



## October 29, 2017 – 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost: 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation

*October 31, 2017, marks the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. In this text produced by our full communion partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, you can learn about how they are undertaking the ministry of reconciliation.*

*All this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has giving us the ministry of reconciliation. - 2 Corinthians 5:18-19*

For Lutherans, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation has provided a welcome occasion to learn more about Martin Luther and the Reformation, while strengthening our understanding and commitment to our ministries. But the date is important not only for Lutherans; its religious and cultural impacts have reached to the entire Church and beyond. Where for centuries there had been distrust and condemnations, this commemoration offers counter-cultural narratives of growing in mutual understanding and common action.

As the first centennial in an ecumenical and inter-religious era, this anniversary occurs in a spirit of reconciliation, for the whole world to see. In our broken world, this ministry of reconciliation is a faithful response to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Thus, the commemoration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) seeks to lift up and honor all of its ecumenical and inter-religious relationships. Together with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, inter-religious neighbors and all full communion and other ecumenical partners [including the Episcopal Church], in this year the ELCA gives thanks for all relationships working together toward reconciliation—toward unity among Christians and healing of the deepest social ills that plague our world. In the spirit of these reconciliations, the ELCA looks with confident hope toward the future.

*“Christians live not in themselves, but in Christ and in their neighbor. Otherwise they are not Christians. They live in Christ through faith, in their neighbor through love.”*  
– Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation commemoration emphasizes Martin Luther’s belief that the promise of God’s love makes possible a life of “a living, daring confidence in God’s grace.” In the face of many cultural suggestions that initiative and responsibility for relationship with God rest on the wavering strength of each individual, there is liberating strength in the Lutheran movement’s insistence that we rely on the faithful initiative and persistence of God’s Holy Spirit, who makes us right with God and renews our hearts. It is through God’s grace that Christ’s life flows through faith into a life of service to the neighbor.

Since October 31, 2016, ELCA congregations and ministries have lifted up and lived out Luther’s belief through various activities that reflect the ELCA’s commitment to be a church for the world. We invite you to explore the ELCA’s commemoration in the following ways:

- Visit [ELCA500.org](http://ELCA500.org), the ELCA’s **Reformation anniversary commemoration website**.
- Explore the [ELCA.org](http://ELCA.org) pages dedicated to **Ecumenical and Inter-faith Relations**.
- Explore [LivingLutheran.org/reformation](http://LivingLutheran.org/reformation), the ELCA’s official magazine’s website page dedicated to sharing the **Reformation anniversary stories** from around the church.