



1580^{AD}

KEY DATES IN THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION

Psalm 133 Ephesians 4:4-6 John 17:20-26

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Martin Luther died in 1546; *almost immediately* there were fractures in the Reformation movement. Luther was a giant during his time; and there was no successor after him. *The void was too much.* Some of the leaders lost their confidence since Luther was gone; some were worried about social unrest; and others feared the Emperor and the Roman Catholic Church. The Emperor Charles V reached out to the Lutherans with a compromise called the Augsburg Interim¹. His goal was to restore a sense of peace in his empire. Some of the reformers joined the cause; but many did not. The Augsburg Interim was essentially a Roman Catholic document that compromised the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

During this time *also*, several errant teachers arose among the ranks of the Reformation. There was controversy over the doctrines of good works, original sin, election, adiaphora, and even justification itself.

It was also during this time that new reformers arose who did not believe that Luther went far enough, and several groups of Protestants² started up.

¹ The Augsburg Interim of 1548 was largely a Roman Catholic agreement, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ was once again smothered in the Roman Catholic system of the work of man. "Charles V called an imperial diet to finally put an end to what he had long called the 'Luther Affair.' Luther was dead and all his political allies were either defeated, in prison, or in hiding. Those who could attend the diet (or parliament) in 1548 found themselves in a city surrounded by the emperor's army. It was nicknamed the 'Armed Diet.' The emperor demanded almost the complete abandonment of all of Luther's reforms. ('From Luther to the Lutherans' By David M. Whitford) Faithful Lutherans could not accept the Augsburg Interim.

² It's important to note the difference between "Lutheran" and "Protestant." At first, the followers of Martin Luther were called the "protesters" -- where the name Protestant comes from. But early in the Reformation, there was a split amongst the Protestants. The split was over the meaning of Jesus' words in the Lord's Supper where He said, "Take and eat, this is My Body." Martin Luther believed that Jesus meant what He said, and that somehow, someway the bread in His hand was also His Body, given for us for the forgiveness of sins. (The same with the wine and "This is My Blood".) The other group of Protestants tried to explain what Jesus really meant, and they decided that Jesus meant "This represents and reminds you of My Body." But it is NOT

Under the name of the “Reformation,” all kinds a people rose up to champion their own causes and break away from the Roman Catholic Church. There were those who wanted a Christian “**utopia**”; there were those who wanted to *completely separate* from the world; there were those who would do *exactly opposite* whatever the Roman Catholic Church did; and there were those who used the Church to promote their own **personal** agendas. *The Reformation movement was splintering.*

It was a tumultuous time after Luther's death; Satan was having a heyday with all of these controversies. The people were confused, and the Gospel was at risk again.

**But once again,
God raised up faithful men
to proclaim the truth of God's Holy Word.**

That's where the year **1580** becomes important. In **1580**, the Lutherans formulated all of their doctrines into one book called the **Book of Concord³**. The **Book of Concord** “confessed” the truth of Holy Scripture. True Lutherans rallied around the **Book of Concord**, as it faithfully confessed the teachings of Christ. The **Book of Concord** brought peace and unity to the Lutheran Reformation. It was the final dividing line between those who confessed Lutheran doctrine and those who did not. Even today, here at Trinity, the official constitution of our church references the **Book of Concord**:

His Body. They turned the Body and Blood of Christ into simply things to remember Jesus with, but not actually His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. Ultimately, they did not hold to Jesus’ words, but they were trying to explain His words by their own reason and strength. (This split was finalized at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529.) The reformers who followed over the next decades all stayed with the symbolic interpretation of the Lord’s Supper, and they are now referred to with the term “Protestants”; and Lutherans who hold to the “Real Presence” of Christ in the Lord’s Supper are referred to as “Lutherans.”

³ The **Book of Concord** contains documents in which Christians from the 4th to the 16th century A.D. confessed as the truth of God's Holy Word. It contains: (1) a preface signed by 51 electors, bishops, princes, and nobles of the Holy Roman Empire and representatives of 35 free imperial cities; (2) the three ecumenical creeds (Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian); (3) the Unaltered Augsburg Confession (1530) and (4) its Apology (1531); (5) the Smalcald Articles (1536–37); (6) Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537); (7) Martin Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms (1529); (8) the Formula of Concord (1577); and (9) the Catalogue of Testimonies (1580), which is supporting citations from the writings of early Church Fathers.

Article III: Confession of Faith

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all of the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments without reservation and acknowledges and accepts all the Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, to be the true exposition of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures. . . . All doctrines shall be taught and examined in the congregation according to these Scriptural and Confessional norms and all doctrinal controversies, which arise in this congregation, shall be decided and adjudicated on the basis of them.

The **Book of Concord** is the official and public Confession of the Lutheran Church⁴. The **Book of Concord** is frequently referred to simply as the **Concordia**⁵ ... a Latin word that means *agreement, union, and harmony*.

Concordia is God's work among us. God's will is that we live in *peace, unity, and harmony* with each other. This **Concordia** is not peace and unity like the world thinks; it is peace and unity around the Lord Jesus Christ, it is harmony around the teachings of His Holy Word. St. Paul describes this **Concordia** like this:

Make every effort to keep the **unity of the Spirit** through the **bond of peace**. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:3-6

That **unity of the Spirit** and the **bond of peace** is the essence of **Concordia** --> peace and unity around the Lord Jesus and His Word. Jesus prayed for this kind of **Concordia**:

Jesus said, "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that **they may be one as we are one**— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to **complete unity**." John 17:22-23

⁴ All pastors and teachers of the LCMS must "**unconditionally subscribe**" to the Book of Concord. The first LCMS President, C.F.W. Walther, wrote, "An unconditional subscription is the solemn declaration which the individual who wants to serve the Church makes under oath 1) that he accepts the doctrinal content of our [Book of Concord], because he recognizes the fact that it is in full agreement with Scripture and does not militate against Scripture in any point, whether that point be of major or minor importance; 2) that he therefore heartily believes in this divine truth and is determined to preach this doctrine without adulteration." This unconditional subscription assures a congregation that its professional church workers are going to teach Lutheran doctrine.

⁵ Hence, the word "**Concordia**" is a popular name. Now it is used to not only refer to the Book of Concord, but it is also the name of churches, schools, colleges, a publishing house, and even the church worker benefits company, just to name a few.

The [Holy Christian Church](#) is all believers of all times in all places. This Church is invisible and known only to God. The [Holy Christian Church](#) is united through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Church that we confess in the Nicene Creed when we say we believe in the One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church. This Church is invisible and known only to God.

The [visible church](#), on the other hand, are local congregations; gatherings of believers in one place around a confession of faith. This is what the Lutheran Church is⁶; believers gathered around Holy Scripture as confessed by the [Book of Concord](#). It means that we hold the same understandings of the teachings of Scripture: we have peace, unity, and harmony --- [Concordia](#) --- around such doctrines as sin, grace, faith, Christ, the Holy Trinity, Holy Baptism, Holy Scripture, Holy Communion, and so forth.

THERE IS A DANGER THOUGH. Inside the Christian Church, there is a significant *false teaching* about the unity of the Church. It's called [ecumenicalism](#), and it's the idea that all "Christians" should unite regardless of what you believe about Christ or His Word. If you say "you *love* Jesus" that's enough. Scripture truths and the doctrines of Christ are considered minor, secondary in nature, and even divisive. They believe that what's important is that we unite as "Christians" regardless of what one believes⁷. As conservative Lutherans, we can have nothing to do with that. Jesus taught us that, "[if you hold to My teachings, then you are really My disciples.](#)" Like the apostles of old, and like our Lutheran ancestors in the 1500s, we will hold to the teachings of Christ. We will faithfully confess them, as we do in the [Book of Concord](#), and we will diligently guard and protect them from false teachers and worldly ideas⁸.

1580AD separated the Lutherans from all the other Protestants. It marks the creation of the [Book of Concord](#), the official teachings and confessions of the true Lutheran Church. **1580AD** teaches us that the teachings of Christ matter; and that true *Concordia* happens only around the truth of the Word of God. Amen!

⁶ "The Lutheran Church does not set itself up as the *una sancta*, but acknowledges that there are children of God also in those denominations in which, besides the doctrines of men, enough Gospel is still proclaimed to produce faith in Christ as the only Redeemer. On the other hand, the Lutheran Church claims to be the Church of the pure doctrine, i.e., it claims that its doctrine agrees in all points with Holy Scripture and should accordingly to God's Will be believed and accepted by all" Christian Dogmatics, Francis Pieper, I.32

⁷ History has shown that ecumenicalism leads to Unitarianism and Universalism. Unity around "Jesus" soon gives way to unity around "faith", whatever faith means to you. This is the path that many denominations have gone down. Churches that are ecumenical signal that by including "Unity" in their name, or by using a tagline such as "a house of prayer for all people." They claim to be "global, inclusive, and spiritual communities".

⁸ If you want to learn more about [ecumenism](#), I suggest reading this pamphlet: "A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism" - it is a LCMS document from 1974. It is an easy read; and it is a good overview. Do an internet search for "A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism", or email me and I will send it to you.

Lord Jesus, we pray for unity in the Holy Christian Church. Open the ears of believers so that they may hear Your true Word and the Gospel Good News of Your eternal salvation. Lead them to repent of their sin and turn away from striving to please you with their own works and efforts. Create faith in the Gospel and sanctify them by your Spirit. Cast out false teachers, and raise up faithful pastors and teachers for us and for the ages to come. We pray this knowing that You are the Lord of the Church, Amen.

Psalm 133

How good and pleasant it is when
God's people live together in unity!

2 It is like precious oil poured on
the head, running down on the
beard,

running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe. 3 It
is as if the dew of Hermon were
falling on Mount Zion. For there
the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

Ephesians 4:4-6

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

John 17:20-26

Jesus said, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25 “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”