

GATHERING

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another. *(Silence is kept for reflection.)*

Faithful God, **have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We pass judgment on one another before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before those of our neighbors. We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves. Make us humble, cast away our transgressions, and turn us again to life in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of †Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world.

Amen.

Gathering Song “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God ” ELW 504

1. A mighty fortress is our God, a sword and shield victorious; he breaks the cruel oppressor's rod and wins salvation glorious. The old satanic foe has sworn to work us woe! With craft and dreadful might he arms himself to fight. On earth he has no equal.

2. No strength of ours can match his might! We would be lost, rejected. But now a champion comes to fight, whom God himself elected. You ask who this may be? The Lord of hosts is he! Christ Jesus, mighty Lord, God's only Son, adored. He holds the field victorious.

3. Though hordes of devils fill the land all threat'ning to devour us, we tremble not, unmoved we stand; they cannot overpower us. Let this world's tyrant rage; in battle we'll engage! His might is doomed to fail; God's judgment must prevail! One little word subdues him.

4. God's Word forever shall abide, no thanks to foes, who fear it; for God himself fights by our side with weapons of the Spirit. Were they to take our house, goods, honor, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The kingdom's ours forever!

Text: Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship Text* © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Reprinted under ONE LICENSE #709391-A

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray...**Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your word, protect and comfort them in times of trial, defend them against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: Psalm 46 (Read Responsively)

¹God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

²**Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;**

³though its waters rage and foam, and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

⁴**There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.**

⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken; God shall help it at the break of day.

⁶**The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake; God speaks, and the earth melts away.**

⁷The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

⁸**Come now, regard the works of the LORD, what desolations God has brought upon the earth;**

⁹behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world; who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰**“Be still, then, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”**

¹¹The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Second Reading: Romans 3:19-28

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

²¹But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, ²³since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel: John 8:31-36

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

³¹Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” ³³They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free’?”

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever.

³⁶So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

Grace and peace, beloved of God, from Jesus, our Lord and Savior, who loves us above all else.

More than 500 years ago, Martin Luther risked everything important in his life to try to change the Church and all Christians through a clear understanding of God's deep love for each and every person.

Luther began his 95 talking points by talking about... repentance. He wrote, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent', he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." Luther went on to say that by repentance, he wasn't talking simply about confession and penance overseen by the clergy, feeling bad in our hearts about something we've done.

True repentance for Luther is a kind of truth-telling. When we are truly honest with ourselves about ourselves, when we don't believe things others say about us that aren't true. Truth-telling gives us an opportunity to change. That kind of truth helps us live in freedom.

This freedom is why today's Gospel is the traditional scripture for Reformation Sunday. Jesus, the Son of God, wants to give us true freedom, but getting there requires truth-telling on our part.

This truth-telling is actually two truths— first about us, and then about God's response to us. So Jesus' promise of freedom will sound more like bad news before it becomes good news. Or, like an old saying goes, "The truth will set you free, but first it will make you feel miserable."

Because the first truth of Jesus— the truth that makes us free, the truth at the heart of the 95 theses that Luther nailed to the door of the Wittenburg church, the truth of the Reformation that we remember and celebrate this Sunday, is that we are sinners— God's imperfect children, from birth to death. Sinners— and nothing we can do can save ourselves, not indulgences, or good works, or even good intentions.

But here is the second truth, and it's the good news— we are also those sinners who are at the same time God's beloved children, those sinners who God calls blessed and holy and perfect, those sinners for whom Christ died. We are also those sinners whose futures are not eternally bound by our regrets and mistakes, but by the future created by resurrection, those sinners whom God loves above all else.

We are not perfect, and we don't have to be perfect to be loved by God. But if we aren't honest first— when we see the sin in our lives, it's hard to trust that we really are loved. This is God's path to true freedom.

The best way to celebrate the Reformation is not to just celebrate it, but to repeat it. To remember both halves of Paul's mighty words— first the difficult truth that "all have sinned and fallen short," so we can then hear the blessed good news that "all are now justified by God's grace... as a gift." This, indeed, is a truth that sets you free. And it is a truth that still will change lives, change the Church, and, indeed, change the whole world. Thanks be to God!

Hymn of the Day “Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound” ELW 779

1. Amazing grace! how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!
3. Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come; 'tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
4. The Lord has promised good to me; his word my hope secures; he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.
5. When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

Text: John Newton, 1725-1807, alt., sts. 1-4; anonymous, st. 5 Public Domain

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

L: With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. *(A brief silence.)*

L: Renew and inspire the church in the freedom of the gospel, O God. Where the church is in error, reform it. Where the church speaks your truth, strengthen it. Where the church is divided, unify it. Ignite in us the working of the Holy Spirit. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#1. As the earth changes, as mountains shake and the waters roar, may we care for this planet as a holy habitation for all living things. Sustain all peoples and lands recovering from natural disasters of any kind. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#2. Guide areas of the world divided or traumatized by conflict, especially in our own land. Free all from slavery and human trafficking, and protect all in harm's way. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#3. In this family of faith we give thanks for courageous voices that have remained firm in their commitment to the one who frees us from sin and death. Centered in your grace, unify us in the hope of the gospel. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#4. We give thanks for each person connected with Northwoods StaR Ministries— so many gifts, so many ideas, everyone nurtured by your love. Help each of us to give thanks for our diversity. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

L: Release those living in bondage to debts, chronic pain, or addiction. Grant healing touch to those who are ill . We especially pray for all those on the prayer list — Nyberg Family, Wear Family, Todd, Sandy, Erika, Steven, Roger, Don, Diane, Mary, Ben M., Scott, Phil & Janice _____ and all those we name before you now, out loud or in our hearts. *(pause)* Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.** *(Other prayers added here)*

L: Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THANKSGIVING

Offering (The offering plates will be placed near the sanctuary entrances. Please place your offerings there as you exit the worship service today. Thank you for your faithful support.)

Offering prayer

Let us pray...**Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

SENDING—Announcements

Blessing

Mothering God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less” ELW 597

1. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; no merit of my own I claim, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Refrain:

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.

2. When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace; in ev'ry high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil. *Refrain*

3. His oath, his covenant, his blood sustain me in the raging flood; when all supports are washed away, he then is all my hope and stay. *Refrain*

4. When he shall come with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in him be found, clothed in his righteousness alone, redeemed to stand before the throne! *Refrain*

Text: Edward Mote, 1797-1874, alt. Public Domain

Mission Statements

Northwoods STaR Ministries

“United in Christ, Sharing God's Love”

Zion Brantwood

“We are disciples of Christ: Growing in faith, sharing our faith stories, serving others.”

First Prentice

“We are Jesus' disciples: Welcoming every sinner, sharing Jesus' love and teachings, encouraging all to live Christ-centered lives.”

First Ogema

“We are called and gathered to share Christ as we minister to all, bringing an unchanging God to a changing world.”

First Westboro

“Feeding bodies, minds and spirits through Christ.”

Dismissal

Go in peace. Remember the poor. **Thanks be to God.**