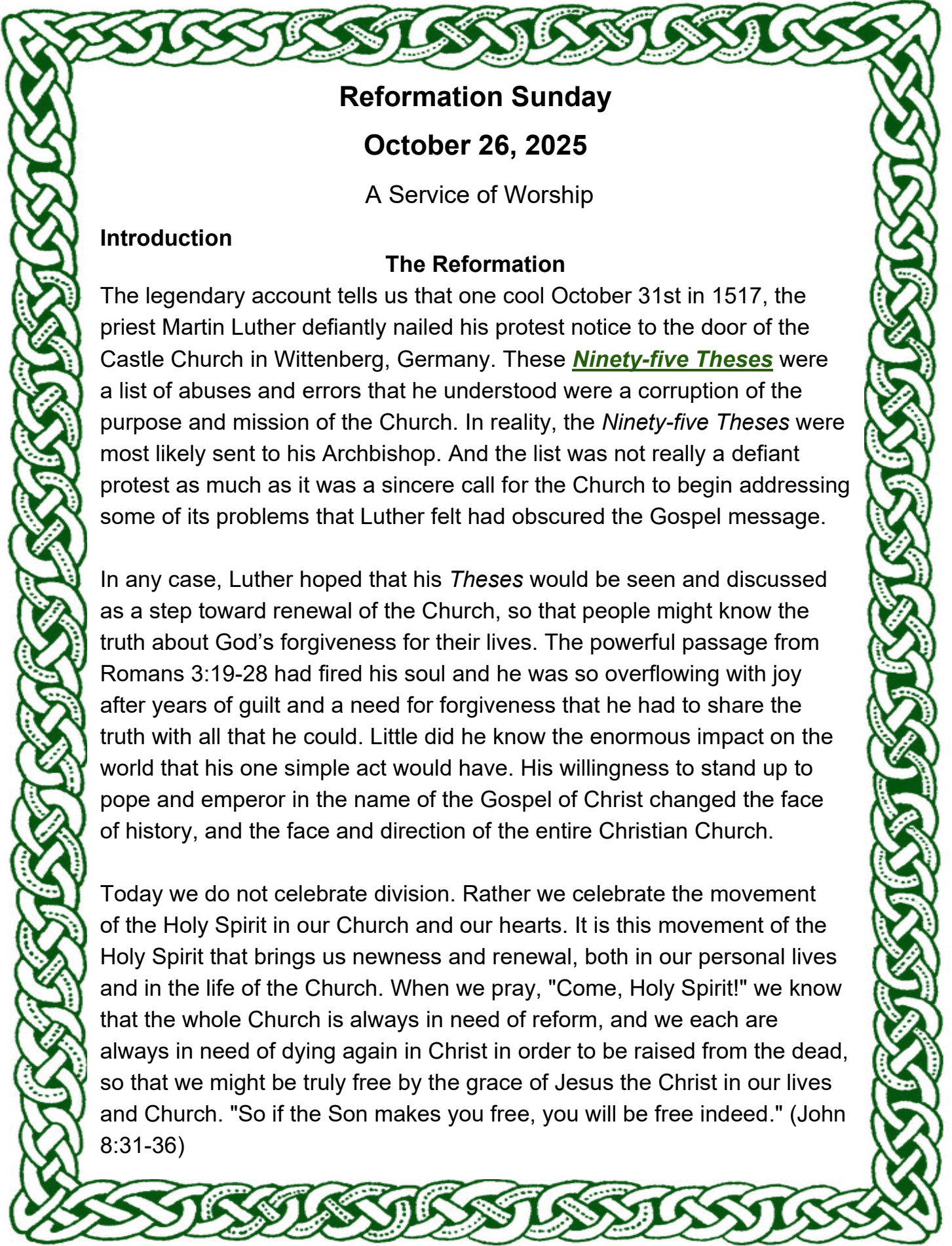




Reformation Sunday

October 26, 2025

A Service of Worship

Introduction

The Reformation

The legendary account tells us that one cool October 31st in 1517, the priest Martin Luther defiantly nailed his protest notice to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. These Ninety-five Theses were a list of abuses and errors that he understood were a corruption of the purpose and mission of the Church. In reality, the *Ninety-five Theses* were most likely sent to his Archbishop. And the list was not really a defiant protest as much as it was a sincere call for the Church to begin addressing some of its problems that Luther felt had obscured the Gospel message.

In any case, Luther hoped that his *Theses* would be seen and discussed as a step toward renewal of the Church, so that people might know the truth about God's forgiveness for their lives. The powerful passage from Romans 3:19-28 had fired his soul and he was so overflowing with joy after years of guilt and a need for forgiveness that he had to share the truth with all that he could. Little did he know the enormous impact on the world that his one simple act would have. His willingness to stand up to pope and emperor in the name of the Gospel of Christ changed the face of history, and the face and direction of the entire Christian Church.

Today we do not celebrate division. Rather we celebrate the movement of the Holy Spirit in our Church and our hearts. It is this movement of the Holy Spirit that brings us newness and renewal, both in our personal lives and in the life of the Church. When we pray, "Come, Holy Spirit!" we know that the whole Church is always in need of reform, and we each are always in need of dying again in Christ in order to be raised from the dead, so that we might be truly free by the grace of Jesus the Christ in our lives and Church. "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:31-36)

Martin Luther's Seal or "The Luther Rose"

While he was a professor at Wittenberg University, Martin Luther designed

this seal which he declared was meant to be "expressive of his theology." The following letter was written to his friend, Herr Spangler, town clerk in Nuremberg, Germany and expresses his thoughts on his seal.



July 8, 1530

Grace and peace in Christ!

Honorable, kind, dear Sir and Friend!

Since you ask whether my seal has come out correctly, I shall answer most amiably and tell you of those thoughts which now come to my mind about my seal as a symbol of my theology.

There is first to be a cross, black, and placed in a heart, which should be of its natural color (red), to put me in mind that faith in Christ crucified saved us. For if one believes from the heart, he will be justified. Even though it is a black cross, which mortifies and which also should hurt us, yet it leaves the heart in its natural color and does not ruin nature ... that is, the cross does not kill, but keeps man alive. For the just shall live by faith, by faith in the Savior.

Such a heart is to be in the midst of a white rose, to symbolize that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace. In a word, it places the believer into a white joyful rose, for this faith does not give peace and joy as the world gives. Therefore, the rose is to be white, not red, for white is the color of the spirits and of all angels.

This rose, moreover, is fixed in a sky-blue field, symbolizing that such joy in the Spirit and in faith is a beginning of the future heavenly joy. It is already a part of faith, and is grasped through hope, even though not yet manifest.

And around this field is a golden ring, to signify that such bliss in heaven is endless, and more precious than all joys and goods, just as gold is the most valuable and precious metal.

May Christ, our dear Lord, be with your spirit until the life to come. Amen.

-(letter from *Luther's Works, American Edition; Volume 49, pp. 356 – 359*)

Gathering *My Faith Looks Up to Thee*

Welcome - Community Events

Prelude *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* – arr. Mark Hayes Jessye Whitis, pianist

***Call to Worship**

*Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

***People: And also with you!**

*Leader: Let us pray together: O God, you are our refuge and our strength.

***People: A very present help in times of trouble, therefore we will not fear.**

*Leader: O God, you made an everlasting covenant with us.

***People: Help us to be your people in this world of trial and trouble.**

*Leader: O God, too often we have sinned and have fallen short of your glory.

***People: Search us, O God, and know our hearts; test us and know our thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.**

*Leader: O God, we have embraced the freedom you offer us.

***People: We embrace the Son who makes us free.**

*Leader: O God, we honor the bold faith of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have gone before us.

***People: May we each be as bold in our faith this week as we cry "Come, Holy Spirit!", help us to die again and again in Christ so that we might be truly free. Amen.**

***Hymn # 275 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God**

***Confession and Forgiveness:**

*Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

***People: Amen.**

*Leader: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

***People: If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

(Silence for reflection and self-examination)

***Leader: Almighty and most merciful God,**

People: We confess that we are unworthy servants. We have not always acted as children of God. We confess that we have left undone things we should have done, and we have done and said things that we should not have done and said. For those times when we have sinned against you even unintentionally, we ask your forgiveness. We truly deserve only condemnation. But we pray that you, for the sake of Jesus Christ, your obedient and faithful Son, will forgive us and increase our faith, that we may rise to live before you in righteousness and true holiness.

***Minister: Jesus Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For his sake, and in his name, I proclaim to you the grace and mercy of God, by which he forgives our sin and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.**

***People: Amen.**

***Passing the Peace of Christ**

***Minister: Peace be with you.**

***People: And also with you**

Choral Anthem *Christ Beside Me* – by Tom Fettke

Jessye Whitis, Music Director and pianist

The Written Word for Us Today

Reader: You gave us the living Word. Help us to listen to it, to live it, and to be bold enough to let it change our lives, and the lives of those with whom we come in contact each day. Amen.

First Reading: Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Second Reading: Romans 3: 19-28

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord to you.

Response: Thanks be to God.

***The Gospel:** John 8: 31-36

***Minister:** The Gospel of the Lord.

***Response to the Reading of the Gospel:**

People: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without
end. Amen. Amen.

Homily *"The Monstrous Regiment": John Knox and the Scottish Reformation*
Rev. Kathy Vineyard, H.R.

***Affirmation of Faith: Apostles' Creed**

People: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and
earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: who was conceived
by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius
Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the
third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and
sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he
shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy
Spirit; the Holy Christian Church; the communion of saints; the
forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life
everlasting. Amen.

***Hymn # 329 God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength**

Invitation to the Offering

God is the giver of all good things,
the one who fashioned each of us with unique gifts
that together make the Body of Christ whole.
In gratitude for all we have received,
we offer our lives back to God — we share our time, our skills, our money
and in so doing, we say "yes" to God's invitation
to join in Kingdom building work here on earth.

Offertory *The King of Love* – arr. Penny Rodriguez Jessye Whitis, pianist

***Doxology # 606 Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow**

***Prayer of Dedication**

Bountiful God,

All that we can offer you stems from your generosity.
May the gifts that we return to you

become a blessing for your whole community,
enriching and empowering us for the work to which you call us.
Amen.

Prayers for the People and the Lord's Prayer

Hymn # 802 *The King of Love, My Shepherd Is

Benediction

Minister: Go in peace, serve the Lord!

People: Thanks be to God!

Postlude *How Firm a Foundation* – Joseph Martin

Jessye Whitis, pianist

+Liturgy written by Dennis Bratcher and adapted to our use