



# Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church

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November 2017 Newsletter

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Members and Friends of Ascension,

The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation will continue to be celebrated for some time to come. October 31, 2017, is/was (depending on when you're reading this) 500 years to the day that Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. The church door was a common place for posting notices. Luther posted his theses on October 31<sup>st</sup> because the next day was November 1<sup>st</sup>, All Saints Day. Everyone would be coming to church and would see Luther's posting on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

We are all quite familiar with the hallmarks of Luther's reformation. The Reformation is noted for Luther's three "solos": faith alone, grace alone, and Scripture alone. This is what Luther and the Reformation are known for. What we don't know so much about is Luther's years as a monk at a monastery. These years were before he became a professor and before he came up with the three "solos."

On July 17, St. Alexis Day, 1505, Luther applied for admission to the Black Cloister in Erfurt, the chapter of the Hermits of St. Augustine. Luther's decision to become a monk and a priest came as a great shock to his family and friends. Why would a gifted young scholar and law student give up a promising future as a lawyer? Despite greatly disappointing his father and despite the encouragement from friends to change his mind and not enter the monastery, Luther was determined to enter the monastery.

Luther the monk was crushed by the law of God. Luther was brought to the lowest point in his life. You see, Luther thought

that by the law he could earn God's favor. Yet the more he tried to live up to the demands of the law, the more he saw God's anger and the more he deserved to be punished. So much so that Luther would take the punishment into his own hands. He tortured himself, thinking that God might be appeased by his self-punishment. It did not work. He still came face to face with an angry God.

E. G. Schwiebert, in his book "Luther and His Times" wrote: "In all of Luther's references to these years of his monastic life there runs a general note of sadness and depression. Such expressions as 'I was always sad,' 'I fell into a state of melancholy,' 'I was the most miserable man on earth,' appear over and over again."

So determined was Luther to live up to the demands of a holy and righteous God that he would sometimes lock himself into his cell (his 7' by 10' undecorated room that he often referred to as a cell) for two or three days, without food or drink, until he finished his breviary. Luther later described what monastic life was like for him, "My head became so heavy that I could not close my eyes for five nights. I was in agony and all confused. As soon as I had improved, I tried to work on my courses, but my head began to swim again. I was so imprisoned in this practice that the Lord had to tear me from this self-torture by violence." (E. G. Schwiebert).

In 1531, Luther filled in for Bugenhagen at the Wittenberg congregation. In a series of sermons on the Gospel of St. John, he said: "I have been a monk and waked at night, fasting, praying, chastising, and tormenting my body that I might remain obedient and live chastely. I speak of those pious and sincere monks who take their vocation in this world seriously, not of whoremongers and rascals, who live an

unchaste, loose life; but those who have made a real effort like myself, who have tried and striven to become like unto Christ that they might be saved. What did they accomplish by all this? Christ says here: 'You will remain in your sins and die,' that is what they have obtained." (E. G. Schwiebert)

Luther was crushed by the law during his monastery years. Luther was certainly conscience of his sins – his many sins; even while living in what most would call a holy setting. Who, of anyone were more holy than the monks and nuns of his day? He certainly knew that it did teach him that he would not find satisfaction or favor with God by trying to live up to the perfect standards of a holy and righteous God. The law, while leading him in the right direction, could never be the answer for what he was searching for – a God who loved him and approved of him. This he would only find only in Scripture and only in the Gospel. That would come, in most part, after his monastic life.

After his monastic life, Luther would learn the truth of Romans 3:20, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. Luther would also learn the truth of the gospel in Romans 1:17, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" We praise God that God revealed these truths to Luther and has passed them on to us!

In Christ's service,  
Pastor Lloyd Schlomer



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## Thanksgiving Service

While thanksgiving to God is done by the Christian each and every single day, our nation has designated the fourth Thursday of November as a Day of Thanksgiving for all Americans. This year Thanksgiving Day falls on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Our Thanksgiving services will be on Wednesday evening, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 6:30 at Shepherd of the Valley and on Thursday morning, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 9:00 at Ascension. Services at SOTV and at Ascension will be identical, so attend the service that fits your schedule. “Come ye thankful people, come!



## WILLISTON EFFORT

As you perhaps remember, your Dakota-Montana District Mission Board (DMB) has a strategy for our mission efforts in Williston named, “The Six Month Plan.” This plan involves calling a semi-retired pastor to work with the Williston congregation for six months (summer through Christmas, 2018). After that time, we will sit down together to decide whether it is time to ask for a full time missionary for Williston.

The total cost of The Six Month Plan is \$35,568. The group in Williston is able to promise \$16,100 for this effort. This leaves a gap of \$19,468. So, upon approval at our Spring Pastors Conference, this appeal was made to our district. And the brothers and sisters of our district have responded! The official total received is \$20,899. Any additional money received will be used for outreach in Williston or elsewhere in our District.



Ascension will be hosting an Advent by Candlelight on Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2pm. Stay tuned for more information in bulletins and/or announcements.

If there is information you would like included in the monthly newsletter, please either drop a note in Trisha Dominguez’s mailbox or send an e-mail to: [newsletter@ascensionmoorhead.org](mailto:newsletter@ascensionmoorhead.org)

\*\*\*All information for the December newsletter is due November 20<sup>th</sup>\*\*\*