November 1, 2026

ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
A LEGACY OF GRACE AND TRUTH!

In Our Worship Today ... we reflect on what it means to be St. John *Evangelical Lutheran* Church. We are not the same as any other Christian church; we are different. As an *evangelical Lutheran* church, we bring a special understanding of Grace and Truth to our corner and our community. We don't make that claim to boast, but to remind ourselves: As Lutherans, Grace and Truth is a legacy shared with us to treasure and to share with others!

Today, we celebrate Reformation Sunday, thanking our Lord for the Grace and Truth blessings of the Lutheran Reformation, which "began" on October 31, 1517, with Martin Luther posting his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg. On that day, Martin Luther still had much to learn about Grace and Truth, but God was at work and soon the Grace and Truth of the Gospel would be pounding on and in hearts around the world.

Deutsche Messe
Luther's first effort at liturgical reform in Wittenberg (December 1523) was to remove from the historic service various false teachings of the medieval church. The service remained in Latin, and included only a German sermon and several German hymns. He hesitated to prepare a German order of service because he feared some would try to impose his work on the entire German church and because he sensed a German service needed original music. After repeated requests, he produced the *German Mass and Order of Service* which was used in Wittenberg for the first time on October 29, 1525.

It is impossible and impractical to reproduce exactly the service Luther created. The following service enables us to gain a sense of our liturgical heritage, and to experience an order that established the framework for Lutheran worship to our day. *Italicized worship notes* are from *Luther's Works*, Volume 53, pages 61ff. This service is adapted from the 2012 Reformation Service at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

PRAYER BEFORE WORSHIP
I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from all sin and every form of evil, that all my doings and life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen. - Dr. Martin Luther

German Mass and Order of Service

In the true mass of real Christians, the altar should not remain where it is, and the priest should always face the people as Christ doubtlessly did in the Last Supper.

To begin the service we sing a hymn or a German psalm…

HYMN: A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD **CW 863**

Luther's rendition on Psalm 46

Please Stand for Verse 4

Then follows the Kyrie eleison… (Greek for "Lord, have mercy.")

KYRIE, GOD FATHER IN HEAVEN ABOVE **CW 934** (adapted)

Latin Trope, 9th century; German version, Wittenberg, 1541

Kyrie, God Father in heav'n above,
You abound in gracious love,
Of all things the maker and preserver.
Lord, have mercy.

Kyrie, O Christ our King,
Salvation for all you came to bring.
O Lord Jesus, God's own Son,
Our Mediator at the heav'nly throne,
Hear our cry and grant our supplication.
Lord, have mercy.

Kyrie, O God the Holy Ghost,
Guard our faith, the gift we need the most,
And bless our life's last hour
That we leave this sinful world with gladness.
Lord, have mercy.

Thereupon the minister reads a collect…

(A "collect" collects the thoughts of God's people and the theme for the worship service into a short prayer.)

Almighty God, through the preaching of your servants, the blessed Reformers, you caused the light of the gospel to shine forth. Grant that we may faithfully defend it against all enemies and joyfully proclaim it to the salvation of people everywhere to the glory of your holy name; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

BE SEATED

Thereafter the Epistle on the eighth tone…

EPISTLE ***Hebrews 8:8b-12***

"The time is coming, declares the Lord,
when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.

It will not be like the covenant
I made with their forefathers
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they did not remain faithful to my covenant,
and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
after that time, declares the Lord.
I will put my laws in their minds
and write them on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.
No longer will a man teach his neighbor,
or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.
For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."

After the Epistle, a German hymn, either "We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost" or any other is sung…

HYMN: WE NOW IMPLORE GOD THE HOLY GHOST **CW 596**

Then he reads the Gospel on the fifth tone…

GOSPEL *John 8:31-36*

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

After the Gospel, the whole congregation sings the Creed…

WE ALL BELIEVE IN ONE TRUE GOD **CW(93) 271**

(a similar translation is CW 941)

Words by Martin Luther based on a 14th century Latin credo

We all believe in one true God,
Who created earth and heaven,
The Father, who to us in love
Has the right of children given.
He in soul and body feeds us;
All we need his hand provides us.
He through snares and perils leads us,
Watching that no harm betides us.
He cares for us by day and night;
All things are governed by his might.

We all believe in Jesus Christ,
His own Son, our Lord, possessing
An equal Godhead, throne, and might,
Source of ev'ry grace and blessing,
Born of Mary, virgin mother,
By the power of the Spirit,
Made true man, our elder brother,
That the lost might life inherit,
Was crucified by sinful men
And raised by God to life again.

We all confess the Holy Ghost,
Who, sweet hope and comfort giving,
Now with the Father and the Son
In eternal light is living,

Who the Church, his own creation,
Keeps in unity of spirit;
Here forgiveness and salvation
Daily come through Jesus' merit.
All flesh shall rise, and we shall be
In bliss with God eternally.

BONUS HYMN - O GOD, OUR LORD, YOUR HOLY WORD **CW 643**

Then follows the sermon…

SERMON

"Evangelical Lutheran" – A Legacy of Grace and Truth

OFFERING

Having heard the Word of God, it is appropriate for his people to offer themselves and their possessions to him, and to pray that his Word would bring more souls throughout the world into his kingdom as an offering to him. In Luther's day, the offerings weren't part of the service proper. Instead, an offering for the poor would have been gathered at the door following the service.

LORD'S PRAYER

After the sermon shall follow a public paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer and admonition for those who want to partake of the sacrament.

I invite you to lift up your hearts to God and pray with me the Lord's Prayer as Christ our Lord taught us.

We pray that God, our Father in heaven, would look with mercy on us, his needy children on earth. We pray that God would grant us grace so that his holy name be hallowed by us and all the world through the pure and true teaching of his Word and the fervent love of our lives, and that he would graciously turn us from all false doctrine and evil living by which his precious name is being blasphemed and profaned.
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

We pray that his kingdom may come to us and expand, that all transgressors and all who are blinded and bound by the devil's kingdom may be brought to know Jesus Christ his Son by faith, and that the number of Christians may be increased.
Your kingdom come.

We pray that we may be strengthened by his Spirit to do and to accept his will, both in life and in death, in good and in evil things, and always to break, slay, and sacrifice our own wills.
Your will be done on earth as in heaven.
We pray that our Father would also give us our daily bread, preserve us from greed and selfish cares, and help us to trust that he will provide for all our needs.
Give us today our daily bread.

We ask that God would forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us so that our hearts may rest and rejoice in a good conscience before him, and that no sin may ever frighten or alarm us.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

We pray that God would not lead us into temptation but help us by his Spirit to subdue the flesh, to despise the [sinful] world and its ways, and to overcome the devil with all his wiles.
Lead us not into temptation.

And finally we pray that God would deliver us from all evil, both of body and soul, now and forever.
But deliver us from evil.

All those who sincerely desire these things will say from their very hearts: "Amen," trusting without doubt that their prayers are answered in heaven as Christ has promised: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you will receive it, and you will."
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

ADMONITION

I admonish you in Christ that you discern the Sacrament of Christ in true faith and, above all, take to heart the words wherein Christ imparts to us his body and his blood for the remission of our sins, that you remember and give thanks for his boundless love which he provided to us when he redeemed us from God's wrath, sin, death, and hell by his own blood, and that in this faith you externally receive the bread and wine, that is, his body and his blood, as the pledge and guarantee of this. In his name, therefore, and according to the command that he gave, let us use and receive the Sacrament.

Thereupon the Consecration…It seems to me that it would accord with the institution of the Lord's Supper to administer the Sacrament immediately after the consecration of the bread, before the cup is blessed. Meanwhile, the German Sanctus could be sung…Then shall the cup be blessed while the German Agnus Dei is sung.... (The texts of these songs are printed below for your meditation during the Sacrament.)

DISTRIBUTION

Isaiah Mighty Seer **CW 943**

Sanctus - Words and music by Martin Luther

Isaiah, mighty seer in days of old,
The Lord of all in spirit did behold
High on a lofty throne, in splendor bright,
With robes that filled the temple courts with light.

Above the throne were flaming seraphim;
Six wings had they, these messengers of him.
With two they veiled their faces as was right,
With two they humbly hid their feet from sight,
And with the other two aloft they soared;
One to the other called and praised the Lord:
"Holy is God, the Lord of heav'nly hosts!
Holy is God, the Lord of heav'nly hosts!
Holy is God, the Lord of heav'nly hosts!
His glory fills the heavens and the earth!"
The beams and lintels trembled at the cry,
And clouds of smoke enwrapped the throne on high.

Lamb of God, Pure and Holy **CW 947**

Agnus Dei - Words and music by Nikolaus Decius, c. 1485-after 1546

Lamb of God, pure and holy,
Who on the cross did suffer,
Ever patient and lowly,
Yourself to scorn did offer.
All sins you carried for us,
Else had despair reigned o'er us:

1 Have mercy on us, O Jesus!
2 Have mercy on us, O Jesus!
3 Your peace be with us, O Jesus!

PLEASE STAND

HYMN: O LORD, WE PRAISE YOU **CW 673**

Stanzas 2-3 by Martin Luther

The collect follows with the benediction:

> We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this salutary* gift [*salutary - for our well-being]. We pray that through it you will strengthen our faith in you and increase our love for one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.
> **Amen.**
>
> The Lord bless you and keep you.
> The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
> The Lord look on you with favor and ✠ give you peace.
> **Amen.**

BONUS HYMN: GOD'S WORD IS OUR GREAT HERITAGE **CW 640**

POSTLUDE

An order is an external thing. No matter how good it is, it can be abused. Then it is no longer an order, but a disorder. No order is, therefore, valid in itself—as the popish orders were held to be until now. But the validity, value, power, and virtue of any order is in its proper use. Otherwise, it is utterly worthless and good for nothing. God's Spirit and grace be with us all. Amen. - Martin Luther

ODDS-N-ENDS

As in the medieval Latin mass, Luther began his service with an Entrance Psalm. This was a psalm that was chanted as the clergy entered. Luther opened up the mass greatly to congregational participation by providing hymns based on the psalms, replacing the one chanted only by the choir. "A Mighty Fortress," a metrical version of Psalm 46, is the most loved of these metrical psalms.

Lutherans today will immediately notice the absence of the Confession of Sins at the start of the service. The early Lutheran Church continued to use private confession and absolution – not the Roman sacrament of Penance ("going to Confession"). The addition of confession and absolution for all at the beginning of worship became part of the Lutheran liturgy in America with the introduction of the "Common Service" of 1888.

75 Years on Our Corner **November 1, 2026**
- A Legacy of Grace and Truth as Evangelical Lutherans

"Maggots. I'm just a sack of maggots. Why would anyone want to call themselves by my name." Those weren't his exact words, but that's roughly what Martin Luther said about people calling themselves or their churches Lutheran. He added: "The teaching is not mine. I wasn't crucified for anyone." So, if not Lutheran, what did Luther want his students, his followers, his churches to call themselves? Christian or Evangelical.

Christian would be a good name for us, wouldn't it? We're saved by Christ; in baptism we wear Christ. We look up to Christ; we follow Christ. Christian is a wonderful name for us. But what? Baptists and Anabaptists, Catholics and Orthodox, Methodists and Pentecostals, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, non-denominational and evangelical - we all call ourselves Christian, and insofar as we believe in Jesus as our by-faith-alone Savior, we are all going to heaven with Jesus. But we are not all the same; we are not at all the same. Christian is a wonderful name for us, but it doesn't tell the whole Truth; it hides the Truth. The name Christian hides the beautiful Truth that we're different.

What about "evangelical"? Evangelical would be a great name for us. But it's a big name, a big word - too big to fit on our sign, too big to fit on our webpage, too big to fit most places - and that's sad, because evangelical is a wonderful word. Picture how it's spelled - e-v-a-n-g-e-l-I-c-a-l. In the middle of the word you have the word angel - messenger or message. At the beginning you have the ev prefix - good. Evangelical means we are based on - we center on - the good message, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As evangelicals, we aren't here to be the behavior police; we are here to hear and to share the good news Gospel that Jesus Christ, Son of God and son of man, lived for us, died for us, and rose back to life - all to set us right and give us life with God. Evangelical would be a great name for us, but what? Go back to Luther's time and place, most anybody and everybody who wasn't Roman Catholic was in some way calling themselves or their churches or their teachings evangelical; evangelical basically got to mean non-catholic, anti-catholic. And today in the United States, there is a grouping of churches that call themselves evangelical, but they don't believe or teach the Good News that in baptism God gives us Jesus and his Spirit; they don't believe or teach the Good News that in the Lord's Supper, Jesus gives us himself and his promise. So evangelical by itself doesn't really tell the Truth about what we believe and teach; it hides the beautiful Truth that we are different.

And we are different. We are wonderfully, beautifully, gloriously different. When I say we're different, I'm not talking about what I wear. Across Christendom, some clergy dress to show their special role with God; other clergy dress to show their common connection with humanity. My alb and stole, are symbols that say - "I am not here as me on my own, but I have been called to represent Christ and you. Likewise, when I say that on our corner, we are different, wonderfully, beautifully, gloriously different, I'm not talking about our church architecture. Church architecture can reflect how we are different; church design can help shape how we are

different. But our church building doesn't not determine or make us different. And when I say that we are wonderfully, beautiful, gloriously different, I'm not even talking about our worship style. Some of us may find our worship style to be wonderful, beautiful, glorious, and some of you might not.

When I say that we are wonderfully, beautifully, gloriously different, I'm talking about what we believe, teach, and proclaim not just as evangelical and Christian, but as evangelical Lutheran. So what does it mean for us that we are evangelical Lutheran? It starts with this, the Bible. Here the Creator of the universe, here the Judge on the Last Day, here the Lord of all gives us his Word, the secrets of his heart, his plan and promise for us from before all time. Here we have the true Word of God himself, God's Light, God's Truth. As evangelical Lutherans - and we're not alone in this - we talk about Scripture Alone. What does that mean? On the one hand, we don't need some church to decide for us what this [Bible] means - we let Scripture interpret Scripture and we will have what God says. On the other hand, we don't pretend that our human thinking and reason can make God's Word better. We let Scripture interpret Scripture and we go with what God says, whether it makes sense to us or not, knowing this - it doesn't have to make sense to us - his thoughts are higher than our thoughts and his ways than our ways. Instead of re-shaping God's Word to fit us, we let God's Word re-shape us.

So what does God say here? He tells us who he is, and here our Creator and our Judge and the Lord of all shares with us his wisdom for us, his heart, his plans for us. As Lord over us, he gives us his Law: "Do this; don't do that." And, as Creator, and Lord, and Judge, he also says: "Or else. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sins, it shall die. Cross God and you will be damned." But that's not all that God says here [the Bible]. Here our Creator, our Lord, and our Judge shares with us his Gospel Good News love for us in Jesus. Here we have God's Good News promise that Jesus lived for us in our place to satisfy God's Law demands - "you better get it right." And here we have God's Good News promise that Jesus died for us in our place to satisfy God's judgment on our sin and guilt. Here we have God's Good News promise that Jesus isn't just Lord over us; he is Lord for us. As Lord for us, he has broken the power of sin and Satan. As Lord for us, he has broken the power of death. As Lord for us, he has what it takes to make and keep his promises to you - "Peace, your sins are forgiven you. Do not let your heart be troubled; I'm coming to take you to heaven! So, stick with me; I've got you!" As evangelical Lutherans, what makes us different? We know and proclaim this is true, not if, when, or because we do some good and godly thing, but by Grace Alone, through Faith Alone. It's God's promise to you in Jesus - no ifs, ands, or buts about it.

God's Promise in Jesus gives us something wonderfully, beautifully, gloriously different. Here in baptism, we have God at work to wash us clean, to cover us with Jesus, to make us alive with Jesus and his Spirit, to adopt us into his family as heirs with God as our Father. Here we have God at work. Not just me and water - but God's Word with God himself at work. Not just a human decision, not just a human promise to God, but here we have God's power and promise for us. Not just a helping hand and first step on the way to get right with God, but God's

powerful promise - “You are my son, my daughter whom I love; with you I am well-pleased!”

And here in the Lord’s Supper today, Jesus gives you something wonderfully, beautifully, gloriously different. Here you have Jesus, not as a sacrifice we give to God to get forgiven. Here you have Jesus, not just a sign, a symbol, or a reminder of Jesus. Here you have Jesus giving you himself, giving you his body and blood, giving you his peace and new covenant promise - “I will be your God and you will be my people. I will forgive you and remember your transgressions no longer.” I know that doesn’t make sense. But that’s what Jesus says. So, thank you, Lord, for giving us a faith to believe you, trust you, no matter whether you make sense to us or not. That’s what we have as evangelical Lutherans.

We call ourselves evangelical Lutheran, but, sad to say, just like the name Christian or the name evangelical, the name evangelical Lutheran can be confusing too. Some evangelical Lutherans teach that the Bible is just a book written by a bunch of dead, old, white guys, and we know better now. Some evangelical Lutherans recite with us “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord,” but they figure May was likely a prostitute who got knocked up by a Roman soldier and their baby, Mary’s baby, grew up to be Jesus - bred by a Roman soldier and then dead by a Roman soldier. Sad so say, but in some places, evangelical Lutheran isn’t even Christian.

So what do we do? We don’t pat ourselves on the back. Like Luther, by myself, I’m maggot fodder. Instead of patting ourselves on the back, we treasure the legacy of Grace and Truth God has given us. We might not be able to fit those words “evangelical Lutheran” everywhere we’d like to post them, but we know that passing on a legacy is more than passing on a name. So we don’t settle for generic God-talk that might sound nice, but doesn’t pack the Truth that Jesus has for us. We don’t settle for generic Christian-talk that might keep peace, but doesn’t pack the Promise and Peace of God. We don’t settle, but we treasure the Truth and we share the Promise - for the glory of God and the good of his people. Amen.