



Scripture alone
Faith alone
Grace alone

— Reformation Themes

Reformation Anniversary Milestone Moment

On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the door of a church in Wittenberg, Germany. That event is recognized as the beginning of the Reformation. Luther would continue to clarify his message to emphasize salvation by grace through faith in Christ. What began in 1517 as an objection to the selling of indulgences to pay for St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome launched a renewal of the church that continues to this day.

The Reformation directly impacted church and society. Luther helped bring the Christian faith into the daily lives of people by translating the Bible and liturgy into the German language and bringing faith into the home by writing the Small Catechism. Luther’s message emphasized God’s power of forgiveness that frees people to love God and neighbor. People were empowered to do God’s work as part of the “priesthood of all believers.” For example, Luther stated that fathers and mothers are “apostles, bishops, and priests,” acknowledging their role in raising children in the Christian faith. He worked as a “pastor and shepherd of souls” to help all people practice the Christian faith by encouraging caring conversations, a devotional life, and service to others.

As the church observes 500 years of the Reformation, the goal is not to remember an honored and distant past but to live the message of the Reformation in the present. The power of the word of God to save and transform lives is as important today as in Luther’s time. The intent of the Reformation Anniversary Milestone Moment is to assist congregations and homes to participate in the ongoing reformation of the church and outreach to a world still in need of God’s grace and mercy and peace.

The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation encourages us to pause and give thanks for how Martin Luther and other reformers proclaimed the heart of the gospel. It provides opportunities to reflect on how the Reformation continues to impact our lives of faith. This Milestone Moment incorporates a five part structure:

Naming – Observing the Reformation gives attention to the importance of trusting God’s action and not our efforts as essential to salvation. This Reformation message frees us to love God and neighbor and to share the Christian faith with the world.

Equipping – Experience the importance of the Reformation in people’s lives by engaging in caring conversations, devotional reflections, service, and Christian rituals and traditions that reflect key Reformation themes.

Blessing – The Reformation promotes a life of prayer for all people. Offering a blessing to others is a sacred and relational moment for Christians that extends God’s love and grace to others.

Gifting – Giving a tangible gift like a bookmark, Bible, cross, Small Catechism, or other reminder of this occasion helps people remember the importance of the Reformation for years to come.

Reinforcing – Following the Reformation Anniversary Milestone Moment, it is important to continue to reflect on how salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ transforms our lives every day.





Reformation Anniversary Milestone Moment

For a Small Group or Family Gathering



Grow the Church by Growing People in Faith

Having ongoing conversations and prayer following the Reformation Anniversary Milestone Moment can help reinforce the blessing of the Reformation for people's lives. When you gather together with family and friends consider ways to continue to give thanks for the gift of faith and the promise of salvation that impacts everything you do in the home, congregation, and world.

An important step after experiencing the Four Keys for practicing faith in a small group or family gathering is to bless and equip friends and families to continue practicing faith by using the Four Keys daily as an intentional step to encourage faith traditions in the home.

Suggested resources for continued faith conversations:

*[Taking Faith Home](#)
[For Everything A Season](#)*

Additional Milestones and Milestone Moments can be found at: www.milestonesministry.org



At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Keys for practicing faith: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions. Luther's Small Catechism consistently makes use of these practices. The Small Catechism was to be used for conversation and prayer in the home. It also encouraged service to others and daily Christian rituals and traditions. Gather with family and friends and use this Four Keys outline:



Caring Conversations

- What is your first memory of attending a Lutheran congregation?
- Martin Luther stated, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." (*The Freedom of a Christian, 1520*). What does it mean to you that a Christian lives this paradoxical life of total freedom and at the same time committed to serve others?
- In *The Estate of Marriage*, Luther wrote that fathers and mothers are "apostles, bishops, and priests to their children." He added that anyone who teaches the faith to another is "an apostle and bishop." How does this influence your life of faith with others? Tell about how you can be a follower of Jesus who shares the faith with family and friends.



Devotions

Read Ephesians 2:8 (NRSV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

- Name a gift you received and have not forgotten. Who gave it to you and why?
- An important contribution of the Reformation is an emphasis on the undeserved kindness of God. Even our faith in Christ is a gift that is "not your own doing." In a world that likes to name our own achievements and what we deserve, how does this understanding of the Christian faith help us live out our faith with our neighbor?
- Reflect on how your life in Christ makes a difference in your daily life.



Sing or pray: *A Mighty Fortress Is our God*, a hymn by Martin Luther.

Service

In honor of the Reformation anniversary in 2017, host a meal and invite neighbors, family and friends to join you. Show a movie about the life of Martin Luther. After the movie, talk about what was surprising about Luther's life. Discuss how Luther's message has changed the church and influenced your life and faith.



Rituals and Traditions

In the Small Catechism Luther gave a number of prayers and blessings to use daily. Use this table blessing (Psalm 145: 15-16) followed by the Lord's Prayer:

The eyes of all wait upon you, O Lord, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living creature.

Use this evening blessing for one another similar to one from the Small Catechism while making the sign of the cross:

May God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over you. Amen.