As we kicked off the year of the Reformation’s 500th anniversary, *Living Lutheran began a series in which we highlighted 500 items about the Reformation and its spirit and impact. Over the course of 10 issues, we explored 500 unique aspects of the Reformation, beginning with 50 wide-ranging quotes.

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1 “In short, I will preach it, teach it, write it, but I will constrain no one by force, for faith must come freely without compulsion. Take myself as an example. I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I simply taught, preached and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philipp and Amsdorf, the Word … did everything.”
—Martin Luther (1483-1546)

2 “One man, Martin Luther, took a stand that literally shredded the fabric of Europe. It changed theology, it changed politics, it changed society and it changed political boundaries. It gave us a revolution in education, in literacy. There are many, many manifestations of the Reformation.”
—Tom Rassieur, curator, “Martin Luther: Art and the Reformation”

3 “[Luther’s] Reformation neither transformed the church, nor was crushed by it. Instead, a de facto partition took shape. One by one, a series of German and Scandinavian cities and territories abolished the Catholic Mass, repudiated the church’s hierarchy, and required preachers to proclaim Luther’s doctrines. A new form of Christianity was starting to come into being. … Like all great revolutions, it had created a new world.”
—Alec Ryrie, author, Protestants

4 “The Reformation is a much broader event than that singular day. To be sure, the Reformation began on that day. The Reformation, however, spanned two centuries and encompassed a cast of characters from a variety of nations. Luther may very well be at the center of the Reformation, but he does not stand alone.”
—Stephen J. Nichols, author, The Reformation

5 “The Protestant Reformation had a lot to do with the printing press, where Martin Luther’s theses were reproduced about 250,000 times, and so you had widespread dissemination of ideas that hadn’t circulated in the mainstream before.”
—Nate Silver, author and statistician

6 “The recently published Atlas of World Christianity enumerates about 500,000,000 adherents to churches and denominations that trace their descent directly or indirectly from 16th-century Protestant beginnings and several hundred millions more in ‘independent’ churches with Protestant origins or strongly Protestant characteristics.”
—Mark Noll, professor
“… the Reformation as such, liberated from its early modern political constraints, remains alive and well in the United States. Anyone who doubts this need only open the Yellow Pages of a local phone book from anywhere in the United States and look under ‘Churches.’”
—Brad S. Gregory, professor

“The now almost universally acknowledged principles of religious freedom, liberty of conscience, the rule of law, separation of powers and constitutionally limited republics were unthinkable before the Reformation.”
—The Reformation Society, Cape Town, South Africa

“The Protestant Reformation was one of the most far-reaching events of the last millennium. It ended the millennium-old hegemony of the Catholic Church in Western Europe and altered political and economic fortunes wherever it reached.”
—Sascha O. Becker, Steven Pfaff and Jared Rubin, professors

“It is impossible to understand modern history apart from the Reformation. We cannot understand the history of Europe, England or America without studying the Reformation. For example, in America there would never have been Pilgrim Fathers if there had not first been a Protestant Reformation.”
—Jack Arnold, church history professor, IIMM Magazine

“I have a hard time picturing several aspects of the modern world without Luther.”
—Martin E. Marty, ELCA pastor and professor

“The Reformation inspired a mood of anti-authoritarianism, which led to backlash against the feudal system and, by extension, to the democratic movement around the world. In the centuries following the Reformation, movements like women’s suffrage and the abolition of slavery traced their roots back to Reformation-era principles.”
—Reference.com

“The Reformation was fundamentally a struggle for the backing of secular governments. Without their support, no religious dissidents could last for long. With it, the old church was at their mercy.”
—Alec Ryrie, author, Protestants

“Prior to the Reformation, worship was largely done for the people. The music was performed by professional musicians and sung in an unfamiliar language (Latin). The Reformation gave worship back to the people. … Worship once again became participatory.”
—Kenny Lamm, Renewing Worship NC

“All that matters is that God’s Word be given free course to encourage and enliven hearts so that they do not become burdened.”
—Martin Luther

“But Luther was the man who, guided by experience in the life of his own soul, again made people understand the original and true meaning of the gospel of Christ.”
—Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), theologian

“The mainstream Reformation was not concerned with establishing a new Christian tradition, but with the renewal and correction of an existing tradition. On the basis of their assertion that Christian theology was ultimately grounded in Scripture, reformers such as Luther and Calvin argued for the need to return to Scripture as the primary and critical source of Christian theology.”
—Robert Kennerson, author, “The theological agenda of the Reformation”
“Luther knew what it felt like for the law to convict him, accuse him, leave him with nowhere to rest. And if you want to know what really sparked the Protestant Reformation it is the fact that feeling this way, Luther … believed that God’s grace is a gift, [and] no longer accepted what the church had for so long taught: that we are really saved by the works of the law. The medieval church had pawned off law as gospel, and Luther dared to know the difference, and then he became a preacher of grace, and that changed everything.”
—Nadia Bolz-Weber, pastor, House for All Sinners and Saints, Denver

“For the reality of grace is not severable form that web and bundle of life out of which the human emerges and is defined, with in which the negatives of need and anguish and death, as well as the affirmative vitalities of beauty and joy burst forth, to which the Incarnation of grace came, and which, in the numberless occasions of experience, constitutes the theater of man’s redemption by grace.”
—Joseph Sittler (1904-87), theologian

“He [Luther] rejected the emphasis on internal experience as the basis for faith because, for him, human beings encountered God through the means outside themselves (extra nos), through the scripture, the word of preaching and the sacraments.”

“A Christian congregation should never gather together [in worship] without the preaching of God’s Word and prayer, no matter how briefly.”
—Martin Luther

“Perhaps Luther’s greatest achievement was the German Bible. No other work has had as strong an impact on a nation’s development and heritage as has this Book.”
—Henry Zecher in Christianity Today

“The Bible ceased to be a foreign book in a foreign tongue, and became naturalized, and hence far more clear and dear to the common people. Hereafter the Reformation depended no longer on the works of the Reformers, but on the book of God, which everybody could read for himself as his daily guide in spiritual life. This inestimable blessing of an open Bible for all … marks an immense advance in church history, and can never be lost.”
—Philip Schaff (1819-93), theologian and church historian

“Because churches today—both Protestant and Catholic, as well as Jewish, Muslim and other religions—are still wrestling with the balance between men’s and women’s spiritual equality and social difference, [Luther’s] words, like those of other authoritative religious writers, are not simply matters of historical interest.”
—Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, professors

“When he asked why he got married, Luther responded that “his marriage would please his father, rile the pope, cause the angels to laugh, and the devils to weep.”
—Terry Lindvall, author, God Mocks

“In essentials, unity; in differences, liberty; in all things, charity.”
—Attributed to Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560), reformer and theologian
31 “What have Luther and Melanchthon taught save the Word of God? You have condemned them. You have not refuted them. Where do you read in the Bible that Christ, the apostles, and the prophets imprisoned, banished, burned, or murdered anyone?”
—Argula von Grumbach (1492-1568), reformer and author

32 “The law says, ‘do this,’ and it is never done. Grace says, ‘believe in this,’ and everything is already done.”
—Martin Luther

33 “[Luther’s] ultimate message was that if one wanted to compare Christianity to a ship, then one must know that all Christians—whether monk or farmer, nun or housewife—were granted a place on board, and no one place was better than another. Moreover, a ride aboard this ship of grace came only by way of faith.”
—David C. Mayes, professor

34 “The first thing I ask is that people should not make use of my name, and should not call themselves Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? The teaching is not mine. Nor was I crucified for anyone. St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3, would not tolerate Christians calling themselves Pauls or Peters, but only Christians. How did I, poor stinking bag of maggots that I am, come to the point where people call the children of Christ by my evil name?”
—Martin Luther

35 “Reformation ends not in contemplation, but in action.”
—George Gillespie (1613-48), theologian

36 “God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in His Church, even to the reforming of the Reformation itself.”
—John Milton (1608-74), author

37 “If we Protestants are ‘reformed and always reforming,’ then commemorating the Reformation should cause us not so much to celebrate the past as to renew our mission and ministry in the present.”
—Christopher Gehrz, professor

38 “It was a sad and unexpected consequence of the Reformation attack in monasticism that the immediate effects on education were negative. As persons left religious orders, and as their property was seized by nobles with evident greed, the traditional role that these institutions played in educating the young disappeared.”
—Timothy Lull (1943-2003), author, Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings

39 “The anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 becomes the focus for a multiyear global process of reflection, repentance, and celebration in all congregations and expressions of the communion. As one part of this emphasis, the [Lutheran World Federation] Assembly in 2017 will be planned as an occasion for the joyful celebration of the power of the Lutheran witness to the gospel and at the same time a space for the self-critical acknowledgement of failures in faithfulness and of the continuing pain of division among Christians.”
—Lutheran World Federation strategic plan

40 “If Luther were to rise from the dead he would be shocked at the strange things, which are done, under the cover of his name.”
—Bishop Manas Buthelezi (1935-2016), theologian, activist and first bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa’s Central Diocese

41 “In commemorating the Reformation, we cannot just see it as a jubilee, but should also admit our guilt for past errors and repent on both sides for the past 500 years.”
—Heinz Josef Algermissen, bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Fulda in Germany

42 “The ecumenical movement has altered the orientation of the churches’ perceptions of the Reformation: ecumenical theologians have decided not to pursue their confessional self-assertions at the expense of their dialogue partners but rather to search for that which is common within the differences, even within the oppositions, and thus work toward overcoming church-dividing differences.”
—The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity
“If, unfortunately, there are things in Rome which cannot be improved, there is not—nor can there be!—any reason for tearing oneself away from the church in schism. Rather, the worse things become, the more one should help her and stand by her, for by schism and contempt nothing can be mended.”

—Martin Luther

“He [Luther] took his shots at the system, yet he also lived up to all the reforms he pushed through. The people listened to him because they could see Luther laboring to bring Christianity back to the point where Christ had established it—a simple faith in God, a direct relationship with Christ, contentment with the calling God gives each individual, and living righteously in the midst of the world.”

—David C. Mayes, professor

“The Reformers did not seem themselves as inventors, discoverers, or creators. Instead they saw their efforts as rediscovery. They weren’t making something from scratch but were reviving what had become dead. They looked back to the Bible and to the apostolic era, as well as to early church fathers such as Augustine for the mold by which they could shape the church and re-form it.”

—Stephen J. Nichols, author, The Reformation

“The time is ripe to acknowledge that translating Luther to new contexts involves a process of transfiguration by which the old, relevant as it is in its reappearance, also passes away. ... The contours of the Reformation now are to be defined over against this new background in which powers and principalities exert control now as they did when the Reformation erupted as a cry for freedom and a call for the gospel. The Reformation defined them then; it is left for us to name them today, yet the spirit is the same.”

—Vítor Westhelle, author, Transfiguring Luther

“The radical gospel of justification by faith alone does not allow for a middle-of-the-road position. Either one must proclaim it as unconditionally as possible, or forget it. We must somehow muster up the nerve to preach the gospel in such fashion as to put the old to death and call forth the new. ... If Lutheranism is to recover a sense of its identity and mission today, it must begin to consider what it means to preach the gospel in radical fashion.”

—Gerhard Forde (1927-2005), theologian

“In our day, we emphasize the gospel of self-esteem, marketing the church based on people’s needs, saying, ‘I found it!’ and ‘I’m the little engine that could.’ Our culture promotes human ability and human will, as did the indulgence culture in Luther’s day, as a way to bring salvation. So I have a hunch Luther would still feel compelled to speak his central message.”

—Martin E. Marty, ELCA pastor and professor

“The church needs a reformation which is not the work of man, namely the pope, or of many men, namely the cardinals, both of which the most recent council has demonstrated, but it is the work of the whole world, indeed it is the work of God alone. However, only God who has created time knows the time for this reformation.”

—Martin Luther

This list was compiled by John Potter, a content editor of Living Lutheran, and Rod Boriack, a writer and editor living in Des Plaines, Ill.
As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, *Living Lutheran* is exploring 500 of its unique aspects, continuing the series this month with 50 Reformation locations.

1. **University of Erfurt, Germany**
   Martin Luther enrolled here in 1501 with the intention of studying law. He received his bachelor’s degree in 1502 and his master’s in 1505.

2. **St. Augustine’s Monastery, Erfurt**
   Luther left law school to enter the Augustinian cloister here in 1505. He took his monastic vow in 1506 and was ordained in 1507.

3. **Rome, Italy**
   When Luther took a pilgrimage here in 1509—seeing firsthand St. Peter’s Basilica and the Scala Santa, among other sites—it was a formative moment in his lifelong skepticism about church practices.

4. **University of Wittenberg, Germany**
   In 1512, Luther received his doctorate and joined the theological faculty here. Today the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg is located in Halle, while the original campus is home to its convention center.

5. **The Town and Parish Church of St. Mary, Wittenberg, Germany**
   Considered the “Mother Church of the Reformation,” it held the first celebration of mass in German. Luther preached hundreds of sermons here.

6. **Heylshof Garden, Worms, Germany**
   After being excommunicated by the pope, Luther was called before the Diet of Worms here in 1521 to answer charges of heresy. He was declared an outlaw in the Edict of Worms.

7. **Augsburg, Germany**
   At the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, the Augsburg Confession, which became Lutheranism’s primary confession of faith, was presented.
8 Veste Coburg, Coburg, Germany
While seeking protection during the Diet of Augsburg, Luther continued his translation of the Bible into high German here.

9 Nuremberg, Germany
With 21 printing presses during the 16th century, this town played a vital role in spreading the Reformation’s ideas by creating and distributing pamphlets.

10 Grossmünster, Zurich, Switzerland
In 1519, Huldrych Zwingli, a leader of the Reformation in Switzerland, became pastor here and began to preach about reforming the church.

11 St. Pierre Cathedral, Geneva, Switzerland
Prominent Reformation theologian John Calvin preached here throughout the mid-16th century.

12 Castle of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, Scotland
John Knox, leader of the Scottish Reformation and founder of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, was chaplain of St. Andrews Castle in the mid-16th century.

13 Parliament of England
By passing the first Act of Supremacy in 1534, the English Parliament established King Henry VIII as supreme head of the church, breaking the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church.

14 Thirty Years’ War, across Europe
Growing tension between Roman Catholics and Protestants, in part, led to the Eighty Years’ War (1568-1648). The Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) was fueled by a Protestant rebellion against efforts to curtail religious freedom.

15 Peace of Westphalia, Westphalia, Germany
This series of peace treaties marked the end of both the Eighty Years’ and Thirty Years’ wars, leading to the separation of religion from the state throughout western Europe.

Nos. 1 through 15 were compiled by John Potter, a content editor of Living Lutheran.

Rick Steves’ top 10 Reformation sites
To research and film my public television special Rick Steves’ Luther and the Reformation, I traveled to many Reformation-related sites around Europe. Here are my 10 favorites.

16 Cathar Castles, Southwestern France
Centuries before Martin Luther, a heretical group called the Cathars created their version of Christianity. The king of France and the pope wiped them out in a series of Crusades. Today the looming ruins of Cathar Castles are a reminder that Luther wasn’t the first Christian who sought an alternative to the medieval church.

17 Old Town Square, Prague, Czech Republic
Czech professor and priest Jan Hus spoke out against many of the same medieval church corruptions as Luther. But he did it in a less enlightened time, a century before Luther, and was burned at the stake. Today Hus is honored by a statue in the center of the enchanting square.

18 Erfurt, Germany
Visitors can tour a museum that includes the austere cell where the young monk spent his formative years, and the church where he struggled with his theological demons.

19 Scala Santa, Rome, Italy
This staircase—believed to be the very steps from Pontius Pilate’s palace that Jesus climbed on the day he was convicted—was brought to Rome and became a magnet for pilgrims. When Luther climbed the steps on his knees (believed to reduce one’s time in purgatory), he wondered, “Who knows if it’s actually true?”
**20 Wittenberg, Germany**
This is the small German town where Luther served as a theology professor, hammered his 95 Theses to the church door, burned the papal bull of excommunication, and—later in life—welcomed students and friends into his home.

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**21 Castle Church (Schlosskirche), Wittenberg, Germany**
On Oct. 31, 1517, a frustrated Luther nailed a handwritten copy of 95 theses (topics for discussion) to the wooden door of the Wittenberg town church, an event that kicked off the Reformation. While that original church and its door are long-gone, the rebuilt church in the same location is loaded with Luther lore, including his tombstone.

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**22 Wartburg Castle, Eisenach, Germany**
This castle is where Luther holed up (disguised as the bearded “Squire George”) after he had been excommunicated by Pope Leo X in 1521. In the castle is a fine little museum with artifacts and art from Luther’s time.

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**23 Lutherhaus, Wittenberg, Germany**
The home that an aging Luther shared with his wife, Katharina von Bora, is now an excellent museum displaying the pulpit from which he preached, famous portraits and the richest collection of Luther artifacts in Europe, including his original translations.

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**24 Cathedral of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland**
The biggest church in Switzerland, this is one of many cleared of decoration by Reformation “iconoclasts,” who whitewashed colorfully frescoed walls, trashed stained-glass windows, and smashed statues of Mary and the saints—all with the goal of decluttering the worshiper’s relationship with God, and placing a focus on the music (organ) and the sermon (pulpit).

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**25 Churches with anti-Lutheran propaganda, throughout Europe**
The medieval church responded to the Reformation with the Counter-Reformation, a propaganda campaign of bombastic Baroque decor designed to dazzle and intimidate the faithful.

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**26 Eisleben, Germany**
Luther was born here in 1483 and died here in 1546. Today it is home to Luther’s Birthplace and Martin Luther’s Death House museums.

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**27 The Church of St. Peter and Paul, Eisleben**
Luther was baptized here the day after he was born, Nov. 11, 1483. The remains of the original baptismal font can still be seen inside the church.

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**28 St. George’s Church, Eisenach**
As a student, Luther sang in the boys’ choir here, where Johann Sebastian Bach’s family also worshiped. Luther would later preach here as well.

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**29 Stotternheim**
Luther reportedly got caught in a lightning storm here in 1505. Fearing for his life, he promised to become a monk, leading to his leaving law school for the monastery. Today, the Luther Stone marks this spot.

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**30 Heidelberg, Germany**
In 1518, Luther defended his theses on the “theology of the cross” before a meeting of the Augustinian Order here. The Heidelberg Disputation, as it became known, led to the Leipzig Debate.

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**31 Pleissenburg Castle, Leipzig, Germany**
Luther debated Johann Eck, a defender of Catholic doctrine, here in 1519. Luther declared that “sola scriptura” (Scripture alone) was the true authority in the church.
32. **Allstedt, Germany**
   Early German reformer and revolutionary Thomas Müntzer conducted church services in German rather than Latin here, primarily at St. John’s Church, drawing thousands from around the region.

33. **Strasbourg, France**
   Called “the Refuge of the Righteous” by Anabaptists, Strasbourg is where Martin Bucer helped lead the Reformation and where John Calvin wrote his seminal works on systematic theology.

34. **Lutterworth, England**
   English reformer John Wycliffe produced the first translation of the Bible from Latin into English here, where he also served as rector at Lutterworth Church St. Mary's.

35. **Windsor Castle, England**
   Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer and others met here to discuss creating *The Book of Common Prayer* in 1548.

36. **Ribe Cathedral, Denmark**
   Hans Tausen, “the Danish Luther,” served as the bishop of Ribe while advocating for reform. Today, a statue of him commemorates his contributions to the Danish Reformation.

37. **Västerås, Sweden**
   At the Diet of Västerås in 1527, Sweden was declared Lutheran, thanks largely to the efforts of clergymen brothers Laurentius and Oluas Petri.

38. **Geneva Academy, Switzerland**
   In 1559, John Calvin founded this school, a central part of Protestant education—specifically within the Reformed church.

39. **Mainz, Germany**
   The birthplace of Johann Gutenberg, who developed moveable type. Today Mainz is home to the Gutenberg Museum, housing original copies of the Gutenberg Bible, the first major book printed with moveable type.

40. **Marienthron Convent, Nimbschen, Germany**
   Katharina von Bora, who would become Luther’s wife, escaped from this convent in 1523 to join the Reformation movement.

41. **University of Ingolstadt, Germany**
   In a display of public campaigning for the Reformation, in 1523 theologian Argula von Grumbach challenged the university’s faculty over the punishment of a Lutheran student.

42. **Bad Frankenhausen, Germany**
   In 1525, this was the site of the decisive battle in the German Peasants’ War. At the Battle of Frankenhausen, the insurgent peasants fighting under Thomas Müntzer were defeated.

43. **Speyer, Germany**
   Although many Diets of Speyer were held here, one in 1526 resulted in a temporary suspension of the Edict of Worms and the expansion of the Reformation, and one in 1529 resulted in the Protestation at Speyer.

44. **Marburg Castle, Germany**
   Luther and Huldrych Zwingli met here in 1529 to discuss the theology of the Lord’s Supper. They could not agree, leading to a split between the Lutherans and the Reformed.

45. **Philippus University of Marburg, Germany**
   Founded in 1527 by Philip I, Landgrave of Hesse—who greatly aided in expanding the Reformation—the university was an early training ground for Lutheran pastors.

46. **Braunschweig, Germany**
   Known as the “Second Martin” within the Reformation, unity-seeking German reformer Martin Chemnitz served as the superintendent of churches here.

47. **Schmalkalden, Germany**
   The Schmalkaldic League formed here in 1531 as a defensive alliance formed by Protestant territory representatives against the Holy Roman Empire’s efforts to stamp out Lutheranism.

48. **Edinburgh, Scotland**
   It’s believed that John Knox died at the site of what’s now called the John Knox House in 1572. The only surviving medieval building in Edinburgh, the historic house is now a Knox museum.

49. **Noyon, France**
   The John Calvin Museum is on the original site of Calvin’s birth house. Today it houses Reformation propaganda and early editions of Calvin’s works.

50. **Trent, Italy**
   The Council of Trent, held here between 1545 and 1563, was a Counter-Reformation-focused ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church that resulted in decrees on self-reform and dogmatic clarifications.

Nos. 16 through 25 were compiled by Rick Steves, a travel writer and TV host and member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Lynnwood, Wash.
As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Living Lutheran is exploring 500 of its unique aspects, continuing the series this month with 50 Reformation figures.

1 **John Wycliffe (c. 1329-1384)**
Often referred to as the “Morning Star of the Reformation,” Wycliffe was an English theologian best known for being the first to translate the Bible into English. He rejected papal authority and is considered the primary precursor of the Reformation.

2 **Jan Hus (c. 1369-1415)**
Influenced by Wycliffe, Hus was a Czech priest who advocated for church reform. He was burned at the stake after being convicted of heresy, initiating the Hussite Wars, in which his followers rebelled against Roman Catholic rulers.

3 **Jerome of Prague (c. 1379-1416)**
One of Hus’ central followers, Jerome was a Czech theologian who sought radical, sweeping church reform. He was burned at the stake for heresy at the Council of Constance.

4 **Johannes Gutenberg (c. 1398-1468)**
The inventor of movable type printing in Europe, Gutenberg started the Printing Revolution, which played a key role in the Reformation, spreading printed works on Reformation ideas throughout Europe.

5 **Wessel Gansfort (1419-1489)**
Called “a reformer before the Reformation,” Gansfort was a Dutch theologian and early humanist whose works would inspire Martin Luther and Huldrych Zwingli. He was a proponent of many positions that took root in the Reformation.

6 **Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498)**
An Italian Dominican friar, Savonarola denounced clerical corruption. When the Medici were overthrown in 1494, Savonarola became the leader of Florence, encouraging the development of a republic. He was excommunicated and executed for heresy, but his writing would influence Luther and other later reformers.
Martin Luther (1483-1546)
Luther sought many of the same reforms that others—including one of his heroes, Hus—had advocated for earlier. But it was the German monk who set in motion a series of events that would reshape Western civilization.

Johann Oecolampadius (1482-1531)
German humanist and preacher Oecolampadius worked with Zwingli and Erasmus to spread Reformation efforts in Basel, Switzerland. His theology would later particularly influence John Calvin.

Johann von Staupitz (c. 1460-1524)
The vicar of the Augustinian order at the University of Wittenberg, von Staupitz supervised the young Luther during a difficult spiritual season. While von Staupitz was not himself a Reformer, his emphasis on God’s grace would heavily influence Luther.

Andreas Karlstadt (1486-1541)
This German theologian and professor was an early supporter of Luther. Karlstadt eventually broke with him over a desire to push for more radical reform.

Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536)
A Dutch humanist and priest, Erasmus’ Greek translation of the New Testament helped bring about the Reformation. Although he was critical of the papacy, he also rejected many of Luther’s ideas.

Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531)
The central founding figure of the Swiss Reformation, Zwingli was a priest who led an alliance of reformed Swiss Confederation cantons against Roman Catholic cantons. Zwingli was killed in battle, but Zurich would remain a Protestant city.

Thomas Cranmer (1486-1551)
A leader of the English Reformation, Cranmer was the first Protestant archbishop of Canterbury and the author of The Book of Common Prayer. He was burned at the stake for heresy, but the reforms he advocated led to the formation of the Church of England.

Thomas Müntzer (c. 1489-1525)
A major German radical preacher, theologian and Reformer, Müntzer was a leader of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1525, during which he was captured, then tried and executed.

Martin Bucer (1491-1551)
This Reformation leader of Strasbourg, Germany, continuously worked to reconcile differences among groups within the Reformation. He influenced Lutheranism, Calvinism and the development of Anglicanism.

Wolfgang Capito (c. 1478-1541)
Capito was a German priest who became a central reformer at Strasbourg. Like Bucer, he sought to unify various groups within the Reformation movement.
Philipp Melanchthon
(1497-1560)
Widely viewed as the intellectual and educational leader of the Lutheran Reformation, Melanchthon published the first Protestant systematic theology text, “Loci Communnes. He succeeded Luther as de facto Reformation leader.

Katharina von Bora
(c. 1499-1552)
After becoming interested in the Reformation movement, von Bora fled her life as a nun in secrecy with the help of Luther. In 1525, she and Luther wed. Von Bora ran the family’s finances, including dealing with Luther’s publishers.

Argula von Grumbach
(c. 1492-1554)
The Reformation’s first female theologian and author, von Grumbach was a Bavarian noblewoman who publicly campaigned for the Reformation. She famously challenged the University of Ingolstadt faculty over the punishment of a Lutheran student.

Nikolaus von Amsdorf
(1483-1565)
German professor von Amsdorf was a close friend and major supporter of Luther. He was known for his strict adherence to Luther’s theology, leading to disputes with Melanchthon and Bucer, whom he saw as compromising Luther’s beliefs.

Johannes Bugenhagen
(1485-1558)
Known as “the Second Apostle to the North,” Bugenhagen was a reformer who helped organize Lutheran churches in northern Germany and Scandinavia. He served as Luther’s pastor in Wittenberg and was respected for his organizational skills.

Henry VIII
(1491-1547)
The king of England from 1509 to 1547, Henry VIII initiated the English Reformation through his disagreement with the pope over seeking to annul his first marriage. He became supreme head of the Church in England after Parliament passed legislation curbing papal power.

William Tyndale
(c. 1494-1536)
An English scholar and theologian, Tyndale produced one of the first English translations of the Bible. He was convicted of heresy and executed. His last words were reportedly: “Lord! Open the king of England’s eyes!”

Marguerite de Navarre
(1492-1549)
The princess of France and queen of Navarre, de Navarre supported the Reformation by financially sponsoring reformers’ work and giving them refuge as they fled persecution.

Jeanne d’Albret
(1528-1572)
The daughter of Marguerite de Navarre, d’Albret was the queen regnant of Navarre from 1555 to 1572. More open in her support for the Reformation than her mother, d’Albret publicly converted to Protestantism and became a central political leader of the Huguenots.
Marie Dentière (c. 1495-1561)  
A Belgian abbess who left her convent after becoming involved in the Reformation. Dentière was the first female theologian of the Genevan Reformation. She emphasized the need for women to take a larger role in the church.

Joachim Vadian (1484-1551)  
An ally of Zwingli, Swiss humanist Vadian became mayor of St. Gallen, Switzerland, in 1526 and converted the city to Protestantism.

Hans Tausen (1494-1561)  
Known as “the Danish Luther,” Tausen was a monk who studied under Luther before leading the Reformation in Denmark. Following the Reformation’s success, he was appointed bishop of Ribe.

Laurentius Petri (1499-1573)  
Along with his brother Olaus, Petri was a leader of the Reformation in Sweden. He served as the first evangelical Lutheran archbishop of Sweden and was primarily responsible for the first Swedish Bible translation.

Jan Łaski (1499-1560)  
A Polish priest-turned-reformer, Łanski was heavily influenced by Zwingli and became a leader in the Calvinist Reformation.

Menno Simons (1496-1561)  
A Dutch priest who became a central leader of the Anabaptists and an advocate of ethical Christianity, Simons was a pacifist reformer whose followers formed the Mennonite church.

Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562)  
An Italian abbot who became a Reformation leader. Vermigli fled to Protestant northern Europe, where he became a professor. He broke with Luther over views on the eucharist, influencing the Reformed tradition.

Conrad Grebel (1498-1526)  
Co-founder of the Swiss Brethren movement, Grebel was a follower of Zwingli who broke in favor of more radical positions. He performed the first adult baptism of the Reformation.

Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575)  
Succeeding Zwingli, Buillinger was elected head of the Zurich church. Where Bullinger and Luther failed to unite over differences related to the Lord’s Supper, he and John Calvin reached agreement, launching the Reformed tradition.

John Calvin (1509-1564)  
The most prominent figure of the Reformation’s second generation, French theologian Calvin worked to reform the church in Geneva, Switzerland. His “Institutes of the Christian Religion” helped form the basis for Calvinism, or the Reformed tradition.

Pierre Viret (1511-1571)  
One of Calvin’s closest friends, Viret was a pastor in Lausanne, Switzerland, where he founded the first Reformed academy in the city. Largely through Viret’s efforts, Lausanne became a second training ground for Reformed preachers, following Geneva.

William Farel (1489-1565)  
Known within the Reformation as “the Elijah of the Alps,” Farel was a French evangelist who founded the Reformed Church in the French-speaking cantons of Switzerland. He famously convinced Calvin to lead the Reformation effort in Geneva.

Michael Servetus (c. 1511-1553)  
A Spanish physician and theologian, Servetus participated in the Reformation but ultimately developed a theology of non-Trinitarian Christianity, leading to condemnation by both Protestants and Catholics. He was burnt at the stake for heresy by Calvinists in Geneva.

John Knox (c. 1513-1572)  
The leader of the Scottish Reformation, Knox was a priest who drew on Calvin’s principles. He oversaw the production of the Scottish Reformed church’s constitution and liturgy, leading to the creation of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

George Wishart (1513-1546)  
Wishart was a Scottish priest who popularized Reformation teachings—particularly Calvin’s and Zwingli—in Scotland. Although Wishart was burned at the stake for heresy, his martyrdom encouraged Knox and others to spread the movement.

Aonio Paleario (1500-1570)  
Influenced by Erasmus, this Italian humanist advocated for the primacy of Scripture over tradition. The author of “The Benefit of Christ’s Death,” Paleario was tried and executed for heresy in Rome.
Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553)
One of the most influential 16th-century German artists, Cranach was a friend of Luther’s and painted altarpieces, court portraits and portraits of the Reformers. He sought to spread Lutheran ideas through his work.

Justus Jonas (1493-1555)
A theologian, professor and hymn writer, Jonas was a colleague of Luther and co-wrote the Augsburg Confession. He translated Luther’s and Melanchthon’s Latin works into German.

Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586)
Chemnitz, a second-generation German reformer who sought to unify the Lutheran church, was known as “the Second Martin.” He served as superintendent of the churches of Braunschweig.

Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575)
A pioneer in hermeneutics and church history, Croatian theologian Illyricus caused a rift within Lutheranism by taking a more conservative view on adiaphora (theological nonessentials) than Melanchthon.

Primož Trubar (1508-1586)
The author of the first printed book in the Slovenian language, Trubar was the founder of the Slovenian literary language as well as the founder and first superintendent of the Protestant Church of the Duchy of Carniola.

Theodore Beza (1519-1605)
French theologian Beza was Calvin’s successor as leader of the Reformation in Geneva. With Calvin, he co-founded the Geneva academy, a Calvinist training ground.

Jiří Třanovský (1592-1637)
As “the Luther of the Slavs,” Třanovský was a Lutheran priest, hymn writer and professor from Cieszyn Silesia who became the founding figure of Slovak hymnody.

Compiled by John Potter, a content editor of Living Lutheran.
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1. **Albrecht Dürer, The Last Supper (1523)**
   Motivated by the belief that emphasizing religious imagery was idolatrous, the Reformation caused a significant reduction in religious art produced in Protestant countries. But certain art forms, such as printmaking, were accepted due to their more modest, private nature. Dürer’s woodcut (above) expresses a Protestant outlook by depicting Jesus giving his new commandment, after Judas had fled the scene.

2. **Heinrich Aldegrever, Death and the Bishop (1541)**
   Luther was the most open of the reformers to religious imagery, if it was limited to personal engagement with symbolic spiritual imagery. A pupil of Dürer’s, Aldegrever was an engraver whose small prints depicted a Lutheran theology. Death and the Bishop, from his Power of Death cycle, criticizes clerical corruption.

3. **Daniel Hopfer, Illustrations to Proverbs 2: The Hoarders of Grain (1534)**
   This etching recounts the Proverbs passage on the virtues of sharing grain, rather than hoarding it. It wasn’t difficult to see the image as an analogy for the ruling class and the church ignoring the needs of common people.

4. **Erhard Schön, The Devil Playing the Bagpipe (c. 1530)**
   The advent of the printing press allowed for the spread of Reformation ideas in the form of pamphlets and propaganda art. Regardless of one’s literacy, this irreverent print (below) would have gotten its point across.
5 Matthias Gerung, *Satire on the Sale of Indulgences* (before 1536)
Broadside were large sheets of popular woodcuts printed on one side of a sheet of paper, often the least expensive and most shared prints available. This broadside satirizes the sale of indulgences without the necessity of including any text.

6 Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Martin Luther* (1528)
Perhaps the most prominent artist of the Reformation, Cranach was Luther's friend and particularly known for painting many portraits of the reformers, including this iconic Luther portrait (left).

7 Hans Holbein the Younger, *An Allegory of the Old and New Testaments* (c. 1530-1535)
Inspired by Cranach’s painting *The Law and the Gospel*, Holbein depicted (above) in the left panel an Old Testament characterized by decay, and in the right panel a New Testament vision of hope, in keeping with the reformers’ theology.

8 Lucas van Leyden, *Worshiping of the Golden Calf* (c. 1530)
This triptych depicts the Israelites disobeying God by worshiping a golden calf statue. Some have interpreted this work as being analogous to the idolatry the reformers saw in the Roman Catholic Church’s relationship with religious imagery.

9 Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Wittenberg Altarpiece, Predella* (1547)
Part of Cranach’s altarpiece for the Church of St. Mary in Wittenberg, this piece depicts Luther preaching in the pulpit, with a crucified Jesus in the center to represent the need for Christ to be at the center of a sermon.

10 Lucas Cranach the Younger, *The Last Supper* (1565)
Cranach and his son worked together on multiple altarpieces depicting the Last Supper. After Luther’s death, Cranach the Younger depicted the reformers as apostles in this piece.

11 Heinrich Füllmaurer, *Gotha Altar* (1539-1541)
This extensive piece includes 160 panels offering a Protestant presentation of the Gospels, incorporating contemporary clothing, a lack of halos (typical in Catholic art) and criticism of the papacy.

12 Albrecht Dürer, *The Four Apostles* (1526)
This panel painting depicts John, Peter, Paul and Mark, and emphasizes the importance of Scripture (above).
Lucas Cranach the Younger, *Adam and Eve* (1537)
While depictions of central biblical stories were rarely and carefully handled in Protestant art, exceptions were sometimes made for humble presentations that focused on the biblical figures’ humanity.

Hans Holbein the Younger, *Noli Me Tangere* (c. 1524)
Although depictions of Jesus were generally uncommon in Protestant art, Holbein’s small painting presented the resurrected Christ and Mary in an intimate and naturalistic style, in contrast to the iconic style of Counter-Reformation art.

Rembrandt van Rijn, *Return of the Prodigal Son* (c. 1661-1669)
More than a century later, Rembrandt—considered one of the greatest painters of all time—continued this theme by telling Jesus’ parable in a way that evokes human sympathy modestly but powerfully.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Peasant Wedding* (1566-1569)
Rather than focus on explicitly religious subject matter, Protestant art often depicted the everyday lives of common people. *The Peasant Wedding* (below) depicts a celebration, but one that is humble and simple.

Jan Vermeer, *The Milkmaid* (c. 1632-1675)
Similarly, Vermeer’s *Milkmaid* (below) highlights the virtues of work and the pious people who perform such work. Protestant art’s focus on individuals is in keeping with the Reformation’s focus on personal relationships with God.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Hunters in the Snow* (1565)
One of the most famous Protestant paintings, the piece depicts the daily routines—both difficult and enjoyable—of people in the winter. The mundane and the beautiful are presented side-by-side.

Adriaen van Ostade, *The Fishwife* (1673)
Genre art also represented everyday scenes of ordinary people engaging in common activity and working. Market settings, as pictured in *The Fishwife*, were common.

Monogrammist W.S., *Luther as St. Jerome in His Study* (c. 1580)
This engraving, based on Dürer’s *St. Jerome in His Study* (1514), recasts the fourth-century saint—who translated the Bible into Latin—as the recently deceased Luther translating the Bible into German.

Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Martin Luther on His Deathbed* (c. 1600)
Cranach’s depiction of a dying Luther aimed to convey the reformer facing death with serenity and calmness.
Following the 16th-century iconoclastic destruction of Catholic art throughout Europe, 17th-century artists depicted the whitewashed interiors that became common in Protestant churches. In particular, vanitas art—as typified by Steenwyck—depicted still-life scenes with symbolic biblical values about the transience of earthly life.
Similarly, Lutheran donor families eventually often commissioned works that inserted themselves into scenes alongside Jesus, emphasizing the idea of God’s direct engagement with Christians.

Although not unlike other Vermeer works depicting the mundane-seeming tasks of everyday people, *Woman Holding a Balance* is rich with details of religious symbolism not necessarily found in pieces like *The Milkmaid*.

Long before Vermeer’s depiction of a milkmaid, van Leyden captured scenes of typical peasant work in engravings such as this one.

One of 48 paintings Hisgen commissioned for a church in Bobenhausen II, Joseph was typical of the parapet cycle works Hisgen created for Protestant churches with upper galleries.

Cranach depicts the Old Testament story of Judith, whose modest nature and actions made her a celebrated figure for Lutheran reformers.

Along with his iconic portrait of Luther, Cranach’s other well-known portraits depicted many other key figures in the Reformation, including Luther’s wife, Katharina.

Cranach served as the court painter for Frederick III and painted several portraits of the Elector of Saxony (and defender of Luther), including this one, likely made shortly after his death.

This engraved portrait of key Reformation figure Melanchthon was one of the last of Dürer’s portrait prints.

As pastor of the city church in Wittenberg during the Reformation’s spread, Bugenhagen was also a key reformer and thus was a portrait subject of Cranach’s.

One of the 16th century’s most prominent portraitists, Holbein here regally depicts King Henry VIII, not long after he became supreme head of the Church of England.

Cranach’s painting (and other similar woodcuts of his) displays the town that Luther and the Reformation were closely connected to.

Bruegel presents Christ carrying the cross as one among many people in the scene and depicts the Roman soldiers escorting Christ as Spanish Catholics oppressing Flemish Protestants.

Another of Saenredam’s influential architecture portraits of Protestant church interiors, Buurkerk is well-known as an example of the artist’s perspectival achievements.

Long after the Reformation, artists like Bruegel depicted Luther and the reformers as heroes, with vignettes from Luther’s life.

Other 19th-century artists like von Werner, who here presents Luther before the Diet of Worms, portrayed him dramatically and heroically.

Yeames here traces the Reformation’s events back to John Wycliffe distributing early editions of his English translation of the Bible.

Compiled by John Potter, a content editor of Living Lutheran.
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1. *Novum Instrumentum omne* (Desiderius Erasmus, 1516)
   The humanist scholar Erasmus’ critical edition of the New Testament texts in Greek was the basis for Martin Luther’s translation of those books into German.

2. *95 Theses* (Martin Luther, 1517)
   Luther opposed the sale of indulgences, claiming instead that grace is a free gift from God. The posting of the 95 Theses on Oct. 31, 1517, is considered to mark the beginning of the Reformation.

3. *On the Freedom of a Christian* (Martin Luther, 1520)
   Luther described two dimensions of Christian life: faith unites us with Christ and leads to loving service of our neighbors.

4. *A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels* (Martin Luther, 1521)
   Luther offered this advice to preachers: “The gospel itself is our guide and instructor in the Scriptures,” and Jesus Christ should be preached “as a gift, a present that God has given you and that is your own.”

5. *Etlich Cristlich lider, or Achtliederbuch* (1524)
   The first Lutheran hymnal, containing eight hymns, four of which were written by Luther.

6. *Small Catechism* (Martin Luther, 1529)
   Luther’s classic explanation of what the basic elements of the Christian faith really mean in the lives of Christians.
7 The Luther Bible (1534) Luther and his colleagues translated the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into German, the language of the people.

8 The Augsburg Confession (1530) The basic statement of the beliefs of the Lutheran reformers—written primarily by Philipp Melanchthon—still authoritative for the Lutheran church today.

9 The Book of Concord (1580) The definitive collection of creeds and 16th-century faith statements of the Lutheran church.

10 Loci Communes, or Common Places in Theology (Philipp Melanchthon, 1521) The first Protestant theology textbook. Luther said, “Next to Holy Scripture, there is no better book.”

11 Women and the Reformation (Kirs Stjerna, 2008) An important discussion of women’s roles and opportunities in the 16th century, as well as the lives of eight women who played significant roles in the Reformation.

12 Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther (Mark Edwards, 2004) Edwards examines the Reformation as a media event made possible through the new technology of the movable-type printing press.

13 Luther’s Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications (Robin A. Leaver, 2007) Leaver explores Luther’s use of music, especially congregational singing, to teach the faith and to reform worship life.

14 The Serpent and the Lamb: Cranach, Luther, and the Making of the Reformation (Steven Ozment, 2011) Ozment highlights the work of artist Lucas Cranach the Elder, his friendship with Martin Luther and his influence on the Reformation.
15 Luther and the Hungry Poor: Gathered Fragments (Samuel Torvend, 2008) Torvend focuses on Luther’s concern for the poor and his emphasis on social ministry as an essential part of congregational life.


17 A History of Lutheranism (Eric W. Gritsch, second edition, 2010) A history of the 16th-century Lutheran reform movement, the tensions between orthodoxy and pietism in the following centuries and the spread of Lutheranism to North America and other parts of the world.


19 Luther and Liberation: A Latin American Perspective (Walter Altmann, second edition, 2016) Brazilian theologian Altmann explores revolutionary aspects of Luther’s theology from and for a Latin American context.

20 Abundant Harvest: Stories of Asian Lutherans (Edmond Yee and J. Paul Rajashekar, editors, 2013) This collection tells the stories of indigenous Lutheran leaders in Asia, both lay and clergy.

21 October 31, 1517: Martin Luther and the Day that Changed the World (Martin E. Marty, 2016) Less a history than a reflection on how the Reformation theme of repentance shapes ecumenical relationships among Christians today.

22 The European Reformations (Carter Lindberg, second edition, 2009) Lindberg looks at many different reform movements included under the broad heading of “the Reformation.” He includes a range of theological approaches, different geographical locations and the impact on various aspects of society.

Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans (Kathryn Kleinhans, editor, 2016) A brief introduction to Lutheran theology, history, worship and service, including stories from the global Lutheran family.

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, 1999) An ecumenical agreement articulating how far Lutherans and Catholics have come in reaching a shared understanding of the doctrine that divided them in the 16th century.

Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (Roland Bainton, 1950) Long considered the definitive Luther biography.

Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career (James Kittelson and Hans Wiersma, second edition, 2016) Kittelson’s biography has been a standard classroom text in colleges and seminaries since the first edition was published in 1986.

Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer (Scott Hendrix, 2015) A balanced treatment of Luther’s early and later life, drawing on the most recent scholarship. It offers a theologically informed history, accessible to the non-specialist.

Resilient Reformer: The Life and Thought of Martin Luther (Timothy Lull and Derek Nelson, 2015) Another well-researched new biography, with a focus on how Luther’s personal resilience allowed him to respond to the many challenges and opportunities of the Reformation both energetically and constructively.

Katherine von Bora: Luther’s Wife (Martin Treu, English edition, 2003) A thoroughly researched biography of the woman who became Martin Luther’s wife. Available in Germany. (Most English-language books about von Bora rely heavily on historical fiction to fill in the gaps of her life.)

A Reformation Life: The European Reformation through the Eyes of Philipp of Hesse (David Whitford, 2015) An interesting recounting of Reformation history told through the life of one of its most prominent political leaders, Philipp of Hesse.


William Tyndale: A Biography (David Daniell, 2001) An account of the man who first translated the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew into English—and was burnt at the stake as a heretic for doing so.

Thomas Cranmer: A Life (Diarmid MacCulloch, 2017) A new biography of the first Anglican archbishop of Canterbury, who composed The Book of Common Prayer, guided the reformation within the Church of England, and was executed when Henry VIII’s Catholic daughter, Queen Mary, tried to reintroduce Catholicism to England.

John Calvin: A Pilgrim’s Life (Herman Selderhuis, 2009) An engaging biography of John Calvin, founder of the Reformed tradition, providing insight not only into his theological accomplishments but on his life as a person of faith.

A Reformation Reader (Denis R. Janz, 1999) A collection of primary texts from the Late Middle Ages, Luther, Zwingli, the Radical Reformation, Calvin, the English Reformation and the Catholic Reformation (sometimes called the Counter-Reformation).

The Annotated Luther, Volume 1: Roots of Reform (Timothy Wengert, editor, 2015) A collection of a dozen early (1517-1520) Luther texts of various genres (academic theses, sermons, letters and treatises), with helpful historical and theological commentary. The other five volumes in this series are also more than worth exploring.
38 Church Mother: The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in Sixteenth-Century Germany (Katharina Schütz Zell, edited and translated by Elsie McKee, 2006)
Zell, the wife of a pastor in Strasbourg, was a theologian, an ecumenist and a reformer in her own right. This volume collects her writings with a helpful biographical introduction by historian McKee.

39 The Book of Common Prayer (Thomas Cranmer, 1549)
Composed by Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer and initially published for the worship life of the Church of England. Revised periodically and adapted for different cultures, this remains the standard worship book throughout the Anglican Communion.

Jacobs examines the history and influence of The Book of Common Prayer, including its use as an instrument of social control early in the English Reformation and its tremendous impact on the English language.

41 In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture (Alister McGrath, 2001)
McGrath examines the controversy over translating the Bible into the vernacular, the efforts leading up to the translation and printing of the King James Bible, and its ongoing influence.

42 The Institutes of the Christian Religion (John Calvin, 1536)
A comprehensive statement of the theology of the Reformed branch of the Reformation. Other editions appeared in 1541, 1559 and 1560.

43 The Spiritual Exercises (Ignatius of Loyola, 1522-1524)
A series of meditations and prayers written by the Spanish priest who founded the Jesuits. Intended to help Christians discern the will of God in their lives, it is still widely used in retreat settings and for personal devotions by Catholics and other Christians.

44 Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution (Steven Ozment, 1993)
Ozment explores the ways in which the Reformation shaped—and was shaped by—everyday men and women.

45 The Imaginative World of the Reformation (Peter Matheson, 2001)
Instead of focusing on doctrines and structures, Matheson explores spiritual and creative aspects of the Reformation by focusing on images, both positive and troubling. Illustrated with woodcuts.

A history of the Reformation movement that rejected infant baptism in favor of believer’s baptism. Anabaptists were widely persecuted by other Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, in the 16th century.

47 Trent: What Happened at the Council (John O’Malley, 2013)
O’Malley explores the history, theology and politics of the Catholic Church’s formal response to the challenges of the Reformation.

48 Atlas of the European Reformations (Tim Dowley, 2015)
This Reformation atlas includes maps, timelines and brief explanations of key themes from 1300 to 1700.

49 Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions (Timothy Wengert, general editor, August 2017)
This dictionary includes nearly 600 articles addressing Luther, the Reformation begun in Wittenberg, and later developments.

50 Encyclopedia of Martin Luther and the Reformation (Mark Lamport, editor, August 2017)
A comprehensive study of Luther’s life and the Reformation movements. Ask your local library to invest in this 1,000-page reference work.

Compiled by Kathryn A. Kleinhans, an ELCA pastor and the McCoy Family Distinguished Chair in Lutheran Heritage and Mission, Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa.
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By Timothy J. Wengert

1 Martin Luther didn’t think of himself as a reformer of the church. He felt that job belonged only to Jesus Christ—Luther was merely a John the Baptist, pointing to the Lamb of God.

2 Luther wasn’t exactly from peasant stock. His father, Hans—whose father was a farmer—ended up a well-to-do mine owner. His mother’s family, the Lindemanns, included a mayor of Eisenach, Thuringia, in Germany.

3 The 95 Theses may or may not have been posted on the University of Wittenberg’s “bulletin board” (the Castle Church door) on Oct. 31, 1517—but they were posted in the mail to the archbishop of Mainz, Albrecht von Brandenburg.

4 Luther’s chief complaint in the 95 Theses was bad preaching and how it undermined the listeners’ faith in God.

5 In the 16th century, Luther would have posted a university notice like the 95 Theses with wax or paste, not hammer and nails. The depiction of Luther hammering the theses first appeared in 1717.

6 During Luther’s lifetime, the 95 Theses were only available in three Latin printings. Only with the publication of the German Sermon on Indulgences and Grace did he become the world’s first living best-selling author.

Wittenberg printing of the German Sermon on Indulgences and Grace.
In his defense of the 95 Theses, called the Explanations, Luther first insisted that God’s word, not our decisions or works, creates faith in us and makes us Christians.

When Luther insisted that Christians are righteous and sinner at the same time ("simul iustus et peccator"), he wasn’t giving believers an excuse to sin but was providing a way to be honest about themselves (as sinners) and about God’s mercy (as righteous).

Luther rarely used the phrase sola scriptura ("Scripture alone") because he also recognized other, lesser authorities in the church and because he preferred to use phrases like “God’s word alone,” which implied proclamation of Scripture’s commands and promises.

With the phrase “faith alone,” Luther excluded all human preconditions for receiving God’s mercy, so that faith itself can never be a “work” we do for God but a relationship God establishes with us through word and sacrament. That is why his explanation of the third article of the Apostles’ Creed in the Small Catechism begins: “I believe that … I cannot believe.”

In 1520, Luther became convinced that the word in the Greek New Testament translated as “grace” (charis) did not designate a power dwelling in us but God’s undeserved mercy.

Despite some movie depictions to the contrary, Luther never met privately with his prince and protector, Elector Frederick the Wise.

Luther wasn’t a monk but a friar. Friars (Dominicans, Franciscans and Augustinians) lived in community in cities and often had responsibilities as university professors of theology or preachers. Monks often lived in isolated areas and focused their lives on work and prayer.

Luther’s “theology of the cross” was not a theory about only the cross but the belief that God always reveals himself in the last place human beings would reasonably look: with the Israelites, not the Egyptians; in a manger; on the cross; among mortal sinners in the church.

When Luther and other reformers distinguished between “law” and “gospel,” they weren’t differentiating between the Old and New Testaments but between two ways that God’s word works: to reveal sin and mortify the “old creature” (law), and to reveal God’s mercy and make the new creature of faith alive.

Although Johann Eck numbered among his most formidable opponents, prior to the Reformation, Luther had hoped to become friends with him.

Philipp Melanchthon, Luther’s associate at the University of Wittenberg and one of Europe’s foremost Greek scholars, was less than 5 feet tall, prompting Luther to nickname him “our little Greek.”

Although he began preaching at Wittenberg’s city church in 1514, Luther was never its head pastor, but always an assistant. From the early 1520s, Wittenberg’s chief pastor and preacher was Johannes Bugenhagen.
Luther understood the common priesthood that believers share with Christ through baptism not as a way to divide the clergy and laity but as a way to unite them in the single body of Christ. He felt that within that body, or common priesthood, different members have different “offices,” but all are spiritually equal in God’s grace.

Luther probably never said “Here I stand” when appearing at his trial before Emperor Charles V in the city of Worms. Instead he or a compatriot wrote it (in German) in a Latin description of the events of 1521 to emphasize Luther’s refusal to recant what he had written.

Luther did say this at the Diet (parliament) held in the imperial city of Worms: “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason … I am bound by the Scriptures that I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.”

Luther’s translation of the New Testament (which he completed in just a few weeks while in hiding at Wartburg Castle) was not the first printed German translation. All previous translations were based upon the Latin “Vulgate”; Luther was the first to use the original Greek text.

Although his superior had released him from his vows as an Augustinian friar, Luther maintained a monastic lifestyle until shortly before his marriage in 1525, thinking of himself as a “Daniel in the lion’s den” of monastic practices.

Even though Luther did not always mind that people called his followers “Lutherans,” he preferred to think of all believers as “Christians.” In German-speaking areas, the usual designation is “evangelisch”—that is, people oriented toward the gospel.
26 Luther’s chief concern for the church was how bad the preaching was. Not only did he publish “sermon helps” (postil in German) for the epistle and gospel readings appointed for the church year, but his 1520 tract, Freedom of a Christian, outlined the content of true evangelical preaching.

27 By defining “church” as the assembly of believers where the gospel is proclaimed and the sacraments rightly administered, Luther (sometimes) included Anabaptist preachers among those sharing the gospel, and Roman Catholics as also having the markings of the true church.

28 The Peasants’ War (1524-1525) ravaged central Europe. Luther and several other important leaders of the Reformation wrote against the uprising—not only as a breach of fealty by those in revolt but also as a misuse of God’s word for selfish ends. Luther was one of the few who, at least initially, also blamed the rulers for exploiting their subjects.

29 Katharina von Bora, Luther’s wife, was 16 years younger than Luther. She bore six children (and suffered at least one miscarriage), ran the household—which included not only immediate family members and servants but also students, refugees and other relatives—purchased land for growing crops to provide for them and brewed her own beer.

30 Luther often showed his emotions. He wept when his infant daughter, Elizabeth, died in 1528 and when his 13-year-old daughter, Magdalena, died in his arms.

31 Medieval tradition believed that the parents of the Antichrist would be a monk and a nun, but Luther’s adult children disproved that myth. Only one of Luther’s sons, Martin (1531-1565), studied theology; none became a professor. His son Hans (1526-1575) became a lawyer; his son Paul (1533-1593) was a physician; and his daughter, Margarete (1534-1570) married a nobleman, Georg von Kunheim, and died in East Prussia.

32 Luther and his colleagues, especially Philipp Melanchthon, often collaborated on projects. In the preface to the 1529 German translation of Melanchthon’s commentary on Colossians, Luther described himself as the rough woodsman, clearing the forest so that Melanchthon could follow as the happy farmer, planting crops.

33 In 1529, when asked in a debate over the Lord’s Supper to explain how Christ could be truly present at God’s right hand in heaven and in the bread and wine, Luther responded that people should not argue about mathematical concepts concerning “place” but simply believe Christ’s promise to be truly present in his Supper.

34 According to an eyewitness, when Luther received news of his father’s death in 1530, while at the Castle Coburg awaiting news regarding the Diet of Augsburg, he locked himself in his room with his Psalter and was heard praying and crying.

35 The chief Lutheran confession of faith, the Augsburg Confession, was presented on June 25, 1530, to Emperor Charles V. Luther compliments its main drafter, Melanchthon, by insisting that Luther could not have treaded so lightly. He also saw it as a fulfillment of Psalm 119:46: “I will also speak of your decrees before kings, and shall not be put to shame.”

36 The Luther Bible, completed in 1534, always included the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha (books written after books of the Hebrew Scriptures but before the New Testament).

37 That Luther’s translation of the Bible was the product of a team of scholars from Wittenberg made it unique—in addition to the fact that it included marginal notes and extensive introductions to many books and to each Testament, as well as illustrations of many of the stories in the Old Testament and of the visions in Revelation but virtually none of the Gospels or Acts.

38 Luther lectured at the University of Wittenberg on one book of the Bible (Genesis) for 10 years (1535-1545). The resulting commentary takes up the first eight volumes in the “American Edition” of Luther’s Works.

39 In the 16th century, Lutherans accorded special authority to three of Luther’s writings (Small and Large Catechisms and the Smalcald Articles) and placed them in their collection of confessions of faith, The Book of Concord, because these writings especially witnessed to the Christian faith.

40 One of Luther’s chief contributions to German society in the 16th century was his consistent concern for the poor. He refused to glorify self-chosen poverty and thought it was a citizen’s duty to help those who were living in poverty, especially through the establishment of the “Community Chest.”
In Wittenberg, the local “Community Chest,” which received money from individual contributions and other sources, provided welfare for the poor, zero-interest loans to get impoverished artisans back on their feet, and funds for teachers, church workers and even a physician to care for those unable to afford medical care.

In Luther’s last great tract, *On the Councils and the Churches* (1539), he listed seven visible markings of the true church: preaching and professing the gospel; baptism; the Lord’s Supper; public absolution; the call and consecration of public ministers; public prayer, praise and the catechism; and the cross (misfortune and persecution).

In 1540, when Melanchthon got sick in Weimar on his way to meetings in Alsace, Luther traveled to be at his bedside. When prayers for his stricken colleague were answered, he reported to his wife that he was “eating like a Bohemian and swilling like a German (yet not too much)” in part to celebrate Melanchthon’s recovery. (*Luther’s Works*, vol. 50:218f.)

None of Luther’s hymns were based upon barroom songs (but rather upon the “bar form” of A-B, A-B, C-B [“A Mighty Fortress”]) but came instead from a variety of sources, including medieval chants and hymns (“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast”); ballad forms and other folk tunes (“Dear Christians” and “From Heaven Above”); ancient Latin poetry and the Psalms (“Savior of the Nations” and “Out of the Depths”).

In 1543 Luther wrote a series of hateful tracts against the Jews. Although not all of his colleagues approved of them even at that time and sometimes preferred his more balanced comments about the Jewish people from 1523, Luther’s comments were for the most part ignored by later Lutherans until the Nazis reprinted them in the 1930s (accusing the Lutheran churches of suppressing them). Only after the Holocaust have many Lutheran churches around the world (including the ELCA) explicitly condemned Luther’s statements.

Luther died in his 63rd year in Eisleben, his birthplace, where he had been invited to resolve a territorial dispute between brothers, the princes of Mansfeld.

Before his death, Luther’s wife Katharina sent a letter to him, worrying about his health. Luther responded by counseling her to read the Gospel of John and the Small Catechism, “about which you once said, ‘everything in this book has been said about me.’ ”

The pulpit where Luther preached his last sermon (in Eisleben) is now in Wittenberg’s Luther House.

Luther’s last written words were a mixture of German and Latin: “Wir sind bettler; hoc est verum” (“We are beggars; this is true”). Among his last spoken words were Psalm 31:5: “Into your hand I commit my spirit.”

After his death, four different people gave funeral sermons or orations. In Eisleben, Justus Jonas (Luther’s former teaching colleague, then the pastor in Halle) and Michael Coelius (the princes’ court preacher) did so; in Wittenberg, where he was buried, Johannes Bugenhagen (Wittenberg’s pastor) preached and Philipp Melanchthon delivered a Latin oration.

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As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, *Living Lutheran* is exploring 500 of its unique aspects, continuing the series this month with 50 things you may not know about the Reformation. The first 25 are included here, and the remaining 25 can be found at [livinglutheran.org](http://livinglutheran.org).

This list is not meant as an all-encompassing compendium of everything essential to the Reformation and its theology, but rather as a glimpse of the variety of ways the movement that Martin Luther sparked in 1517 would influence the history of the world.

1. The word “Protestant” was first used formally around 1529. “Protestant” originates from the Latin word *protestari*, meaning “declare publicly, testify, protest.”

2. The name “Lutheran” originated as a derogatory term used against Martin Luther by German scholastic theologian Johann Maier von Eck during the Leipzig Debate in 1519.

3. While reformers rejected marriage as a sacrament of the church, they expanded the role of the church in marriage. Couples took an oath before God and the ceremony was moved from outside the church on the doorstep—a medieval practice—to inside the sanctuary in front of the altar.

4. The Reformation created a demand for all kinds of religious writings. Readership was so great that the number of books printed in Germany increased from about 150 in 1518 to nearly 1,000 six years later.

5. By the time Luther died, 30 editions of the Small Catechism had been published. By the end of the 16th century, there were an additional 125 editions in circulation and approximately 100,000 copies in print.

The Leipzig Disputation 1519. Lithograph by Max Seiliger.
An estimated 6,001,500,000 Bibles have been printed since the first one came off the press in the Middle Ages. The first Bible published in North America was printed in 1663.

The Luther rose (or Luther seal) was created at the request of printers to have a personal symbol representing the reformer’s faith that could serve as a mark indicating something was an authorized publication of Luther’s. It became widely recognized as the symbol for Lutheranism, and still is today.

With the invention of the printing press and the introduction of pamphlets and booklets to the public, women in the 16th century found increasing access to information they had been previously restricted from reading, studying, discussing or even listening to in public settings.

The Reformation paved the way for what we still refer to as a “Protestant work ethic.” Luther’s teachings about the “priesthood of all believers” helped dissolve the wall between “temporal” and “spiritual” realms. In doing so, everyday work and labor was affirmed and seen as pleasing to God; it was no longer considered an inferior life to that of a monastic life or the priesthood.

Education was set on a far-reaching course of reforming thanks in part to Luther’s advocacy and ideas that a proper, well-organized and broad education for all children—not just those of the wealthy elite—would benefit the state as well as the church.

The legacy of Luther’s ideas about education can be seen today in the Lutheran church’s concern for Christian education, early childhood education and schools, colleges and universities, lay schools for ministry and seminaries.

An emphasis on the involvement of laypeople during worship revolutionized the way space inside the parish church was used during the Reformation. Many of the physical barriers between priest and congregation were removed. Consequently, the interiors of local churches took on the appearance that many still have today.

Whether or not to use pipe organs and other musical instruments during worship became a hotly debated issue for many churches involved in the Reformation movement. Some went as far as banning the use of organs and instruments.

Prior to the Reformation, congregational singing—and even talking—during church services wasn’t standard practice in Germany.

Luther composed more than 40 hymns in his lifetime, and in 1529 wrote and composed the tune for what became known as “The Battle Hymn of the Reformation”—today called “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

Luther desired hymns to be modest and text-driven—derived from Scripture, expressing Christian values, illuminating faith and the gospel message and lending themselves to congregational singing.

The area of Germany where Luther’s story unfolded is now referred to as “LutherCountry.” This region of Reformation sites and history was part of East Germany for 40 years until the Berlin Wall fell in 1989.
Today the United States has more Protestants than any other country, about 160 million. Nigeria is second, with nearly 60 million Protestants. China has the third-largest Protestant population, approximately 58 million.

About half of all Christians worldwide today are Catholic (50 percent), while more than one-third are Protestant (37 percent).

Recent research and surveys reveal that about one-third of mainstream Protestants believe eternal life depends on our actions and living a good life, despite the biblical understanding and teachings of the reformers that salvation is a gift from God received through faith in Christ, through no effort of our own.

Reformation Day is a national holiday in Chile, and is officially called Día Nacional de las Iglesias Evangélicas y Protestantes—National Day of the Evangelical and Protestant Churches.

The Peace of Augsburg was signed in 1555, despite its dissenters and many loopholes. This settlement represented a victory for state princes and granted recognition to both Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism in Germany, allowing each ruler to decide the religion to be practiced within his state, and permitting residents to migrate to a territory where their denomination was recognized.

The first European colonists who came to North America were attempting to escape post-Reformation conflicts and persecution. They were 98 percent Protestant and a diverse mix of denominations, but their newfound freedom wasn’t without intense conflict and intolerance between denominations and religions.

In the late 1800s, some North American religious leaders voiced concern over what they feared was hero-worship of Reformation leaders. They encouraged refocusing on theological issues and teachings, the accomplishments and failings of reformers like Luther and Huldrych Zwingli, and contributions of reformers prior to the 16th century.

While the Reformation gave birth to Protestantism, today only two of the 10 countries with the largest Protestant populations are European.
26 If Luther could have had his way, he would have probably deleted the books of Esther, Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation from the Bible. They were among his least favorite books of the Bible.

27 There were reformers well before Luther and what became known as the Reformation, but Luther and other reformers of his time became the first to skillfully use the power of the printing press to give their ideas a wide audience.

28 During the religious wars that followed the Reformation, even family members were often pitted against one another. Both Catholics and Protestants were often convinced that the other was doing “the devil’s work.”

29 The Counter-Reformation—or Catholic Reformation—initiated vigorous efforts to condemn the teachings and influence of Protestant reformers, restore obedience and loyalty, reconvert the converted, and establish new missions and influence globally in regions including Africa, Asia and South America.

30 The Catholic Society of Jesus, whose members are called Jesuits, was founded in 1534 and participated in the Counter-Reformation to stop Protestantism from spreading. Today they represent the largest single religious order of priests and brothers in the Catholic Church.

31 The Council of Trent (1562) decreed that all bishops must “banish from churches all those kinds of music in which, whether by organ or in the singing, there is mixed up anything lascivious or impure, as also all secular actions; vain and therefore profane conversations, all walking about, noise, and clamor, that so the House of God may be seen to be, and may be called, truly, a house of prayer.”

32 On April 18, 1994, the Church Council of the ELCA officially repudiated and apologized for Luther’s words and teachings that have been appropriated by anti-Semites for the teaching of hatred and violence toward Judaism or toward the Jewish people. The ELCA also pledged to oppose such bigotry within the church and in society and to pray for the increasing cooperation and understanding between Lutheran Christians and the Jewish community.

33 The idea put forth during the Reformation that God sees all believers as spiritually equal had profound repercussions in the church—especially when the idea was applied to women.

34 Luther’s exhortation to read and interpret the Bible on one’s own and the impact of the printing press opened new doors for laypeople that changed the church’s approach to faith formation and Christian education forever.

35 One of the far-reaching impacts of the Reformation was the promotion of applying the word of God to every area and endeavor of life, in the church and in society.

36 The early movement of Lutheranism quickly gained followers in the German states, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Scotland and portions of France.

37 While we associate the Reformation with Germany, broader reformation movements spread across Northern and Western Europe, including England and Switzerland.

38 England went through its own religious and political reformation in the late 1500s through early 1600s. It was influenced by Luther and other reformers, but it was more deeply intertwined with the power, personal beliefs and political motives of England’s kings, queens and political leaders of the time.

39 In the 17th century, Lutherans from Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Denmark began to migrate to the United States, bringing their language, culture and Lutheran faith with them.

40 The first Lutheran worship service in North America is believed to have taken place in what is now Manitoba, Canada, on Jan. 23, 1620.

41 Today, more than 200 denominations and churches in North America have histories connected to the Reformation.

42 Worldwide, the number of Christians has more than tripled in the last 100 years. But the world’s overall population also has risen rapidly, so Christians make up about the same portion of the world’s population today (32 percent) as they did a century ago (35 percent).
An abundance of festivals, exhibits, concerts and tours are taking place across Germany throughout 2017 in recognition of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Christian education was a passion of Luther’s. He encouraged a partnership between the home and the church in which parents would take the lead and the church would assist.

The reformers taught God’s dominion over the world, creation and all things and helped revive an interest in the world that was increasingly receptive to an encouraging of exploration, study and rediscovery of nature and the universe—without losing sight of faith and spirituality.

Stirring changes and new thinking about the church, religion, politics, law, economics, education and society, the Reformation influenced the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern period and Age of Discovery.

Luther didn’t lay a personal, unique claim to his beliefs and teachings. He declared in a sermon, “It is not my doctrine, not my creation, but God’s gift. … Dear Lord God, it was not spun out of my head, nor grown in my garden. Nor did it flow out of my spring, nor was it born of me. It is God’s gift, not a human discovery.”

Researchers and archaeologists have recently corroborated the assertion that Luther was a well-educated thinker and prolific writer, producing an average of 1,800 pages a year.

Recently discovered archive documents have revealed that an arranged marriage of Luther by his father may have been imminent for the young man and most likely played a major role in his leaving his study of law and joining the order of the Augustinian Hermits at the monastery in Erfurt.

During and after the Reformation, there was a sharp decline in the commissioning of large-scale works of biblical art by Protestant churches.

This list was compiled by Rod Boriack, a writer and editor living in Des Plaines, Ill.
50 things Luther taught that you may not know

As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Living Lutheran is exploring 500 of its unique aspects, continuing the series this month with 50 things Martin Luther taught that you may not know. The first 25 are included here, and the remaining 25 can be found at livinglutheran.org.

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By Mark Ellingsen

1 We know that Martin Luther considered justification by grace through faith the most important teaching of Christian faith—the one by which everything else we say and believe is judged (Luther’s Works, Vol. 21). But what we need to remember is that salvation is not something yet to come; justification is already complete (LW, Vol. 34).

2 Every baptized Lutheran is a “born-again Christian.” And since that’s who we are, Luther said we are to start living that way—living our baptisms (Book of Concord).

3 The righteousness of God is not something God is, but what he does to us—he makes us righteous (LW, Vol. 34). Luther tells us that this insight is the essence of the spiritual experience that changed his life, the famed “Tower Experience.”

4 Luther often said justification involves a pronouncement by God, declaring us sinners righteous (LW, Vol. 25). But more frequently he compares justification to a marriage. We receive all that Christ has in the marriage, and having his love and righteousness qualifies us for salvation and makes us more loving in faith (LW, Vol. 44).

5 Luther wanted us to be sure that Christ’s work is “for us” (LW, Vol. 34). But the strength of one’s faith is not his hang-up. Even a weak faith saves, Luther said (LW, 12:262). In fact, when it comes to salvation, we’re passive—getters, not givers (LW, Vol. 52).

6 The reformer also taught that we can’t even believe on our own—it takes the Spirit, who gives us faith (The Small Catechism, II.III.6). Lutherans are, in fact, big on the Spirit, believing that the Spirit is active in every aspect of our lives. Every good idea we have is a work of the Spirit, who sets us on fire, Luther said (LW, Vol. 24; Complete Sermons, Vol. 3/1).

7 But grace isn’t cheap for Luther! Christ’s love starts moving us to do good like a spouse’s love moves us to faithfulness to our marriage vows (LW, Vol. 44). We’re so filled up with the goodness God pours into us that we can’t help but spill out to others (LW, Vol. 31).

8 Indeed, Luther said we’re so filled up with God’s goodness that it’s as if we were intoxicated with him, doing the bidding of God and the Spirit without being in control of ourselves (LW, Vol. 31).

9 Good works transpire without our willing them, like a good tree can’t help but produce good fruit (LW, Vol. 34). Faith is such a busy thing, Luther added, that it’s impossible for the faithful not to be doing good works (LW, Vol. 35).
Philipp Melanchthon performs a baptism assisted by Martin Luther. This is a Reformation altarpiece, triptych left panel from the Church of St. Marien, Wittenberg, Germany. 

Attributed to Lucas Cranach the Younger.
Luther taught that the Christian life is “hidden,” that one can’t judge Christians by their lifestyles, and that sometimes non-Christians will do more external good deeds than the faithful (LW, Vol. 26). God himself acts in hidden and surprising ways, as he did with Jesus on the cross (LW, Vol. 31).

God is so in control that the good we do is really God’s work (LW, Vol. 34). We’re nothing but the hands of Christ, Luther asserted (LW, Vol. 24). In the good we do, we are just “little Christs” to each other (LW, Vol. 31).

Living as “little Christs” entails life having a free, easy quality, filled with happiness (even when plagued with the suffering that comes from being Christian) (LW, Vol. 24; Complete Sermons, Vol. 3/2). That’s why Luther wants us to look at our jobs as good things—a chance (or “mask”) to serve God and other people (LW, Vol. 35).

Luther knows that sometimes we can be our own worst enemy. That’s why he said Christ takes us away from ourselves, making us dependent on what is outside ourselves (LW, Vol. 26). The righteousness of God given to us is external or alien, not something that is in us or belongs to us (LW, Vol. 31).

The reformer didn’t teach universal salvation, insisting that we must have faith. But he expressed an openness to hoping for the salvation of all, that God might give the gift of salvation to all, even in death (LW, Vol. 43).

We sin in everything we do because everything we do is inspired by selfishness (Luther calls this “concupiscence”). The best we can do is sin bravely—confess we are sinning in all we do and yet seek to do God’s will anyway (LW, Vol. 48).

Even when we do good, we act in selfish ways (LW, Vol. 33). We are free: The law and failure to do works can’t condemn us (LW, Vol. 31). But we are also free from the law in the sense that we may break the law to do good (Complete Sermons, Vol. 3/1).

While the reformer read the Bible critically (LW, Vol. 34), at times he referred to Scripture as “inerrant” (Weimar Ausgabe, Vol. 40 III). He suggested there are two kinds of word of God in Scripture—the word that has to do with us and our context and the word that does not (LW, Vol. 35).

The reformer spoke of the three persons of the Trinity as speaker, sermon and hearer (LW, Vol. 24), or as the mind, intellect and will of God (LW, Vol. 1).

Church and state weren’t separate for Luther in the sense that he didn’t see the state as secular, for it is still ruled by God. However, Christian values on Luther’s grounds aren’t imposed on the state. Political judgments are to be made on the basis of reason (LW, Vol. 45).

Although the majority of the time Luther spoke of God as male, he did refer at times to God as “mother” (LW, Vol. 17).

He called the church “a hospital for sinners” (LW, Vol. 25)—the church is only for sick people like us.

The reformer focused on the authority of Scripture, but not without tradition. Tradition mandated for him the desirability of maintaining liturgical worship, and was the basis for the validity of infant baptism—do it because God has always had the church do it (LW, Vol. 40).

The reformer preferred immersion in baptism (LW, Vol. 35). He also embraced the ancient African Christian practice of kissing infants before they are to be baptized to honor the hands of God that the baptized child will become (LW, Vol. 45).

Luther was open to maintaining a papacy if the pope would acknowledge that sinners have free forgiveness and submit to Scripture (LW, Vol. 26 and 39).

Contrary to any notion that he may not have been strong on evangelism, Luther taught that the only reason God lets us live is so we can bring others to him (LW, Vol. 30).
Although different from Calvinist doctrine, Luther gave God so much credit for all that we have that he even sometimes arguably supported predestination (**LW**, Vol. 33, page 190).

Sometimes Luther taught that works did not cause salvation, but that they were necessary for salvation and outward righteousness (**LW**, Vol. 25, page 186).

Other times, he even said we become divine in faith (**Complete Sermons**, Vol. 2/1, page 216).

Luther believed that we are all religious to some extent. He taught that what you trust and believe with your whole heart is your god (**Book of Concord**, page 386). He urged us to be sure that we have the true God, not an idol.

Although he was referring to Europeans enslaved by feudalism, not the enslavement of Africans, Luther seemingly opposed slavery. He advocated that slaves run away and that a just government would guarantee the life and livelihood of the freedmen (**LW**, Vol. 9, page 232).


The reformer praised the ancient African churches—especially the Coptic church in Egypt. He said they were valid churches without acknowledging the pope’s authority, so the Reformation movement had much in common with them (**LW**, Vol. 31, page 281).

While Luther said some notoriously vicious things in anger against the Jewish community, earlier in his life he demanded equal rights for Jewish citizens (**LW**, Vol. 45, pages 199-229).

The first reformer admired Islamic society. He may have criticized the Quran and feared Islamic invasions in Europe (**LW**, Vol. 46, page 177, 183), but he praised Islamic morality and Muslim culture (**Weimar Ausgaben**, Vol. 30II, pages 189, 206).

The reformer advocated generous safety nets for the poor (**LW**, Vol. 45, pages 169-194). Luther believed that God has a bias toward the poor and weak, as he claimed that it is God’s nature to feed the hungry and comfort the miserable (**LW**, Vol. 26, page 314).

Critical as he was of the free market (**Book of Concord**, pages 416, 419), the reformer opted for government to set interest rates and manage the economy (**LW**, Vol. 45, page 249).

The reformer also said that God doesn’t tell time like we do—that from his perspective, all time is one (**LW**, Vol. 30, page 196). This affirmation, suggestive of Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, entails that, in God’s sight, your mother is caring for you in your infancy at the same time that your great-grandchildren are being born. In God’s time you are never alone, bereft of your loved ones.

Although Luther predates the development of the theory of evolution, his view of God’s way of telling time entails that God’s six days of creation are not completed, for God is still creating (**LW**, Vol. 4, page 136).

Luther envisioned God in a way compatible with the Higgs boson particle (the idea that there is a field that holds all the subatomic particles together and makes matter possible)—as being in every single thing individually, present at the same time in many ways (**LW**, Vol. 37, page 60).

As a result, the reformer recognized that God is always “meddling” in our affairs—that everything that we have, even our homes, families and the food on our tables, is God’s work (**Book of Concord**, page 354).

Luther believed that the universe is a body never in one place, a bit like how the Big Bang theory posits that the universe is ever expanding (**LW**, Vol. 38, page 60).

Luther also said the church was our mother—“the mother of all Christians” (**LW**, Vol. 51, page 166). In fact, he said the church can get along fine without us (**LW**, Vol. 47, page 118)—but we need our mom.
Luther didn’t always teach only two sacraments. Sometimes he claimed that there were three—and once even said there are seven (LW, Vol. 41, page 166).

In communion, at least at one point, Luther believed we actually swallow Jesus—that he enters our bodies (LW, Vol. 37, page 100).

Since we all receive Christ’s body in the Lord’s Supper, Luther said we receive all the members of his body. You can lean on them and support all others who receive the sacrament, so their problems and joys are now yours too (LW, Vol. 35, pages 50ff). Luther seems to have been open to the communion of infants as well (LW, Vol. 35, page 110).

Luther taught that we should regard the possessions we have as a traveler does the items in a hotel room: they are yours for a while, but they are the owner’s. This makes it easy to leave behind to others what we think of as ours—they’re just on loan (LW, Vol. 21, page 13).

Luther called Mary “the Mother of God” (LW, Vol. 21, page 308) because he believed everything said of Christ’s divinity must be said of his humanity (LW, Vol. 22, page 346). The reformer even remained open to believing the perpetual virginity of Mary and her immaculate conception (LW, Vol. 45, page 205; LW, Vol. 21, 327.)

Inasmuch as all that happens to Christ’s humanity happens to his divinity, Luther said it follows that God himself suffered on the cross and still suffers with us (LW, Vol. 30, page 223).

The reformer believed that we are already in the “end-times”: the kingdom is already present when the Spirit works faith in us or compels us to do good (Book of Concord, page 356).

Luther believed that the dead “sleep in God’s bosom,” not that their souls go directly to heaven (LW, Vol. 4, page 313).

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As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Living Lutheran is exploring 500 of its unique aspects, continuing the series this month with 50 Reformation hymns. The first 25 are included here, and the remaining 25 can be found at livinglutheran.org.

Martin Luther instinctively understood the power of music to nurture and teach. This list is not meant to be a compilation of “Lutheran favorites”; rather, they sing of central aspects of the Reformation—the cross, baptism, eucharist and Christian vocation—and its impact over the last 500 years.

1 “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship [ELW], 503–505; Lutheran Book of Worship [LBW], 228–229; This Far by Faith [TFF] 133). Written in the late 1520s and first circulated as an inexpensive single-sheet broadside, Martin Luther’s metrical commentary on Psalm 46 has probably been translated more frequently than any other hymn in church history. Luther and his contemporaries viewed this text as one of “comfort” in the face of adversity, confessing Christ as “the Lord of hosts by name” and reminding us that “no other God we claim.”

2 “The Church of Christ, in Every Age” (ELW, 729; LBW, 433). Fred Pratt Green’s text reminds us that the Reformation wasn’t just confined to 1517: “The church of Christ, in every age beset by change, but Spirit-led, must claim and test its heritage and keep on rising from the dead.”

3 “Hope of the World” (LBW, 493). Ongoing debates from the Reformation—creed, language and style, among others—continue to pit people of faith against one another. In this hymn, Georgia Harkness asks Christ to save us from our “own false hopes and aims” and reminds us that Christ alone is our Savior.

4 “I’m Going on a Journey” (ELW, 446; TFF, 115). In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther wrote that it is baptism “by which we are first received into the Christian community.” This hymn reminds us that whatever “roads [we] trod,” our heads are dripping wet with the mark of Christ and sign of God’s love.

5 “O Blessed Spring” (ELW, 447). Baptism grafts us to Christ, the “holy Vine” and “living Tree.” Susan Palo Cherwien’s text also calls to mind the original meaning of the Lenten season, a time of preparation for those being baptized at the Easter Vigil.
“God Alone Be Praised.” This collaboration between Susan Briehl and Zebulon Highben was commissioned to mark both the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the 30th anniversary of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians. Like “A Mighty Fortress,” Briehl’s stanzas use Psalm 46 as a point of departure.

“Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice” (ELW, 594; LBW, 299). Although “A Mighty Fortress” is sometimes called the “battle hymn” of the Reformation, a better summary of Luther’s reforms could arguably be found in this text. Originally 10 stanzas, it describes his realization of being “bound in Satan’s chains,” where his works couldn’t save him; only God’s unconditional love in sending Jesus can free us.

“Holy God, Holy and Glorious” (ELW, 637). For hymn writer Briehl, these stanzas sing Luther’s theology of the cross. “God’s glory and majesty are hidden under their opposites,” she wrote: power is emptied, beauty is despised and rejected, living is shown in dying.

“Come to Us, Creative Spirit” (ELW, 687). David Mowbray’s stanzas speak directly to our use of God’s gifts—“every human talent hallow”—and that the use of these gifts is rooted in the “Word from God eternal springing.”

“Day of Arising” (ELW, 374). Ecumenical relationships have enriched many of the texts we speak and sing in worship. Based on the appearance of the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), this hymn reminds us that Christ is our companion and “hope for the journey.”

“The Magnificat” (ELW, 234, 251, 573, 723, 882; LBW, 180; TFF, 168). Luther saw Mary as a teacher, extolling her faith and trust in God’s promises as well as her love and service to others. The Magnificat was an important text for Lutheran composers in the following centuries, especially as the gospel canticle for evening prayer.

“All Earth Is Hopeful (Toda la tierra)” (ELW, 266). This text and tune were both penned by the Catalan-born priest Alberto Taulé. In these stanzas, we can glimpse Luther’s understanding of vocation—a “horizontal” orientation that calls us to care for neighbors near and far: “in neighbors we see our Jesus is with us, and ever sets us free.”

“O God of Light” (ELW, 507; LBW, 237). This hymn was written to mark the publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible in 1952. In it, God speaks “through saints, apostles, prophets, sages, who wrote with eager or reluctant pen.” Our song today joins “myriad tongues, in one great anthem blending” that “praise and celebrate” God’s “gift of grace.”

“Unexpected and Mysterious” (ELW, 258). Author Jeannette Lindholm wrote this text in 1996 for Advent at St. Mary’s Episcopal in Rockport, Mass. For Lindholm, these words emphasize “God’s love, compassion, and grace made known in incarnation” as well as “our own call to embody God’s compassion and healing.”

“We Are All One in Christ (Somos uno en Cristo)” (ELW, 643). Both the text and tune of this Latin American hymn are anonymous; Gerhard Cartford first provided this translation for Libro de Liturgia y Cántico (Augsburg Fortress, 1998). The hymn reminds us of our oneness in Christ: one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one faith, one love, one baptism.

“Now the Silence” (ELW, 460; LBW, 205). Author Jaroslav Vajda envisioned this text as an entrance hymn, “a list of the awesome and exciting things that one should expect in worship, culminating in the eucharist and benediction.” The tune by Carl Schalk inaugurated a long collaboration between the two.
“The Word of God Is Source and Seed” *(ELW, 506).* Sister Delores Dufner, Order of St. Benedict, used images from Ezekiel 37, Mark 4 and John 1 to craft these stanzas that teach about God’s word.

“Rise, O Church, Like Christ Arisen” *(ELW, 548).* Cherwien’s stirring imperative—“Rise, O Church”—compels us toward service in Christ’s name. The striding melody by Timothy Strand gradually builds toward its highest note, a Trinitarian apex: “God,” then “Christ,” then “Spirit.” The final stanza returns to the opening imperative: “Rise, O church, a living faith.”

“Rise, Shine, You People!” *(ELW, 665; LBW, 393).* “Christ the Lord has entered our human story; God in him is centered.” One might have to look at the hymnal credits to see that this is not by Luther, but a 20th-century writer. The hymn was inspired by the author’s experience at an Easter Vigil that, for him, recalled the story of Luther hurling an inkpot at the devil.

“Voices Raised to You” *(ELW, 845).* This Trinitarian text was commissioned for the 10th anniversary of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians and represents another close collaboration between author and composer, Herman Stuempfle Jr. and Carolyn Jennings. Our hymns, hymnals and musical settings are God’s gifts to be used in God’s service, not merely our own aesthetic edification: “Art and music, gifts you lend us, we return to you today.”

“Holy Woman, Graceful Giver.” Cherwien wrote this text for the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women in the ELCA. In her words, “it celebrates the hidden treasures in all God’s people—female and male, clergy and lay—with Christ at their center.”

“Signs and Wonders” *(ELW, 672).* Recalling Luther’s “sin boldly,” this text calls us to boldness in other ways too: “boldly may we heed Christ’s call” and “let us boldly serve and bless.” So sing boldly and dance boldly to this familiar tune, a treasure from Jean Calvin’s *Genevan Psalter.*

“Out of the Depths I Cry to You” *(ELW, 600; LBW, 295).* This was an early hymn of Luther’s, a psalm paraphrase of the type he encouraged others to write. In one letter he urged, “I intend to make vernacular psalms for the people, that is, spiritual songs so that the Word of God even by means of song may live among the people … since you are skillful and eloquent in German, I would ask you to work with us in this and turn a psalm into a hymn as in the enclosed sample of my work.” Here, Luther’s catechism chorale about confession is heard in a setting by 17th-century composer Arnold von Bruck.

“These are the Holy Ten Commandments.” In 1523 or 1524, Luther arranged verses from Exodus 20 in hymn form. Soon after, he wrote a slightly shorter version, yet both were sung during catechism services, especially during Lent. In this setting by Johann Hermann Schein, one can hear the influence of Italian vocal styles that became fashionable at the outset of the Baroque. Note especially the text painting at “hoch auf dem Berg,” the repeated, rising lines that suggest the height of Mount Sinai where Moses was given the Ten Commandments.

“Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior.” Luther’s hymn about the sacrament of communion is an expansion of an early 15th-century Latin hymn sung by the followers of Jan Hus. In his German Mass of 1526, Luther suggested that it be sung during the distribution of communion. This setting is by the 17th-century cantor Thomas Selle, who spent most of his career in Hamburg.

“Our Father, God in Heaven Above” *(ELW, 746 and 747).* Luther probably wrote this in 1538 or 1539, and it is one of few hymns for which his manuscript still exists. His nine stanzas directly correspond to the sections of his explanation in the Small Catechism *(ELW, pages 1163-1164).* The chorale is heard here in a setting by the late Renaissance composer Johannes Eccard.

“To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord” *(LBW, 79).* Completed in 1539, this was one of Luther’s last catechism hymns. The tune is by Johann Walther, though it was originally composed for a text Luther wrote in 1524. A famous organ setting of this chorale by J.S. Bach places the tune in the pedal, surrounded by the “flowing waters” of the left hand.
31 “Kyrie! God, Father” (ELW, 409; LBW, 168). Throughout the medieval period, it was common for liturgical chants to be “troped,” or adjusted to fit a particular occasion. Somewhere between the 10th and 12th centuries, a trope of the Kyrie known as Kyrie fons bonitatis emerged, later translated in the 16th century as Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit. This four-voice setting by Heinrich Schütz uses the melody as a point of imitation, each line blossoming across all four voices until a new phrase begins.

32 “All Glory Be to God on High” (ELW, 410; LBW, 166). This versification of the “Gloria” was penned by Nikolaus Decius, who, like Luther, was a German monk who became a pastor. It was first sung on Easter Day, April 5, 1523, and was widely adopted during the Reformation. It was translated into Swedish as early as 1567 and was one of the most frequently sung hymns by Swedish Lutherans in the Delaware Valley around 1700. A vocal-instrumental arrangement by Michael Praetorius was rendered by the Early Music Consort of London.

33 “We All Believe in One True God” (ELW, 411; LBW, 374). Like some of his other hymns, Luther’s versification of the Nicene Creed was founded upon an earlier version that had been around for about a century. In his German Mass of 1526, Luther instructs that “after the Gospel the whole church sings the creed in German.” The hymn is sung here as it appears in ELW by the 2010 Lutheran Summer Music community gathered for worship in the Center for Faith and Life at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa.

34 “Isaiah in a Vision Did of Old” (ELW, 868; LBW, 528). Rather than fashion a direct translation of the Sanctus, Luther placed the cry of “Holy, holy, holy” in its biblical context, a metrical version of Isaiah 6:1-4. His melody is derived from an 11th-century Sanctus sung during Advent and Lent. The hymn is heard here, also as it appears in ELW, in the same service as Luther’s versification of the Nicene Creed (above).

35 “O Christ, Lamb of God” (ELW, 196; LBW, 103). The Agnus Dei was introduced to the liturgy sometime around the eighth century and is derived from John the Baptist’s cry, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). This hymn first appeared in one of Johannes Bugenhagen’s church orders of 1528, though it may have existed as early as 1524 or 1525. Bach uses this chorale in the final movement of Cantata 23 and surrounds it with instrumental interludes.

36 “Lamb of God, Pure and Sinless” (ELW, 357; LBW, 111). This versification of the Agnus Dei is also the work of Nikolaus Decius (see “All Glory Be to God on High” above). Perhaps the most famous use of this chorale is Bach’s opening of the St. Matthew Passion where it floats above the double choir.

37 “I Shall Not Die But Live” (Non moriar sed vivam). In addition to a few dozen hymn texts and melodies, Luther’s musical output also includes a short, four-voice motet that was first published in 1545. The text is Psalm 118:17, which Luther had once written on the wall of his study: “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

38 “Savior of the Nations, Come” (ELW, 263; LBW, 28). Throughout the 1520s, Luther adapted several Latin plainsong hymns for the mass and church year and recast them as German hymns—not all were direct translations, and others were subjected to some melodic “retrofitting” to match German syntax. Thus, a fourth-century hymn by Ambrose of Milan, Veni redemptor gentium, became Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland.

39 “From Heaven Above” (ELW, 268; LBW, 51). Luther originally wrote this hymn in 15 stanzas and called it a “Children’s Hymn for Christmas Eve.” Like many early Reformation melodies, it is a “contrafact,” meaning that original words—in this case, “Good news from far abroad I bring”—were replaced with new ones.

40 “O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright” (ELW, 308; LBW, 76). Philipp Nicolai wrote this, the “Queen of Chorales,” in either 1597 or 1599. His seven original stanzas bore the subtitle: “A spiritual bridal song of the believing soul concerning Jesus Christ, her heavenly bridegroom, founded on the 45th psalm of the prophet David.” Accordingly, it was used throughout Germany for weddings and other festivals outside the Epiphany season.

41 “The Only Son from Heaven” (ELW, 309; LBW, 86). Elisabeth Cruciger was one of the Reformation’s earliest hymn writers. She and her spouse, a pastor, were personal acquaintances of Luther and Katharina von Bora. Both Elizabeth and Katharina were former nuns, and it was Elizabeth’s desire that her text about Christ the Morning Star be paired with this German folk melody.
“Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands” (ELW, 370; LBW, 134). Founded upon an earlier plainsong sequence, Victimae paschali laudes (see ELW, 371), Luther’s sturdy Easter hymn first appeared in 1524 in seven-stanza form. For Bach, these stanzas were enough for his cantata Christ lag in Todesbanden—he did not surround the chorale with other poetry or dialogue as in many other cantatas.

“Now to the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray” (ELW, 743; LBW, 317). Before the Reformation, some German folk hymns ended with the text “Kyrie eleison,” sometimes elided and shortened to “Kyrieleis.” These were called Leisen. This hymn began as a single-stanza Leise to which Luther added three more stanzas in 1524. During the 16th century and after, it could be used variously as an entrance hymn during Advent or Pentecost, before or after the sermon, or at funerals.

“Built on a Rock” (ELW, 652; LBW, 365). The first stanza of the original Danish begins “Kirken den er et gammelt Hus”—literally “the church, it is an old house.” God is the foundation and Christ “builds a house of living stones.” The imagery of a sturdy frame is matched by an equally sturdy tune.

“Where True Charity and Love Abide” (ELW, 653; LBW, 126; TFF, 84). “Let us be watchful that no strife still divide us.” These are appropriate words for this Reformation anniversary year and continued ecumenical dialogue. Fitting, too, that this should be a ninth-century text sung by many assemblies in both plainsong and Taizé versions. Perhaps the most famous setting is the choral arrangement by French composer and teacher Maurice Duruflé.

“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word” (ELW, 517; LBW, 230). Luther’s three stanzas were likely written around 1541-1542, when the Turkish army was defeating European forces both on land and at sea. This Trinitarian text pleads for protection and for steadfastness in times of adversity. Many German congregations added a fourth stanza (see ELW, 784 and LBW, 471) to Luther’s words, and Johann Walter wrote another stanza in 1566 that prayed for “peace and good government.” An edition by Dieterich Buxtehude was used in his setting for voices and instruments.

“Lord God, We All Praise You.” In 1554, Paul Eber wrote German stanzas based upon a Latin text by Philipp Melanchthon. By the early 17th century, Eber’s stanzas were sung to a Genevan psalm tune known today as Old Hundredth, often song as the doxology, “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow” (ELW, 884, 885).

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References


This list was compiled by Chad Fothergill, a church musician and musicologist based in the Philadelphia area.
As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, *Living Lutheran* is exploring 500 of its unique aspects, continuing the series this month with 50 ways the Reformation still impacts pastors. The first 25 are included here, and the remaining 25 can be found at livinglutheran.org.

This list is not meant as an all-encompassing compendium of everything essential to the Reformation and its theology, but rather as a glimpse of the variety of ways the movement that Martin Luther sparked in 1517 would influence the history of the world.

2 **Context matters.** Luther’s assertion that word and sacrament are what matters when it comes to worship, and the rest is *adiaphora* (theological nonessentials), is critical to becoming a more just and inclusive church. At St. Stephen, it allows us to continually reform worship, spreading the good news of God’s loving work further and wider.

3 **I am so not in charge.** As the pastor, I am just one member of the priesthood of all believers. The people of my congregation are always ministering alongside me and teach me every day.

4 **Be a sinner and sin boldly …** Luther’s frequent reminders of human sinfulness can seem like a downer. But in daily ministry, I see how the belief that we can be perfect and “do it all” leads to despair. We can’t do it. Accept it.

5 **… but trust more boldly in the grace of God.** God never stops speaking love, mercy and grace to us. But it’s when we finally trust that we can fall back on the love of God that the fullness of life overflows into a beautiful, bold, constant outpouring of gratitude.
“And.” Thanks to former Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson for amplifying this most important Lutheran word that accommodates tension and the breadth of truth: Jesus Christ is divine and human; we are saints and sinners gifted with law and gospel. For us, this is true both individually and collectively: it has helped me see systems, families, congregations and church more clearly and completely.

2 Sola scriptura. I am so grateful for and inspired by the reformers’ insistence upon the primacy of the biblical word and Luther’s particular passion for connecting it with people’s daily lives.

3 Theology of the cross. Calling something what it is, while also clinging to hope in the holy, mysterious God hidden in the horrors of human history. This is an essential guard against the temptations of easy answers, platitudes, stereotypes, dismissiveness and despair.

4 “Oh that I could pray the way this dog watches the meat!” This quote from Luther not only resonates with my own distracted prayer life; it also showcases the humor, humanity and earthy, insightful spirituality of Luther—and the blessedness of dogs!

5 Grace. This is the heart, the point of it all.

The Spirit of God. I find comfort in Luther’s explanation of the third article of the Apostles’ Creed: “I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him.” The Spirit of God gives me, and the whole Christian church, the faith we need in order to follow in the footsteps of our savior.

2 Absolute truth. The Reformation’s biggest lesson for me is that God’s love for humanity is the only absolute and ultimate truth that we can trust. Any other system, person or institution that asks for this absolute trust must be viewed as penultimate and fallible.

3 The democratization of ministry. One of the Reformation’s fundamentals that is still vital to my work is the understanding that all Christians are called at baptism to serve God and neighbor with their gifts, talents and treasures. In other words, the democratization of ministry.

4 Preaching the law and the gospel. The dynamics of law and gospel inform the way in which I write my sermons. When I preach the law, I try to lift up the human condition, and with the gospel, I proclaim God’s assurance of forgiveness to all, thanks to Christ’s death and resurrection.

5 Freedom. The Reformation has taught me that God’s last word for us is always forgiveness, life and salvation. Luther has also taught me that we are free to think, give our opinions, debate and struggle to what we think is God’s will for the sake of creation.
Kerstin Weidmann
Pastor, St. Matthew Lutheran Church, San Francisco

1 “One has to look at the mouth of the people” –Luther. The reformer understood that, in order to reach people with the good news of Christ’s grace and salvation, you have to speak their language—and for that, you have to actually understand their situation. Beyond language, this applies to cultural shifts and means of communication today.

2 “Christians must be taught …” –Luther (repeatedly in the 95 Theses). Luther advocated for the education that leads to critical thinking of all Christians in order to live their calling to the fullest. Christian education today should still be thought-provoking and lead to informed and respectful discourse in the face of difference of opinion.

3 “What does this mean?” –Luther (repeatedly in the Small Catechism). As followers of Christ, we mustn’t pretend we have all the answers, but we are called to have an inquisitive heart and mind. Christian life is about wrestling with God’s word, even and especially in conversation with those who have different backgrounds or understandings of God’s word.

4 “[Give] yourself in service to your neighbor just as you see that Christ has given himself for you” –Luther. Grace frees us from the immense burden to somehow redeem ourselves, but we still have the responsibility to extend God’s grace and love to those who need them today (which is everyone).

5 “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject of all, subject to all” –Luther. Freedom has become a keyword and is often interpreted as a personal freedom to do whatever benefits the individual—and subsequently leads to the limitation or even obliteration of the freedom of the underprivileged. Our Christian freedom is defined by the bounds of God’s law of love for the neighbor and all of creation.

Stacey Siebrasse
Pastor, First English Lutheran Church, Billings, Mont.

1 Showing up. My favorite Luther quote states, “Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God.” For me, this quote employs those visceral, gut feelings we detect when facing a decision to either give in to the status quo or show up for and speak out in the name of justice, no matter the cost.

2 Baptism. Luther’s take on baptism is the main reason I’m a Lutheran today. Baptism is not a one-time event or a required, eschatological confession. Rather, it is an outward sign of God’s eternal love for us in Christ that has no beginning or end.

3 God’s omnipresence. In a letter to Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli on the real presence of Christ in the sacrament, Luther wrote that “God is as present in your cabbage soup as in the sacrament. The difference is that God is hidden in the soup and revealed in the sacrament.” I love this statement, affirming God’s omnipresence in every aspect of our lives.

4 Paradoxy. Luther was paradoxical in his teachings, stating that we are “simultaneously saint and sinner” and both free and subject to none while dutiful and servant to all. These statements remind me of my constant need to self-evaluate and seek forgiveness from God, approaching the font every day to die to self and then rise again as a new creation.

5 Challenging the church. The kinds of reforms Luther demanded from his church also give me the courage to challenge my church. Because the ELCA is a mainly white church, we need to learn to decolonize worship and our theology, and we need to uplift the bodies and voices of people of non-white descent or color.
William Flippin Jr.
Pastor, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Atlanta

1. **Here I Stand.** I was first introduced to the study of Luther 21 years ago by reading Roland Bainton’s seminal book *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther.*

2. **Deus absconditus.** Luther’s academic study of Deus absconditus—the idea that God’s mercy in Christ comes sub crucem tecta (covered under a cross); not so much hidden so that it’s not at all visible, but covered under what looks like the opposite (*sub contrario objectu* meaning “under its contrary opposite”).

3. **“The contrary opposite.”** The most provocative “contrary opposite” is the cross itself—the completed work of Christ.

4. **Transparent dialogue.** As an ecumenist, Deus absconditus has guided me in having a transparent dialogue of humankind through common experiences.

5. **God being present in our world.** My feminist interpretation of Deus absconditus, which I learned from theologian Dorothee Söelle, is that God moves beyond being with those who suffer; God is present in our world, and human suffering battles with us for life.

Benjamin Dueholm
Pastor of worship and education, Messiah Lutheran Church, Wauconda, Ill.

1. **God revealed in the cross.** I love Luther’s theses and explanations for the Heidelberg Disputation, and I think about them a lot. They remind me that while I’m tempted to look for God in wisdom and glory, I can only see God revealed in the cross and suffering.

2. **Command and promise.** In preaching and teaching, I find it continually helpful to look for these direct, intimate, unconditional ways God communicates with us.

3. **Word and sacrament.** The gifts of word and sacrament create the church and make it visible to the world. The reformers help me stay focused on these gifts.

4. **“Passive righteousness.”** This phrase of Luther’s doesn’t translate well (the last thing we need to hear is an encouragement to passivity!), but it helps me remember that God’s work in us is much more effective than any program we design to please God.

5. **The Freedom of a Christian.** This is the name of a favorite Luther treatise and also an important idea: freedom not as an absence of rules or constraints, but as a freely embraced responsibility for each other.

Leslie Scanlon
Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Chesapeake, Va.

1. **The Luther Rose.** When I get mired down in the complexity and craziness of life, the Luther Rose is a great reminder of the gospel at its most basic: the pain-causing black cross gives our red hearts life; faith in this truth gives joy, comfort and peace (white); we can glimpse this peace both while on earth (blue) and forever (gold). Luther’s summary of theology is so basic, yet so beautiful.

2. **“Believe in this.”** One of my favorite Luther quotes is from the Heidelberg Disputation, and is vital for all Lutheran preachers to keep in mind: “The law says ‘do this,’ and it is never done. Grace says ‘believe in this,’ and everything is already done.”

3. **The spreading of ideas.** Luther wasn’t the first to suggest reforms for the church, but his ideas spread due to a perfect storm of events, including the invention of the movable type printing press in Europe. Social media is today’s printing press: a new tool that can be used to spread God’s love (or not—depending on how you use it).

4. **95 Theses.** Many Lutherans have read, or maybe even memorized, Luther’s Small Catechism, but Luther’s 95 Theses show us what he was resisting in the church of his day. It’s important to be able to separate this Catholic church of the past from the Roman Catholic Church of today as we live ever more fully into ecumenism.

5. **We worship God, not Luther.** One of the most important parts of being Lutheran today is to remember and to be able to admit that Luther wasn’t perfect. Like us, he is *simul justus et peccator* (simultaneously justified and sinful). He did a lot to spread God’s good news in this world, but also said and wrote some terrible things, for which the Lutheran church has since apologized.
Michael Malone  
Pastor, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Cape Girardeau, Mo.

1 “We are church. We are Lutheran. We are church together. We are church for the sake of the world.”  
–Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton (four emphases for understanding church)  
Years of conversation informs me that the notion “We are Lutheran” often functions at a level of subconscious presupposition. I continue to be inspired whenever I offer historical context to empower a more cognizant sense of what being Lutheran means 500 years after the Reformation.

2 “The histories present powerfully with examples and happenings making them visually so real, as though one were there and saw everything happen that the word had previously conveyed to the ears by mere teaching.”  
–Luther (Preface to Galeatius Capella’s History)  
The enthusiastic response among participants in trips to Germany that I have been leading on behalf of the Central States Synod this year reminds me of the power of history to inform us of who we are in the present in light of our past.

3 “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”  
–Jesus (Matthew 13:52)  
In Matthew, Jesus addresses the problem of becoming enmeshed in perspectives on the past to the point of missing the work of God in the present. Likewise, the fact that we continue to identify as Lutheran connects us to a distant past in ways that should continue to inform our identity while emboldening our present ministries as God works through us.

4 “What’s past is prologue.”  
–William Shakespeare (The Tempest)  
I remain fascinated by the fact that events that unfolded 500 years ago continue as such an indelible part of our identity as Lutherans. Our past ought to tell us something of who we are in the present even as we recognize that our past is not determinate of our future.

John Flack  
Pastor, Our Saviour’s Atonement Lutheran Church, New York, N.Y.

1 “God is essentially present in all places, even the tiniest tree leaf.”  
–Luther (LW 37: 57-58). As I have grown into the ministry, I’ve begun to realize that the defining ethical challenge of my time is climate change. Luther’s understanding of God’s presence in creation made available for us in the sacraments has given me a theological foundation for preaching and teaching creation care.

2 “The true treasure of the church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.”  
–Luther (Thesis 62)  
In a time when churches are closing, synods are selling property, and people are afraid that the influence of the mainline Protestant denominations has waned to nothing, I need to hear over and over that the real treasure, power and beauty of our faith is not with a building or a bank account, but with the saving message of God’s love for all people.

3 “Every call of Christ leads to death.”  
–Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Discipleship)  
I have come to learn that being a Christian means that everything we are is Christ’s. We are his. And the more I live as if I am Christ’s, the freer and more faithful I become.

4 God’s unbreakable promises.  
In my pastoral care, the Lutheran sacramental understanding of God’s unbreakable promises, made available for us in tangible, objective signs, has helped me more than anything else. The God we seek promises to be found, and God wants us to find God in real things.

5 Christ’s heart is bigger than our grievances.  
The ecumenical movement of the latter half of the 20th century, which seems to have truly striven to break down barriers and make a broken church whole, helps me realize that Christ’s heart is bigger than our grievances. That movement inspires me to see Christ at work everywhere (even with people I’d rather he leave alone).