

Freed and Renewed in God's Grace: Commemorating 500 years of The Reformation

Weaving Lutheran music and arts into your congregational activities

By John Weit

With the Reformation anniversary year underway, Lutheran congregations and synods across the U.S. and the world are planning and hosting activities that demonstrate the importance of this historic milestone: that God's grace in Jesus is given freely to all. These unique, deep, and meaningful custom-created opportunities lift up Martin Luther's message that to trust God's mercy with a living, daring confidence allows one the freedom to give of oneself generously, loving all of life's undertakings in everyone they meet.

That is the central theme behind the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) anniversary theme: "Freed and Renewed in Christ: 500 Years of God's Grace in Action."

As Lutheran musicians, we know this is an exciting time to weave the Reformation into the music and arts within and throughout congregational worship as well as into everyday activities that support the Reformation anniversary. Resources in many forms provide tools to create and collaborate with your congregational partners to bring the message alive.

Getting Started

The newly relaunched elca500.org website hosts a wide variety of

resources to understand, plan, and communicate all aspects of the Reformation. Among these, there are a few good starting points.

The "With New Voices" tab offers the tools to support ELCA Presiding Bishop Eaton's invitation to hear the catechism from new voices, perhaps from those not heard earlier in one's faith experience. Included is an extensive guide that highlights opportunities to use music with the catechism study.

The *Reformation 500 Sourcebook* (Resources/Worship/Books) published by Augsburg Fortress contains materials needed for all aspects of the celebration, with a particular focus on music (page

113). This section makes connections to Martin Luther's small catechism and encourages brief studies of selected hymns appropriate for any age. Suggested hymns for the anniversary year appear beginning on page 43. Information on adapting "The Church's Journey in Art and Song" from the 2015 joint ELCA Worship Jubilee/ALCM biennial conference can be found in the printed resource and in the included CD-ROM.

Although only a foundation for a Reformation worship, catechism study, or a joint ecumenical service, the resources available in both the website and sourcebook partner well together.

Freed & RENEWED in Christ

500 YEARS OF GOD'S GRACE IN ACTION

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Throughout the Year

During the course of the year, you can help sustain your congregation's energy for the Reformation anniversary through the use of music and other resources that connect to the Reformation and its history.

Consider using the ecumenical document *Declaration on the Way* as part of ecumenical and interreligious gatherings, where it is most appropriate. With the important relationship being forged and healed between many Lutherans around the world and the Roman Catholic church, the Common Prayer Liturgy offers a reflection point for common witness and commitment.

Music from throughout the ages also provides a great perspective, bringing 500 years of the Reformation to the present, particularly when connected with spoken and written word. This includes incorporating the commemorative hymn "God Alone Be Praised," created in honor of ALCM's 30th anniversary year and the Reformation anniversary.

Your gifts as a Lutheran music and worship team member can create a lasting impression that lifts up the Reformation among the hearts of parishioners in your congregation. And for those outside your church, it offers the gift of the Holy Spirit working through the living, daring confidence of God's grace. ■

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The Church Musician as Persuader

By Barry L. Bobb

One of the great blessings we enjoy as church musicians is that we have the opportunity to hear Holy Scriptures read in public probably as often as anyone does. It's fascinating to me that, even after all these years and even with the familiarity of the lessons, there still are times when a word or a turn of phrase catches my ear.

That happened recently when I heard Acts 18:4: "Every Sabbath he [St. Paul] reasoned in the synagogues, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks." It was that verb "persuade" that got my attention—not "sharing," "proclaiming," or "witnessing," but "persuading." In our culture of safe zones and trigger warnings, it almost sounds aggressive. Actually the Greek verb *peitho* appears several times in Acts and it always means "trying to change the heart of someone" (not merely the mind). It implies a systematic, convincing argument and the use of rhetorical devices. It suggests further that the viewpoint being expressed

might be a "hard sell." Corinth was a very diverse and pluralistic society, a very difficult place for Paul to sow the seeds of the gospel, to persuade.

A couple of questions come to mind.

Did Paul know rhetoric—the formal art of discourse?

Rhetoric had its beginnings in 5th-century BC Greece; Aristotle developed it considerably as a discipline. Certainly the Romans of Paul's day (and he was a Roman citizen) were trained in rhetoric. From the apostle's other writings we surely know he had a drive for organizing Christian teaching. One contemporary Christian writer has envisioned meeting Peter and Paul in heaven. Peter has a fishing pole and invites you to go out on a lake in his boat; Paul, on the other hand, has a PowerPoint presentation he wants to show you.

Art: Raphael Sanzio, "Plato walks with Aristotle," central figures (detail) in *The School of Athens*, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City, 1509-11.