



Reformation History #5: Worms

by Pastor Glenn Huebel

Part of a year-long series on Reformation history and theology, from November 2016—October 2017, in commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

The German city of Worms was ancient even in Luther's day. It was originally a Celtic City, occupied by an ancient Germanic tribe in 14 BC. Later, it was conquered by Rome and became a Roman Catholic Bishopric by the early 7th century. Eventually, it became an Imperial Free City, meaning that it was not ruled by a local lord, but was responsible to the Holy Roman Emperor. As such, the city was the site of many "Imperial Diets," conventions of the legal entities of the Empire. The most famous of the many meetings held at Worms was the Diet held in 1521 to examine and demand that Martin Luther recant his "heretical" writings. From this Diet came the famous confession of Luther, coined in the words, "Here I stand!"

The Luther issue was a real aggravation to the political and Church leaders of the day. Most of them would gladly have nailed him to the stake themselves if they could, but his writings, published through the Guttenberg Press, had made him wildly popular in Germany. Furthermore, his Elector, Frederick the Wise, refused to allow his citizen to be taken out of Germany for trial. Rendered politically impotent, the leaders of the Roman Church and the Emperor grudgingly conceded to allow a hearing, but not a debate. The question was settled from their point of view. Luther would be required to recant or else. When demanded to do so, Luther requested one night to ponder the issue. Hoping to end the conflict as peacefully as possible, and thinking that Luther was ready to yield, the

powers granted his request. They must have been bitterly disappointed the next day when Luther, having fully pondered the dire consequences of a refusal, obeyed his conscience rather than the threats of man. His response has become one of the most famous Christian confessions in history:

"Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."

Tradition adds the words, "here I stand," but they are not found in the early transcripts of the account. Nevertheless, the whole statement is clearly his "stand" before Pope and Emperor. Jesus plainly commanded his disciples to confess Him before man, no matter what the consequences may be (Matt. 10:32). St. Paul writes that "if you **confess with your mouth** that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Christians in the first four centuries after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus were put to the test over and over again. The Church survived and prospered because the Holy Spirit empowered men and women to confess in the face of great threats and afflictions. Luther is but one more confessor in a long train of Apostles and martyrs in Church history. He



was the first to put himself in the shadow of others. He knew very well that the Reformation of the Church did not stand or fall on him, for he always considered himself to be only a poor beggar. Later he mused "I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy

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That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. —John 20:31

that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything." While we should never foolishly try to make Martin Luther into some super sanctified saint, we may certainly be inspired and encouraged by his example of courage and integrity. The Lutheran Church has long been

known as a *confessional Church*. Lutherans have historically placed a high value in publically and clearly stating what we believe according to the Scriptures. We set our faith before the world in six documents contained in the Book of Concord. While many denominations emphasize spiritual experience,

emotions, or vague and ambiguous clichés, Lutherans desire to speak as plainly as possible, testifying both to what we believe and what we reject. For the sake of the Gospel and the salvation of men, we want others to know exactly *where we stand*.

Roles and Goals for the Church — by Pastor Tom Chryst

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

In this passage from Ephesians 4, Paul lays out some "roles and goals" for the Christian congregation at Ephesus. These may also serve as a model for any Christian congregation.

In light of some recent discussions about Messiah's own mission, I'd like to add some comments to the mix in the next several months. What follows will be a series of articles, based on this passage. I'll focus on these key ideas inspired by the Holy Spirit and set forth through St. Paul to the Ephesians:

- Different gifts and roles
- Unity of Faith
- Knowledge of the Son of God
- Mature Manhood
- Speaking Truth in Love
- Grow in every way

Unity of Faith

In our first look at this passage, we acknowledged the diversity of gifts and roles within the church. We

noted, with Paul, that God gave some to fill various roles of public ministry in order to teach and proclaim the word of God. But we also pointed out that not everyone is called to be a pastor, and that the church needs all sorts of various gifts and roles.

But now, a brief nod to the flip side of that point. While there is, and should be, a diversity among God's people, there ought to be, also "Unity of Faith". But as good Lutherans always ask, "What does this mean?"

Unity, as a concept, is one of those abstract ideas that gets good vibes all around. In our public square, in our cultural roster of desirable values, "unity" ranks quite high. We are the "United" States, after all. In our pledge, we claim a nation that is united – and indivisible. But it often seems, at least to me, that "unity" serves as more of a buzzword than anything. Great in theory, but hard to realize in practice. Unity never seems to last very long. It often seems to be shallow and symbolic, rather than deep and meaningful.

And then there is a false unity – like the kind put forward by the "coexist" bumper stickers, implying that Christianity is really no different – and out to be united – with all manner of false belief systems. A unity based in falsehood is no unity at all. Rather, as Jesus prayed in John 17, may we be united in the truth (and God's Word is truth!)

Unity – it literally means "oneness". And I suppose there are many different aspects such a oneness might entail. Unity of purpose. Unity of mission. Unity of culture. We may

feel united by a common situation – perhaps if we suffer from the same disease, or bear a similar grief. We may even feel at one with someone for something as mundane as a common hobby or sports team loyalty.



But what about "unity of faith"? Are we, Christians, united in the faith? And if so, what does THAT mean?

A quick look around might suggest that we are NOT united in the faith. Christians are, to outward observance, quite divided. You have Lutherans and Roman Catholics and Baptists and Non-Denoms. You have subsets of each of these. And the reasons will vary, but it's often because of different doctrine and practice: disagreements about things like the sacraments, church authority, and what it means to be saved or to be a Christian at all. Even within our own church body, we're not as united as we ought to be.

But the problem is far more local. Our own congregation suffers a lack of unity (as all congregations do). We have our own little factions and cliques. We have this group and

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that. Tensions between church and school rear up. Conflicts over various issues break out, or are sometimes swept under the rug. Even at the smallest scales, we humans are divided against one another – even within families – we see division, conflict, strife, and a lack of peace. Disunity abounds. It's just another effect of sin in this world. And you don't need me to point it all out.

Paul sees it too, and acknowledges it when he says, *"until we all attain to the unity of faith..."* He admits we don't have it... yet. And this is why we need to be built up, to be built toward it, by those public ministers who equip us for the work of ministry and service. We need to be continually evangelized, shepherded, taught, and equipped – all toward this goal of unity of faith.

You see, there is hope for us to attain unity of faith. And that hope is always, only, and ever in the Word of God. The Gospel – the free and full proclamation of God's grace in Christ crucified for sinners. This is our

unity! Whatever unity of faith we have is not because we bring it, build it or achieve it. When we have it, it is a gift of God – thanks be to him! And to the extent that we do have it – thanks be to him!

For even amidst all our divisions, there is a sense in which we **are** united – already. We are made one, in Christ. By baptism. By faith. Just as we are individually both sinner and saint, so are we, the Christian church on earth, both divided by our sin, and united in Christ! The union is *invisible* – we can't see it. Only by faith does it exist. But it is real, and we even confess it in our creeds - "I believe in one holy, Christian and apostolic church". One! Unity! We are united, as different as we are, sinner/saints, in the one Body of Christ. We are united with Christ, each of us, and therefore united with each other.

And we do recognize a measure of unity under what we call "Church Fellowship". That is, those other congregations and church bodies who confess the Gospel and all its

articles rightly, along with us. This is one of the chief purposes to even have a "synod" - to *walk together* in unity of doctrine. We naturally want to join our voices together in a common confession of the truth of God's holy Word. We rejoice in the truth, and in our fellow brothers and sisters who share this confession of faith.

Perfect unity of faith – both inward and outward – is something we won't enjoy until the fulfillment of all things. When the dead are raised, and the life of the world to come begins, when the Holy City Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ is presented and the marriage feast of the Lamb begins its festivities in full swing.

This ultimate unity is one of the ultimate goals for the church. But it is a goal that we receive by faith, and is being built up in us by the ministry of the Word. It is a blessed unity which we ought to strive toward in this fallen world, but also recognize will be fully revealed and manifest when Christ comes again and makes all things new and right.

Swaddling Clothes Ministry by Deaconess Student Pamela Buhler

What a beautiful mission we have going on down the hill at the MAC. Karen and Marcia do a wonderful job preparing for our Swaddling Clothes' day. Messiah's mission has reached over 110 families in our community in 2016. Monthly, we serve anywhere from 30-40 families, hold babies, and love on the moms. What a joy to welcome people in the name of our Lord. Swaddling our extended family is one way Christ calls us to serve

our neighbor. Through the giving of our time and gifts we have shown the love of Jesus to many of His children. I have been blessed by this ministry myself. I thank the Lord that He has shown me how to give and receive the love of my neighbor. It has been a delight to follow through with some of my clients from Pregnancy Help 4U and see them blossom through our Swaddling clothes ministry. To dawdle over their precious bundles

and help women feel proud to uphold the sanctity of life is what all moms need. If you would like to care for the need of your neighbor through this ministry, we could always use willing hands; there are always clothes to be washed. They are located in the closet by the mailboxes. You can take a peek in anytime and wash a bag or two.

Swaddling Clothes Testimonies:



My daughter and I have both benefited from the generosity of swaddling clothes. As a single mother looking for work, it had surely helped me when we needed it most. Thank you to all of those who donate their time and hands to make it all happen!



I love the help that ya'll provide. I honestly don't know what I would do without ya'll. I donate as much as I can just to help give back :)



Swaddling Clothes is extremely helpful! I can rely on every month getting diapers and wipes. I also love how we are recycling clothes and baby accessories, which helps the planet.



Messiah Lutheran Church & School

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

www.messiahkeller.org

Miscellany (*/'misə,lānē /*) *noun.*

—a mixture or collection of different things

Lone Star, a ministry of the LCMS Texas District, is a wonderful camp filled with summer events, fellowship and worship. We will leave from the church at 7:30 am on July 20, and return around 6:00pm on July 23. All nights will be at the camp, and all meals will be provided at the camp. All events will have adult chaperones (Messiah parents), and those involving water will have a paid lifeguard on duty.

For a list of items to bring, to RSVP, or for any other information, contact Stacy Howell.

and can't attend services or activities regularly. They are all still part of our extended family and it is important that we let them know we care and are praying for them. If you would like to help more with this project see Pamela Buhler for information



One of our featured cards

Youth Trip to Camp LoneStar:

Our Second youth trip will be to Camp Lone Star in LaGrange Texas. This event is for confirmed youth only. \$60 is needed to reserve a spot. You may give the money to Stacy Howell or to Pastor Chryst- ear marked "2nd Youth Trip." An emergency form will need to be completed once you reserve. Parents wanting to attend should contact Stacy.

Care Board: Caring For Our Church Families, One Card at a Time

As an outreach effort, every month Messiah will feature a different group in our church family and display cards for anyone to take. Our Care Board will be on display in our Fellowship Hall. Simply take a card, write words of love, stamp and mail. It's that simple. We would like to care for our members and mission families who are "out of pocket"

Last, but not least....our library fundraiser from Schwan's continues through March 21. Use code number 29877 when you order by phone or at Schwans.com

Thrivent...Care More, for Free

Caring for our church families, through our Thrivent options:

As part of our outreach effort, we would love to care more for those we love. If you would like 100% guidance to apply for your free \$250 gift card, Pamela Buhler will take you through all the steps. Free funding can impact our church families in so many ways.

Pamela is looking for THREE Thrivent members willing to apply for an action team so she can fund the following projects:

1. Bibs for Babes for our Saddling Clothes (purchase bibs & burp clothes)
2. Frames of Love for our PH4U sonogram clinic (purchase frames on Amazon)
3. Christ/Phoebe Academy Breakfast fundraiser (purchase food)
4. Drop-Box for our Swaddling Clothes (purchase wood & paint to build a drop-box)
5. Shut-in Care (Purchase blinds, paint, & cleaning supplies)

How does it work? Think about an unmet need in your community and how you could help. Apply to lead your volunteer team in a one-time fundraiser, service activity or educational event that can care for those you love.

Receive a \$250 Community Impact Card you can use as seed money to purchase project supplies and create promotional materials.



Am I eligible? All Thrivent members are eligible to lead a Thrivent Action Team. However, the number of teams each member can lead per year depends on his or her membership type. Benefit members are eligible to lead two Thrivent Action Teams per calendar year, and associate members are eligible to lead one per calendar year (maximum of three).