Happy Reformation Day!

Preach the Word...For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching... II Timothy 4:2–3

I came upon a wonderful article written by C.F.W. Walther in the April 1947 Concordia Theological Monthly. It’s the essay he delivered at the Western District Convention in 1858, “Why Should Our Pastors, Teachers and Professors Subscribe Unconditionally to the Symbolical Writings of Our Church?”

Walther said, “Our Church never was satisfied with a mere conditional subscription to its Symbols on the part of its teachers [pastors]; it always demanded a definite, positive, and unequivocal subscription as an indispensable condition for teaching in our Church.”

Earlier in the lecture he says, “By demanding only a conditional subscription to its Symbols the Church forfeits its distinctively Lutheran characteristics, and by admitting that its Symbols contain errors it places itself on the same level with the heterodox bodies. In this case the church is without a united, certain, general form and norm of doctrine, the basis of which each one is able to judge his own teaching as well as all other writings and teachings.”

As you know, October 31 is the anniversary of Luther nailing the Ninety-five Theses on the Wittenberg castle church door in 1517. This is, no doubt, a significant date for the Reformation. It is also the beginning of the confessional Lutheran church, ultimately leading to 1580 when the Book of Concord (Symbols) were first published.

When do these confessions become dated or irrelevant? Never! You and I accept and pledge to these Symbols because they agree with the Scripture — and they always will. This is the very Confession you pledged at your ordination and installation. Walther puts it this way, “The Symbols are confessions of faith, or of the doctrine of the Church, and never were intended to be anything more nor less; therefore, an unconditional subscription to the Symbols can be interpreted in only one way.”

Isn’t this wonderful? This is the very Confession that binds us in a Synodical Union, known as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It is true – “The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation” the Holy Scriptures and the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, i.e. The Book of Concord.

What a wonderful time to celebrate our confessional unity, as we celebrate the 502nd anniversary of the Reformation. Dear pastors, thank you for your faithful confessional service to the Lord and His Church. Please extend my greeting to your congregation and wish them a “Happy Reformation!”

In Christ,

Jim

Rev. Dr. James Baneck, Executive Director of Pastoral Education
Exciting News from the PALS Field

**PALS Groups Gather Across the Country**

**Pastor Guy and Emily Roberts** recently led a **Minnesota North District** PALS retreat at a hotel, worship at a local church, and meals together noting: “It has been a blessing and honor to come along side these families!” Topics studied included an Ambassadors of Reconciliation Bible study, *Transitioning from Seminary to the Parish*, and the lectionary readings.

**Pastor David and Ginny Vanderhyde**’s **Rocky Mountain District** PALS group met at an Airbnb house, hosting all the meals and activities on site. Topics studied included: *Finding Balance and Setting Boundaries*, and Deb Burma’s **JOY: A Study of Philippians**. Participants shared: “This was an amazing time of fellowship to share the joys and challenges of ministry with others who are also beginning this journey. I will return encouraged and excited to serve my people with joy.” “PALS is a safe place to share your burdens with brothers and sisters in Christ.” “A great place to talk about what’s important.”

**Pastor Nate and Sarah Reichle** enjoyed a fall retreat with their **North Wisconsin District** PALS group. Families enjoyed sharing meals, time in devotion, fellowship as well as dedicated time for pastors to meet, and wives to meet. It was noted, “Discussion among new pastors to the group went really well.”

**Pastor David and Kassie Weaver**’s PALS group enjoyed a Columbus Day weekend retreat in the **Central Illinois District**. Participants enjoyed a discussion around the course *Calling on Inactive Members*, a Pew Sisters (Schuermann) book study, as well as time in the park with the children, serving a need for continuing education, spiritual growth, and time in fellowship.

**Pastor Mark and Sue Pflughoeft** led their **Indiana District** PALS group through the *Pastor’s Life of Prayer* and book studies on **JOY** (Burma) and Pew Sisters (Schuermann) during their weekend retreat. One participant shared, “I appreciated the topic of prayer and the encouragement received regarding the difficulties of ministry.”

**Pastor Kenneth and Vickie Mars**, **Wyoming District** PALS, enjoyed time spent in fellowship and study as they discussed a work by Johann Gerhard, as well as “Vocations under the Headship of Christ Jesus.” What a wonderful opportunity for study and encouragement.

**Pastor Vern and Dee Sandersfeld** in the **Montana District** were blessed to be able to spend time with a new couple in their district, sharing PALS materials and experiences as pastors who are both serving in a vacancy setting.
**PALS Curricular Resource**

**Weary Joy: The Caregiver’s Journey** by Kim Marxhausen is the most recent resource provided to each PALS facilitator for use as a possible book study during a PALS meeting or retreat. This serves as a resource our new pastors can preview for use in their own congregations, as they serve families facing the challenges of caring for aging parents and spouses.

Marxhausen’s book is organized by topics focusing on issues of emotional health found in the blessings of faith. Some chapters are specific for those caring for a loved one with memory challenges, and others are for caregiving in general. Each section contains questions for family or support-group discussion and ends with a devotion tied to the chapter theme.

Chapter titles include:

- Connection: Burden on the Brain (Romans 3:23–24)
- Advocate: Navigating Emergency Care (Romans 8:26)
- Shadow: Care for the Caregiver (Psalm 17:8)
- Obstinance: Working with Difficult Emotions (Romans 7:18b–19)
- Growth: The Positive Sides of Caregiving (Romans 5:3–5)
- Prepare: The Decision to Find a Care Community (John 14:1–3)
- Guilt: The Hidden Burden of Caregiving (I Corinthians 1:7–8)
- Humor: Cultivating Joy (Galatians 5:22–23)
- Abide: The Support of Hospice Care (John 15:9)
- And more…

**Prayers for Judi**

Judi Winker, our PALS office assistant was in a serious car accident recently and is making her way through a long journey of recovery. Judi works with such care and grace, behind the scenes, serving our facilitators in support of their ministry with their PALS pastors and families. Please keep Judi in your prayers.
Please Share This with Your Congregation

There is a “best kept secret” at lcms.org.

Go to “How We Serve” > Education > Pastoral Education (scroll down) > Preach the Word

That’s the best kept secret – PREACH THE WORD!

President Harrison initiated the *Preach the Word* project in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. *Preach the Word* is a video-based download series of preaching topics authored by seminary professors and Synod pastors. *Preach the Word* is a marvelous way to accumulate continuing education units to be added to your Self-Evaluation Tool (SET). For a list of topics and authors, go to the website as stated above.

Also, see 2019 Synod Convention Resolution 6-07. Check it out!