

Reformation Nuggets

Did you know ...

Our Synod has a **Reformation at 500 Committee** that is bringing together Reformation related resources for congregations. We have some speakers who could speak on Reformation topics. Our website lists some resources and links to other organizations planning for the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the publication of the 95 Theses in 1517.

<http://ministrylink.org/ministries/teams/luther2017/>

Our Synod will sponsor a third trip to **Lutherland in June 2015**. The trip will be led by **Karl Krueger**. The final itinerary is still being finalized. Stay tuned for more details.

Tidbits ...

We know about struggling artists. This is hardly how you would describe **Lucas Cranach**, a Wittenberg contemporary of Martin Luther. Cranach might have been the richest man in town. In 1504, he became the court painter of Elector Frederick the Wise (patron of Wittenberg University, supporter of Luther). In his time in Wittenberg, Cranach not only painted pictures of Luther and Katarina and other reformers, he ran a successful art studio, was a printer, an pharmacist and served as mayor of Wittenberg. He is commemorated on April 6.

Many have heard of **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**, the Lutheran pastor who was part of the Confessing Church in Germany in the 1930's that stood up to Hitler's treatment of the Jewish people. Later he was implicated in a plot to assassinate Hitler and died in the Flossenburg concentration camp, April 9th, 1945, a week before it was liberated. In his essay, "*The Church and the Jewish Question*" (found in No Rusty Swords), Bonhoeffer quotes Luther, "*That Jesus was born a Jew, 1523*", who then urged that the Jews be treated in a "brotherly way". Bonhoeffer is commemorated on April 9.

The **Luther Rose** (or seal) was created for Luther at the invitation of Prince-Elector John Frederick of Saxony. It was sent to him while he was staying at the Coburg Fortress during the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 (because of the Imperial Ban he was not able to leave Saxony). A description of the meaning of the Rose using Luther's own words is visually displayed in a YouTube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZi7x6YYoyM>). The Stiftung Luthergedenkstaette, headquartered in Wittenberg, is attempting to collect 2017 depictions of the Luther Rose by Reformation Day 2017.

Long before the ELW and LBW, the SBH and the Common Service Book, long before Lutherans had ‘made a name’ for themselves, there was a **hymnal**. Martin Luther worked with hymn writer and composer Johann Walter to publish the *Geistliches Gesangbüchlein* (Spiritual Song Booklet) in the 1520’s.. Walter and Luther would later collaborate on the German Mass. There are four hymns attributed to Walter and the *Geistliches Gesangbüchlein* in the ELW, including *Savior of the Nations, Come* (NunKomm, der Heiden Heiland.)

Martin Luther may (or may not) have said, “If I knew the world were to end tomorrow, I would **plant my apple tree** today.” However, this hope-filled sentiment was the impetus for an international project sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation - *The Luther Garden*. Located in a park from which one can see the tower by the Castle Church and the twin towers of the City Church, the goal is to plant 500 trees by 2017. The trees are planted by churches - denominations, congregations, institutions - from all over the world. The first five trees, planted in the five petals of a landscaped Luther Rose represented the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed, Methodist and the Anglican communions. Each tree planted in Wittenbeg is matched by a tree planted at the location in the world of the tree sponsor. On June 18, 2014, Claire Burkat, on behalf of the SE PA Synod, planted a tree in the Luther Garden (#227). See <http://www.luthergarten.de/list.html>.

In Luther’s time, one did not wait for relatives or reservations, but took a child as soon as possible to be baptized. Martin Luther was born on November 10, the next day, November 11, St. Martin’s Day, he was taken by his father to be baptized in the Sts. Peter and Paul church in Eisleben. **Luther’s baptismal church** is now a Baptism Center. A new, modern Baptismal Font has been installed. The Center now hosts worship Services, Workshops, celebrations of baptism remembrance, school projects, youth camps, and church trips. See <http://www.zentrum-taufe-eisleben.de/>

In Luther’s day, the most common form of transportation was your own feet. When he had to travel to Rome on a mission for his Augustinian Order, **Luther walked**. Over the years, people of faith have been encouraged to take religious pilgrimages. Many have heard of the St. James Way that leads to Santiaho of Compostela. In Germany, pilgrims and everyday hikers can walk on Luther’s Way. The pathway originally connected traditional Lutheran cities like Wittenberg, Eisleben and Erfurt. I continues to be expanded- there are now more than 900 miles of paths. <http://www.luther2017.de/en/25519/luther-way-day-we-want-raise-public-awareness-pilgrimage-paths>

In the 16th century, Wittenberg was a hotbed of the Reformation with leading Reformers, Luther, Melanchthon and Bugenhagen and the leading reformed University. In the 21st century, Wittenberg might have the smallest percentage of Lutherans (even Christians) then most cities in Germany (under 15%). Wittenberg belongs to the German State, Saxony-Anhalt, which has the **fewest Protestants**. The time of Russian dominated Communist rule and years of national socialists have had a large impact on church membership in Luther's city as well as elsewhere in Germany.

Have you ever had a good conversation at the dinner table. Turns out, Luther had many noteworthy conversations at his table. In German they are called *Tischrede*, in English simply **Table Talks**. The talks, recorded by students and subsequently reconstructed for publication, are rich with Luther's insight, humor and earthiness. You can still see the site of these talks - the table is part of the Luther Stube - the one room in the Luther House in Wittenberg that still has its original furnishings.

Martin Luther had the highest respect for stories attributed to the ancient Greek author **Aesop**. He assigned them a status second only to the Bible and regarded them as wiser than "the harmful opinions of all the philosophers." Throughout his life, Luther told and retold Aesop's fables and strongly supported their continued use in schools. He put together a collection of Aesop's fables in 1530 in Coburg. (He translated thirteen of Aesop's fables in simple language and gave the morals in German proverbs.) Luther's own autograph of his edition of the fables still survives. It was found in the Vatican Library in 1887 by Richard Reitzenstein.

Old Lutheran tidbit of the day:

<http://www.oldlutheran.com/oldlutheran/page.php?page=tidbit>