

To reestablish the basic reform of worship, Luther instructed that the Christian congregation should not gather together for worship without the preaching of God's Word and prayer. He gave instruction about how that could be applied both daily and weekly in larger city churches and churches with schools, as well as in the small rural village churches. The goal is that "Christian people will by daily training become proficient, skillful, and well versed in the Bible" (12) and that pastors and future pastors "become good preachers and pastors [*See/sorgers*: "caretakers of souls"]" (13).

He added instruction about the service of the Lord's Supper. Communion with communicants must be eliminated. The Lord Supper should be given only when congregation members desire it. Chanting should be retained because they are singing God's Word, but it should be chosen carefully as is appropriate to the abilities and needs of the congregation. The traditional readings for Sundays are kept, but the weekday festivals should be restricted to those that are pure.

And finally, "this is the sum of the matter: Let everything be done so that the Word may have free course instead of the prattling and rattling that has been rule up to now. We can spare everything except the Word. Again, we profit by nothing as much as by the Word" (14).

In the months and years to come, Luther would cautiously and carefully offer reforms of the Divine Service, give more detailed suggestions about the daily services, and suggest reforms in the Baptism rite, Marriage rite, and much more. Very significantly, he called for Lutheran hymns to be written, and he began to write hymns (especially in 1523 and 1524), as we shall see. But in everything he directed pastors and congregations to the Word of God. It is the "one thing needful" (Luke 10:42), "that Mary sit at the feet of Christ and hear His Word daily. This is the best part to choose and it shall not be taken away forever. It is an eternal Word. Everything else must pass away, no matter how much care and trouble it may give Martha. God help us achieve this. Amen" (14).

FUTURE DATES (see wylcms.org for information)

February 10-11, 2023: TTGNJ Convocation, Ramkota, Casper (register at wylcms.org/ttgnaj by February 5)
February 17-19: St. Andrew's Youth Breakaway 9-12 grades, Laramie

THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations around February 20 (March 2023 issue)



Wyoming District Round-Up **February 2023**

District Website: www.wylcms.org

"...REMEMBERING YOU IN MY PRAYERS..." (Eph. 1:16)

For **Rev. Ralph Jaeger** (emeritus, Laramie), health

For our active-duty chaplain, **Rev. Ryan Mills (Colorado)**

For **Rev. Neil Carlson (Zion, Chappell and Trinity, South Divide)** as he returns to full service at the beginning of February.

PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

Rev. Travis Sherman (Grace, Gordon) is serving **Grace, Merri-man, NE** (Nebraska District) while it considers its future.

Prince of Peace, Buffalo (served by **Rev. Rene Castillero, Immanuel, Sheridan**) held a call meeting January 22.

Bethel, Lander (served by **Rev. Gregory Sonnenschein, Wind River Lutheran Mission, Ft. Washakie and Mt. Calvary, Dubois**) called **Rev. Travis Berg (Trinity, Cheyenne)** on January 12.

The leadership of **Our Savior's, Chadron** (served by **Rev. Dan Praeuner, emeritus**) met January 5 with the leaders of **Bethlehem, Crawford and Redeemer, Harrison (Rev. James Rockhill)** to discuss the present and future needs of each congregation. Our Savior's has decided to proceed with the calling of a seminary candidate.

Trinity, Riverton (Rev. Mark Mumme) will consider calling an assistant pastor/head teacher February 19.

Immanuel, Burns and St. John's, Kimball (served by **Rev. Andrew Dimit, assistant pastor at King of Glory, Cheyenne**) met January 9 and called a candidate from the seminaries. Candidate placement takes place April 25 and 26.

Rev. Mark Preus (St. Andrew's, Laramie) is considering a call to Ascension Lutheran Church, Huntsville, Alabama.

The Christian in Community: Hospitality to Strangers

Genesis 18:1-15 records the feast Abraham gave to three remarkable visitors. Hebrews 13:2 comments on this event, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Jesus will say to Christians on the Day of Judgement, "I was a stranger and you welcomed Me" (Matthew 25:35). Hospitality is a divine virtue.

It turns out that Abraham entertained not only angels, but the LORD God Himself. The purpose of God's visit was to bring news to Abraham. "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." Sarah was barren and past childbearing. She laughed with astonishment and joy at hearing the news. God named their son Isaac, meaning "he laughs," because he was the son of God's promise and the occasion for joy.

The Holy Spirit describes Abraham's hospitality in a well-ordered household. When the three strangers approached his tent, Abraham quickly gave orders to his wife and his servant to prepare fresh bread, steak, cheese, and milk. They were obedient and prepared the food efficiently. He washed the feet of his guests and gave them rest in the shade. He waited on them at table. Abraham was prepared and practiced at hosting strangers.

The word 'hospitality' describes a divinely ordered relationship between a host and guest. The root word can describe "host, guest, stranger, or enemy." Related words include such opposites as hospitality and hostility. The ancient obligation of giving hospitality to strangers is rooted not in custom but in divine, eternal law. Love for strangers and guests is included in the command to love the neighbor. God protects and provides for strangers and travelers with the command to provide hospitality.

God commanded the Israelites to be hospitable to strangers and sojourners. The command is repeated in the New Testament, "Pursue hospitality" (Romans 12:13). Pastors are to be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8), and we are all to imitate their example. Christian women are especially to be known for showing hospitality in their households (1 Timothy 5:10). Spiritually healthy congregations and families welcome guests and outsiders into their houses and provide for them. Abraham and Sarah set an example for us all.

We see that by being hospitable to those who may be friend, stranger, or enemy, we are also ordering our lives properly toward Jesus Christ Himself. Abraham's hospitality was the occasion for God to preach the Gospel of Christ to Abraham and Sarah. Indeed, to welcome strangers is to welcome Christ Himself (Matthew 25:35): "I was a stranger and you gathered Me to you," that is, you joined Me to your community, your congregation, your family. So we too draw others into our homes and congregations and make them one of us.

"Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12–13).

REFORMATION 500

The year 1523 marks the beginning of what we know as Lutheran worship and prayer life, founded by God's Word and shaped in part by the historical practices of the church. In early 1523 Luther wrote "Concerning the Order of Public Worship," where he proposed how to begin a faithful reform of the church's liturgy and worship practices. Luther was no liturgical romantic, as though there were some golden age of the church's liturgical life. Nor was he a

"church growth" innovator. Rather, he took what he had learned about the doctrine of worship from God's Word and applied it faithfully and pastorally to the living church in his care.

And what had Luther learned about worship in the early years of the Lutheran Reformation? He learned that God Himself taught worship and instituted the things His worshippers do, rather than worship being designed by churchmen for their own worldly purposes. He learned that God had ordered all things in the church for forgiving sins, for justifying sinners through faith in His Word. He learned that worship was not for earning merit points with God but for hearing the Word, receiving the Sacraments, praying to and praising God. He learned that the Lord's Supper was not a sacrifice of Christ's body and blood offered to God for the sins of the living and the dead, but a giving of forgiveness, life, and salvation with His body and blood. He learned that it was not the traditions or tyranny of churchmen, but the Institution and Word of Jesus that determines what the Lord's Supper is, how it is to be used, who is to receive it, who is to distribute it, and so on. He learned that pastors are not the sacrificers of the Lord's Supper and rulers over men's souls, but rather preachers of God's Word and caretakers of men's souls.

And how, in practice, did these beautiful doctrines lead Luther to make changes in the church's worship life? First, he taught God's Word. He taught Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Confession, and prayer. He taught justification by faith in Christ alone.

As he taught, he began to urge changes in the prayer habits of Christians and published a prayer book to give them the form to enact these changes. He taught what Baptism is and what it works in Christians. He taught that the Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice offered by the church to God, and that it should be received in both the body and the blood by all worthy Christians.

Then came the radical and upsetting changes of 1521–1522, while Luther was in exile at the Wartburg Castle. The changes were so sudden and destructive to the simple faith of his members, that Luther stopped the reform of the liturgy for a while. When he returned to Wittenberg in March 1522, he restored most of the old practices. By the beginning of 1523, however, he saw that the church was ready to make clear changes: Communion in both kinds (both the body and the blood); elimination of the liturgical enactment of sacrificing Jesus again in Lord's Supper; and the restoration of preaching as the central public duty of pastors to their congregations.

In "Concerning the Order of Public Worship" (AE 53.11–14), Luther summarized the abuses that had corrupted the worship life of his day. First, "God's Word has been silenced," especially preaching and teaching. "This is the worst abuse." Second, "when God's Word had been silenced such a host of un-Christian fables and lies, in legends, hymns, and sermons were introduced that it is horrible to see." And third, "such divine service was performed as a work whereby God's grace and salvation might be won" by worshippers and not by Christ on the cross. The result was that "faith disappeared" (11).