

Applewood United Church
An Affirming Community
Hybrid Worship for October 29, 2023
22nd Sunday of Pentecost

(*please stand in body or in spirit; **bold** print is for all)

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: "Halle Halle Halle" VU 958

Halle, Halle, Hal-le-lu-jah!

Halle, Halle, Hal-le-lu-jah!

Halle, Halle, Hal-le-lu-jah

Hal-le-lu-jah! Hal-le-lu-jah!

* Call to Worship and Opening Prayer: *(responsive)*

One: God is our dwelling place from year to year, age to age.

And yet, we become complacent, forgetting who we are.

God reforms us

All: and makes prosperous the work of our hands!

One: God's life surges forth through creation, like grass that renews every morning.

And yet we prefer to be dust, swept away in the wind of every new idea and new fad.

God reforms us

All: and makes prosperous the work of our hands!

One: God turns to us, and has compassion on us, so the great work of our lives manifests Christ's glorious love to the world.

God reforms us

All: and makes prosperous the work of our hands

One: And we pray:

All: Thirteen billion years ago your creative spark called creation into being.

Two thousand years ago you lit a spark of new creation in Christ.

Five hundred years ago, your grace reignited the hearts of men and women.

Just when we think all is settled, everything is finished, closed,

your power and presence explodes on to the scene yet again, bringing newness, bringing life.

Fill us with your power and presence, O God,

so we may, like our grandparents in faith

**carry your truth, your beauty, and your justice to the world you so love—a world in such need.
In Jesus' name. Amen.**

*** Opening Hymn:** "Yahweh Be Praised" MV51

Yahweh be praised in the heavens.

Yahweh be praised in the streets.

Yahweh be praised with your singing
when in worship we meet.

Yahweh be praised.

Prayers for Reflection and Revelation

Sung Response: "Take, O Take Me As I Am" MV 85

Take, O take me as I am;

summon out what I shall be;

set your seal upon my heart

and live in me.

Scripture Readings: Inclusive Bible

Psalm 90:1–6, 13–17

YHWH, you have been our refuge
from one generation to the next.

before the mountains were born,
you brought forth the earth and the world;
you are God without beginning or end.

You turn humankind back into dust
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"

For in your sight a thousand years
are like yesterday, come and gone,
no more than a watch in the night.
You sweep us away like a dream,
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the
morning—

In the morning it sprouts,
but by evening it has withered and died.

YHWH, relent!

How long before you have mercy
on your faithful ones?

When morning comes, fill us with your love,
and we will celebrate all our days.

Give us joy for as many days as you afflicted us,
for as many years as we knew misfortune!

Let your work be seen by your faithful,
your glory be witnessed by their children.
Let YHWH's favor be upon us!
Grant success to the work of our hands,
success to the work of our hands!

Matthew 22:34–46

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had left the Sadducees speechless, they gathered together, and one of them, an expert on the Law, attempted to trick Jesus with this question: "Teacher, which commandment of the Law is the greatest?" Jesus answered: 'You must love the Most High God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.' "That is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments the whole Law is based—and the Prophets as well." While the Pharisees were gathered around him, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose descendant is the Messiah?" They said, "David's." Then Jesus asked, "Then how is it that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls the Messiah 'Sovereign'? For he says, 'The Most High said to my Sovereign, "Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies under your foot.'" "If David calls the Messiah 'Sovereign,' how can the Messiah be a descendant of David?" No one could reply, and from that day on no one dared ask him any more questions.

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Choir: "Ancient Words"

Reflection: Martin Luther: Social Media Influencer

* **Hymn:** "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" VU 262

A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper sure amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing:
for still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
with power and malice great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth he has no equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side,
the man of God's own choosing:
dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;

Lord Sabaoth his name,
from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God hath willed
the truth to triumph through us:
the prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure,
one little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers,
no thanks to them, abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours
through Christ, who with us sideth:
let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still,
God's kingdom is for ver.

Introduction to the Offering

Offering of Music

*** Hymn of Dedication:** "Know That God is Good" MV104

Know that God is good,
know that God is good,
know that God is good,
God is good,
God is good.

*** Prayer of Dedication:**

**Receive these gifts O God,
use them to reform this community of faith
as you remake the world in your image.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

God of Grace and God of Glory,

On this Reformation Sunday, we give you thanks for the saints who have gone before us.

For those who faced trouble and trial, and even death,

for the sake of the message of your mercy

and in the spirit of Pentecost, the right to hear and read the scriptures in their own languages.

We pray especially for those who now face trouble, trial, even death,

for those members of the body of Christ who face persecution.

For your beloved children everywhere—regardless of tradition—

who live under the threat of religious persecution.

For people, especially those of us who are Indigenous, who face the extinction of our own languages through neglect, oppression, or cultural pressure.

We pray that all may hear the good news of the Prince of Peace in ways that resonate,

and cause us to drop our weapons and defences for the sake of the kingdom.

We pray that you may help us not only walk in the shoes of our forebears, but fill them.

May all of us gathered here today be as captivated by the life you have given us in Christ

that we are freed to reach our friends, neighbours, and enemies with your unconditional love.

Lord, we pray for the world you love

in hope, and in trust,

that we and your church might carry the light that has been passed down through the centuries,

so we might be a beacon of your love to the world.

We pray now, as Jesus taught us to, singing:

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,

now and forever.

*** Closing Hymn:** "You Shall Go Out With Joy" VU 884

*** Commissioning /Blessing**

*** Sung Amen:** VU 959

Reflection: Martin Luther: Social Media Influencer

Let us pray:

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your site, gracious God. Amen.

This is reformation Sunday, and we cannot talk about the Protestant Reformation without a discussion of Martin Luther. There did seem to be a whole host of things that came together to create the “perfect storm” for the change that happened over 500 years ago.

Martin Luther’s father sent him to university to become a lawyer so that Luther could lend his legal acumen to the family business. But Luther found the law to be uninteresting to him and he was looking for a more meaningful vocation. To say his father was disappointed would be an understatement.

While Luther travelled from home back to school, he was caught in a terrible storm, and Luther made a promise to God that he would devote his life to the church, if his life was spared.

So Martin Luther joined a monastic order and was a very good student albeit obsessed with confessing to his sins. He practiced self flagellation, and incessant confessions to the extent that five minutes after one confession he would return with other sins he had remembered. This was an attempt to answer the one question at the core of Luther’s focus: Am I a good person?

His study led him to deduce that he could confess, do good works and devote his life to the church and he still felt as if he was unworthy of God’s love and redemption.

Because he was such a devout and accomplished scholar, when he was ordained, the university sent him on a trip to Rome. On foot mind you, so walking from Germany to Rome was no small feat. Luther was expecting a Mecca befitting the sacred office and purpose of the seat of the leadership of Christians. He was bitterly disappointed by his trip to Rome. Everywhere he looked he found perversion and sin and he returned home with a very altered view of the holy city.

Back at the University, having gained his doctorate he started teaching when an interesting character makes his appearance in our story.

Johann Tetsel arrives in town to help raise money for the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Johann had this scheme that would have people paying to avoid purgatory, on the way to heaven by paying for Papal Indulgences. Not only could you pay to avoid purgatory, but you could also pay to have your predeceased loved ones avoid time in purgatory as well.

This absolutely enraged Luther. He was shocked that the church would make up such indulgences and sell them to unsuspecting common folk who had no way of knowing this was not biblical, as they could not read the bible. He was quoted as saying that if the Pope wanted money to finish St. Peter’s he should use his own money. Pope Leo was very rich indeed as he was part of the Medici family, the famous bankers of Florence. So, personally Pope Leo was very rich.

Luther wanted this to be discussed in scholarly debates and he drew up a list of 95 debate points to be used in discussions. These theses were posted, perhaps to the university church door or perhaps some other space, history debates this point, but they were generally available to the students and teachers at the university.

It is at this point that another Johann enters the story. Johann Guttenberg had developed a printing press that could mass produce written materials for distribution and consumption. One of Luther’s students showed Guttenberg the 95 Theses and he thought it was just the sort of thing that would make a good pamphlet with a controversial and topical theme.

To use today’s verbiage: It went viral.

In just 10 days, the 95 Theses was in Spain, quite a distance from Germany. They sold out immediately and more had to be printed.

Now Pope Leo dismissed Luther as he thought him to be a minor disturbance not to be taken seriously. It should be noted that at this time, the church owned 50% of the land in Europe. The Pope was more of a CEO of a large corporate entity rather than the spiritual head of the church. Pope Leo was always looking towards political alliances rather than theological disputes. It is not surprising that he viewed Luther's radical writing as dangerous in so far as it impacted his ability to hold on to power. This undercurrent of political scheming had an impact on how the rulers saw Luther's teachings. Luther had concluded, through study and prayer, that the righteous person lives by faith alone. Salvation is not earned by good works or purchasing indulgences, but by simply believing and having faith. With this realization, comes the freedom to joyfully love and serve others.

Luther continued to write all his ideas down. His students wrote down everything that he did and said. It is why we have such a rich volume of accounts of his life. He became a bestselling author, the first actually. He wrote one quarter of all the books sold in Europe at that time. He also paid attention to how books looked, right down to the font used and pictures (woodcuts) chosen to illustrate both adult and children's books.

Luther, now excommunicated by the Pope, did come under scrutiny for his writings. He was summoned to Rome, but would not go, so it was arranged that he would be presented to Charles V at Worms to answer for his heresy. Luther was asked to recant all of his writings which had been collected by the accusers. When asked if he would recant, he understood what was on the line, because heretics were burned at the stake. He asked for time to prepare his answer and was given until the next day to do so. It should be noted that Martin Luther was a celebrity. The people followed him wherever he went and that King Frederick made sure he had safe passage to travel for this trial. He enjoyed the popular support of regular people and some nobility.

When he arrived back at the trial he responded to their questions, with questions of his own. Luther implored them to show him where he had gone wrong. To use scripture to explain to him the error in his thinking, but they could not do so. Martin Luther would make the return journey home.

Over the next five days, private conferences were held to determine Luther's fate. The emperor presented the final draft of the [Edict of Worms](#) on 25 May 1521, declaring Luther an [outlaw](#), banning his literature, and requiring his arrest: "We want him to be apprehended and punished as a notorious heretic."^[81] It also made it a crime for anyone in Germany to give Luther food or shelter. It permitted anyone to kill Luther without legal consequence.

On his return trip, Luther was taken to Wartburg Castle in an effort to hide him away from those who sought to harm him.

While under protection at Wartburg Luther translated the New Testament into German and continued to write many more books. Finally the people of Germany had scripture in their own language and could read it for themselves. As a consequence of his translation and other books, Luther has been credited with standardizing the German language for a centuries to come.

Luther left Wartburg about a year later. He returned to Wittenburg after reports that peasants had been harming Catholics in revolts. It should be noted that Martin Luther never set out to start the Lutheran church, he hated that his followers called themselves Lutherans. He wanted to reform the

Catholic church and so when they were being attacked Luther urged the peasants to show love and quoted today's scripture to do it. To love your neighbor as yourself.

Another way in which the new church differed from the Roman Catholic church was in allowing the clergy to marry. Luther felt that it was an unnatural state of being and that human beings were created to procreate and have families. Celibacy was a gift from God and not all clergy possessed that gift.

Luther was asked to assist in the rescue of 9 nuns. Once rescued, husbands or places were found for 8 of the nuns, the final nun, Katharina Van Bora, Luther married. Luther felt obligated to marry since he was advocating this for priests within the faith, but he developed a loving and strong relationship with Katharina and they had 6 children. Luther loved family life and developed many instructional classes or catechisms for young people as well as advocating for the education of both boys and girls.

There were two facts about Luther that can offer some insight into his approach to some of the trials he found himself facing. One was that he suffered from poor health and bouts of depression during his life. The other was that he often used very colorful and earthy language. While some of the terms and insults that he hurled at those in opposition to him, he was probably understood all the better by the working folks who hear him speak. It certainly lent to his reputation for speaking his mind. When the Pope Excommunicated Luther, he excommunicated the Pope! During one debate, hosted by Charles V, there was a jester employed to entertain the spectators. Luther announced that the common man (and here he indicated the Jester) armed with scripture is far better than any priest, bishop or pope without it. The Protestant movement was really gaining momentum and a number of religious leaders came together to discuss points of interest and agreement. Luther's Swiss counterpart Zwingli, differed with Luther with regards to communion. While Zwingli saw the act of communion as tribute or memorial to the last supper, Luther maintained that the bread and wine actually transformed into the body and blood of Christ. This is a major difference to be sure but the way that Luther referred to Zwingli would curl your hair! He used the most foul and abusive language to describe his opponent it makes one question his love your neighbor tenants.

As Luther aged and was faced with continued challenges, ill health and depression quite often seemed to show a duality of nature. Early in his ministry he preached loving compassion to Jews because, after all, Jesus was Jewish. After decades of assuming that Jews would naturally want to become Christians, Luther changed his tune and wrote books strongly condemning Jews for not becoming Christians.

Luther died in 1546 leaving a varied legacy.

Founder of the Protestant reformation, the first bestselling author. Writing 130 volumes of work and translating the New Testament into the common German Language. While he did not reform the Catholic church, many of the reforms that did come about in Roman Catholicism saw their roots in Luther's ideas, for example they no longer sell indulgences.

Standardization of the German language and the education of every child were adopted all over Europe and beyond. He would spearhead the use of new social media platform, printing as a way to spread ideas and movements.

But the turning point for us all, is the assertion that we are saved by grace alone. There is nothing that we can say or do that would make God love us any less and the knowledge of that grace gives us the freedom to live out our love of God and our neighbors, in the world.

I would like to end by giving two examples of the impact Martin Luther had in the 20th Century:

In Adolf Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, he sites Luther's antisemitic writing as some of his justification for hatred of Jews. Additional Nazi propaganda also uses this work. I would never seek to let Luther off the hook in relation to the horrors of the Holocaust, but it was the pseudo science of eugenics that built the framework for the genocide that followed.

My last example also takes place in the early 1930's, when a preacher from the US was attending a conference in Germany. Michael King learned a lot about Luther during the conference and he was impressed with Luther's non-violent resistance and patient perseverance. This preacher was so impacted by what he learned that when he returned home, he told his son that, "We are going to change our names, and from today, I will be known as Martin Luther King Sn. And you will be known as Martin Luther King Jr.

Two very different men, two very different outcomes. Martin Luther remains an important historical figure and founding father of our Protestant faith.