



Pilgrims' Progress



The Monthly News of the People of Pilgrim Lutheran Church
Warwick, Rhode Island
March 2017

**April's Progress Deadline is
Wednesday, March 15th.**

Please e-mail submissions to
parishasst@pilgrimlutheranri.org
or place in her mailbox in the
church office. Many thanks.

The Progress deadline is the 15th of every month.

From Our Pastor

Dear Fellow Pilgrims,

We live in a difficult time. Much of the difficulty comes from the fact that our words are understood in ways we may never have intended them to be. Suddenly many things have become "politicized" that have only a tangential relationship with politics. For example, when pastors preach about hospitality and welcoming the stranger into our midst, some think that this as a political statement. The welcoming of strangers is an ancient notion of Judaism and Christianity. It is not raised as a political statement, although it does have political consequences.

But remember this: the words used to speak about the reconciliation and renewal of the world in the Bible is political: Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God. So anything with a social or communal aspect can be seen as political because it involves more than one person. Jesus himself claims to be where two or three gather in his name. In Jesus' thinking our faith is most definitely communal and therefore has a "political" dimension to it.

But one of the big questions is how do we use this political dynamic of our faith in shaping our life together as a people. Here

there are different theories, different ways of understanding the goals of the intersection of religion and politics. (I use the word "religion" because it is a way of speaking about faith from an institutional perspective.) Several months ago I had a letter to the editor printed in the *Providence Journal*. Basically I proposed that the role of government grows from the fourth commandment (Honor your father and mother) because God wants us to live in a safe and secure environment. God wants order in our lives and in our world because that is how we best flourish as humans. A couple of responders chided me for my thoughts because they thought that I was saying that we should live in a world that is defined by Christian values or a Judaeo-Christian ethic. I was not trying to say that at all. I was simply saying that for us as Lutheran Christians, the government has a role to allow members of society to flourish, to feel secure, to know that working together with people of all kinds of faith or no faith at all will produce a safer world.

Religion and politics should never interact at the place where the ethics of one group is imposed on all members of society. Yes, there are basic issues that need to be addressed: murder, robbery, slander, etc.; but individual choices are not determined by someone else's values. For example, if I am **forced** to make certain decisions, then morality is gone. Morality only flourishes in freedom. That truth goes for the powerful as well as those with no voice.

These kinds of issues become meaningful in decisions about things such as abortion or capital punishment, in waging war or sexual orientation. So when a pastor talks about hospitality or mercy, about helping those

who have little or no resources for facing life, or targeting certain kinds of people; pastors are not trying to be political, they are declaring what God has said in the Bible and other faith's scriptures.

Compassion is not a political category. Mercy is not a political category. Helping others is not a political category. Looking out for the weak ones is not a political category. Truth is not a political category. Respect for others is not a political category. These and many other things which might seem to grow from politics are simply the message we have been declaring as God's will throughout the centuries.

Finally, it is not about us taking offense because people disagree with us, but it is rather about listening and learning, responding and growing in our views. Being kind or working for justice is what we do as God's people, and while they might have a political dimension, they are simply God's way of creating a more rational and safe place for human life to flourish.

With hope,



Pastoral Acts:

Funerals:

Scott Dutra
Nancy Johnson
Charles Jones, III
Andrew Oliviera
Clark Goodwin

January Financial Report:

Income	\$19,969.52
Expenses	\$19,938.74

Hospitalized or Needing a Pastoral Visit?

Please have a family member call us at 401-739-2937 to speak to Pastor Kohl or to leave information with the office or on the church's voicemail. Be sure to leave your name, the name of the person who needs a visit, which hospital and room number, if possible, and a contact telephone number.

We need your help! We're looking for volunteers to serve as Assisting Ministers, Communion Assistants, Ushers, and Greeters. If you are able to help with these important ministries, please sign up on the sheets posted on the bulletin board outside the office or contact the office at 739-2937.

The next **Congregation Council meeting** will be held on Thursday, March 16, at 7:00 p.m.



2017 Sunday School Schedule of Special Events (Revised):

April 16 -	Easter*
May 14 -	Mother's Day*
May 28 -	Family Sunday*
June 11 -	Church Picnic

*Please bring your children to worship



If you're moving, please let us know.
We'd like to keep in touch.

Mid-week Services in Lent

Wednesday, March 1 – Ash Wednesday

Noon – Spoken Holy Communion
with ashes in chapel

7:00 PM – Holy Communion with ashes
in the main church.

Wednesday, March 8 –

6:30 PM - Holy Communion in chapel

Wednesday, March 15-

6:30 PM - Holy Communion in chapel

Wednesday, March 22 –

6:30 PM - Holy Communion in chapel

Wednesday, March 29 –

6:30 PM - Holy Communion in chapel

Wednesday, April 5 –

6:30 PM - Holy Communion in chapel

Thursday, April 13 – Maundy Thursday

7:00 PM - Absolution and Holy
Communion in main church

Friday, April 14 –

Noon - Passion and prayer for the
whole Christian church and
adoration of the crucified

7:00 PM – Passion and prayer for the
whole Christian church and
adoration of the crucified

Saturday, April 15

At dusk - The Great Vigil of Easter

Altar Flower Dedications

Please sign up to support the Altar Guild in 2017. There are flower envelopes in the narthex. A \$30 donation is suggested. Place the envelope, with dedication information and donation, in the Altar Guild mailbox. Thank you!

Worship Servers are needed for **Easter Sunday, April 16**. There will be two services – one at 8:30 a.m., the other at 10:15 a.m. The sign-up sheet is located on the bulletin board outside the church office. Please volunteer. Thank you.

The Adult Class on **Honoring Our Neighbors' Faith** meets on Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. We are studying about various denominations of Christians, various world religions, as well as some sects and cults. There will be opportunities for speakers and field trips. The following week's topic will be posted on the church bulletin board.

Congratulations to our new officers of the congregation and the Council.

President, Mike Ferry

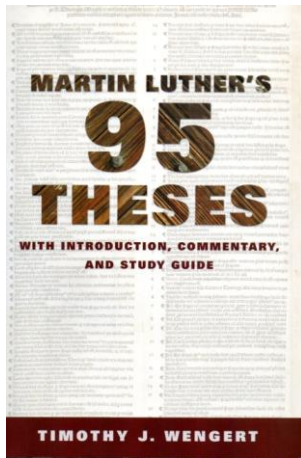
Treasurer, Laurie Linden

Vice President, Stephany Laurent

Assistant Treasurer, Bill Brinson

Secretary, Susan Horsch

Financial Secretary, Beth Fish



Martin Luther's 95 Theses started a lively argument in the church of 1517. This foundational document about the role of indulgences and the forgiveness Christ won for us continues to be important for Lutheran Christians. But how many of us are familiar with the content, the

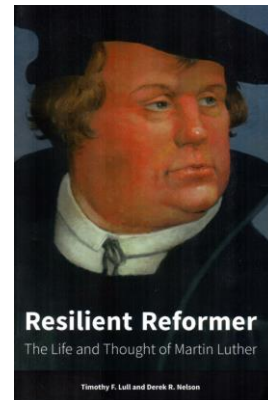
history of, and the impact made by the 95 Theses?

Our Monday night study group is finishing up our study of 1 Corinthians in a few weeks. Our next topic will be to read this little book together and discuss some of the details of the Lutheran Reformation. We are doing this to observe the 500th anniversary of Luther's posting these 95 points for debate on October 31, 1517. Timothy Wengert has provided this newest translation of Luther's work along with the letter Luther sent to his Archbishop Albrecht, the most powerful church official in the Holy Roman Empire. Also included in this book for our consideration is Luther's *Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*. This sermon preached in German was his way of communicating the concerns of the 95 Theses to the ordinary folks at that time.

If you would like to join us on Mondays from 7 to 8 PM, please come along. If you would like to purchase a copy of this book, please sign up on the bulletin board. The original price of the book is \$15.00 but with a bulk order we can get this book for \$8.00. Please let me know if you are interested in learning more about our history as Lutheran Christians. It is really an exciting story.

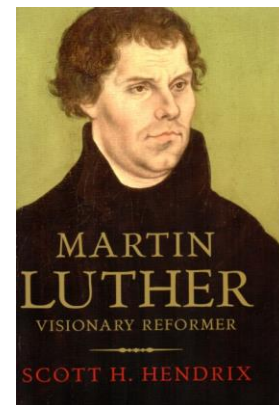
Two Biographies of Martin Luther for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Resilient Reformer: the Life and Thought of Martin Luther has been published by Fortress Press. The authors are Timothy Lull and Derek Nelson. Dr. Lull was the president of our seminary in Berkley, California, and has written several books on Luther. He died suddenly leaving his book unfinished. Derek Nelson is a professor of religion at Wabash College in Indiana. He was able to finish this book for general reading.



This book is a pleasure to read. It moves along and helps the reader to know more about Luther and some of the shorter books. One of the things about both these biographies that is important is that they trace the patterns of Luther's thought and his struggle with *Anfechtungen*, a word that might be translated as uncertainty, anxiety, or even fear about Luther's relationship with God. The reason this is important is that his struggles with God are not uncommon among the human family. The reader may find comfort in knowing that struggles of faith are a part of most Christian's story as faith seems to come and go.

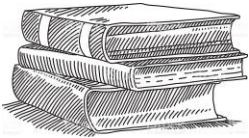
This other biography is written by Scott Hendrix, a retired professor of Reformation History at Princeton University. Yale University Press has published this biography. Again this biography is not only concerned about the events and people of Luther's life, but also helps the reader to understand his theological development, his wrestling with *Anfechtungen* and coming to understand God's righteousness, not as a demand God makes



but a gift God gives through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Both books introduce us to Luther's *Theology of the Cross*, finding God in the last place people expect to find God: struggles, suffering, humility, sickness, and death.

As winter lingers on, one of these biographies would be a good way to spend some of those hours we need to spend indoors. Whenever or wherever you might read one of these books, you will find a fellow Christian wrestling with faith and coming to peace by knowing Jesus as the savior of the world.



Our book discussion of *Unmindful Negligence* by Karen Gustafson will be held on Thursday,

March 9, at 7:00 p.m. Please join us.



Sunday Readings in March

March 5 – First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 *Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.* Lent is a time of getting back to basics. We hear the story of the original sin this Sunday; it is not trusting God and wanting to be our own gods.

Romans 5:12-19 *Death came through one; life comes through one.* Paul tells us what God did about sin: sent Jesus as our savior.

Matthew 4:1-11 *The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness for forty days.* The fullness of Jesus' humanity is seen in the struggles he had with temptations.

March 12 – Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 12:1-4a *The blessing of God upon Abram.* Abram's and Sarai's (later Abraham and Sarah) obedience to God brought them blessings and promises

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 *The promise to those who share Abraham's faith.* Paul tells the Romans that we are connected to Abraham and Sarah by our faith (trust) in God's promises being fulfilled.

John 3:1-17 *The mission of Christ: to save the world.* Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus reveals God's purpose in sending Jesus. In Jesus we have the birth which comes from above by water and the Spirit. In Baptism we find God's salvation.

March 19 – Third Sunday in Lent

Exodus 17:1-7 *Water from the rock in the wilderness.* The faith of the Israelites ran thin on their 40 year journey to the Promised Land. In this reading we see that God provided for them in the last place they thought God would: bringing water out of a rock.

Romans 5:1-11 *Reconciled to God by Christ's death.* Paul reminds us that even in our weakness God has not given up on us. In Christ God does what we cannot do: bring peace between God and humanity.

John 4:5-42 *Baptismal image: the woman at the well.* As Jesus speaks with a Samaritan woman she comes to discern that he is the Messiah, God's anointed servant for blessings.

March 26 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

1 Samuel 16:1-13 *David is chosen and anointed.* God's plan of salvation is consistent with the promises God has made, a lowly shepherd will become the ancestor of God's Messiah.

Ephesians 5:8-14 *Awake from sleep, live as children of light.* The Ephesians and we are called to live our faith as lights shining in the darkness.

John 9:1-41 *Baptismal image: the man born blind.* Jesus restores a man's sight and reveals that God's power and presence can be found even in the struggles life brings to us.