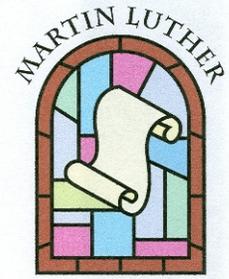


Congregational newsletter



LUTHERAN CHURCH
— Founded 1955 Gegründet —

November 2010

DEVOTION

*Dear Members and Friends of the
Martin Luther Church !*

In Romans 3 we find a powerful summary of Paul's message.

For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

This message was at the beginning of the reformation, this way Martin Luther renewed the church. But what does this message mean, for you and for me? How can this message touch and transform our lives?

Let us be clear about this: whenever we come before God, we come into the presence of the holy and just God. And this is the big question before God: Have you cared for God's will? Have you fulfilled what God has expected from you? If we are honest we have to admit: no, I haven't done that, I have failed, I have sinned. So often I have forgotten God and hurt my fellow humans, so often I have been careless and inconsequent.

Yet Paul is not content with any superficial confession, he isn't satisfied when we are sorry for this and that - Paul wants us to reach deep down into the life of our soul. He wants us to accept wholeheartedly: I need God, always everywhere totally. I need God with everything I am and have, with body soul and spirit. I am totally dependent upon God. First on God's grace, that God forgives what is wrong. Then on God's Spirit, that the

Spirit guides and teaches me, that God's Spirit does the good in and through me.

And then this is a very liberating message! Jesus has done everything! Whatever I have failed to do, Jesus has fulfilled it! I can live from grace! I can behold God's love and compassion. I need not permanently brood over my shortcomings. The most essential is: I am a child of God, God cares

for me with a fatherly and motherly love, I can live in this confidence and freedom!

When Luther rediscovered this truth, this changed the church tremendously. But there always was this question also, directed against Paul or Luther, is this not too simple or too extreme: "Justified before God through faith alone?"

Famous are the qualms of the letter of James: What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Faith by itself, if it has no works, is it not dead? Yes, these are very important questions. Let us just imagine a murderer, someone who killed deliberately several humans. If this murderer cries in his hour of death, "Jesus, have mercy upon me?" - is he then saved so easily? And let us imagine another man, honest, diligent, and conscientious, who struggled to direct all his life to the good, but unfortunately he never heard of Jesus, therefore he was not able to believe in Christ. So is this man lost in hell after death whereas the murderer is rescued?



I am convinced Paul does not mean this. Paul is completely focused upon God: God's glory and power. We humans need God absolutely, we depend on God in everything - this is Paul's great message. And I am certain: God will judge the life of each human with absolute justice and absolute compassion. God's absolute just and absolute compassionate judgement will do right to each human, much more than our human judgements which are most times very superficial.

Let me share another thought with you: Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer insisted that we should never misunderstand "Justification by Faith" as "Cheap Grace". Bonhoeffer said: *"Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."* Grace is a deep experience: that I examine my life honestly before God and then regret my failures sincerely. So I can experience forgiveness as a true liberation, as a new beginning here and now. This experience is rooted in God's Costly Grace, that he gave his son on the cross for granting me forgiveness.

So I can ask God, "transform me by your Holy Spirit, show me the way, strengthen me through your Spirit that I can fulfill your will today, in the manifold tasks of this day." This is what "Justification by Faith" means, not a cozy lazy general principle, but a deep experience, an active commitment, nurtured by an intimate relationship with God.

Just let us remember Martin Luther. In these weeks, I show the Luther movie to our confirmands, the movie with Joseph Fiennes playing Luther and Sir Peter Ustinov being Frederick the Wise. Here the confirmands see themselves what the rediscovering of this message meant for Luther. It did not mean a cozy lazy life, it was Costly Grace for him, exposing him to big dangers and perils.

In that movie it also becomes clear how liberating the the message of the reformation was, how helpful and beneficial. Tetzl, the preacher of indulgences, comes and persuades people to buy

his papers for a big amount of money. But Luther says to Hanna, a poor simple woman, this paper is worth nothing. If you need help for your little crippled daughter, save your money, try to get crutches for her. This will help her, not this paper of indulgence.

Then a young man is discovered, hanging at a rope, who committed suicide. The parents are desperate because their son has killed himself. But they get even more desperate when an interment in the church cemetery is not possible because it is not allowed by church regulations. Luther does not care for this church law. He sees the desperation of these parents, he knows of the horrible darkness which drove this boy into suicide, he knows this was a suffering tormented human. Therefore Luther buries this boy with his own hands in the church cemetery, as a sign: This human still is a beloved child of the gracious God! Actually there is no historical proof that Luther really did this. But there are many comments made by Luther which show his deep understanding for suicides. Luther really was terrified many times by church laws and religious ideas which were a burden for humans, suppressing human dignity. Then Luther always would ask, is this concordant with the gracious and caring God, who wants life and salvation and bliss for his children?

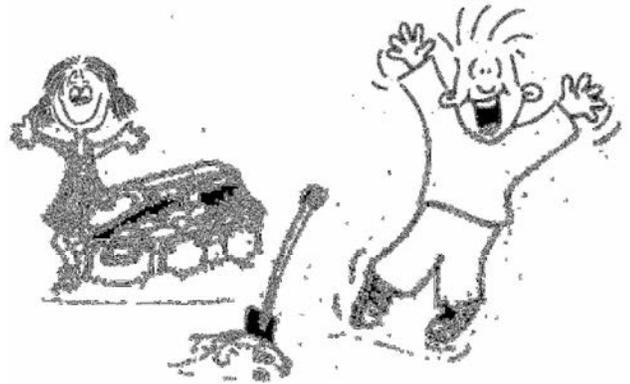
This is Reformation also, to ask again and again: where are humans suppressed by inappropriate laws and ideas? How can we change and mend this so that humans experience them as help and orientation from the living and caring God?

We celebrate Reformation, the origin of our Lutheran Church, an occasion for gratitude and for reflection. It is not about Cheap Grace. It is about Costly Grace, which costed God so tremendously much, which gives us so much, but which places us in a deep and profound responsibility also.

*Kind regards and God's blessings,
Your Pastor Alexander Mielke*

The painting of Lukas Cranach the Elder shows Martin Luther in the year 1521.

For **Sunday Nov 7**, we very cordially invite to a **German Family Service** which will be starting at 11:00 a.m., a lively service with contemporary songs for young and old. The motto is "Ein Schatz ist, wenn du plötzlich etwas ganz Tolles findest".



On this Nov 7, we celebrate the English "All Saints" Service at 9:45 am, for remembering our beloved ones.

Please notice the DAY LIGHT SAVING TIME CHANGE from Nov 6 to 7 !!!

Very welcome to the Advent Concert on the **first Advent Sunday, Nov 28**, 1:30 p.m., presented by the **Edelweiss Choir** under the direction of Manfred Petz. We will be able to enjoy Austrian and German Carols.

On this First Advent Sunday, there will be a little Advent Bazaar too with ecological and fair trade products. As Pastor Heike Block-Mielke regularly volunteers at "Ten Thousand Villages", she will provide such a table after the services. It is a good opportunity to find some nice Christmas presents.

We are looking forward to the **Christmas Play on the third Advent Sunday, Dec 12**, the great event during the Advent Season. All children are very welcome to participate. Practicing will be done during the sunday schools beforehand.

We very cordially invite to our services in the Christmas Season:

4th Advent Sunday, December 19, 5:00 p.m.: English Candlelight Service
for the Young and Young at Heart

December 24, Friday, 5:00 p.m.: German Service in Christmas Eve
6:30 p.m., English Candle Light Service

December 25, Saturday, 11:00 a.m.: German Service on Christmas Day

December 26, Sunday, 11:00 a.m.: Joint Service as Sing Along with English and German Carols

There will be another **Adult Retreat** in the end of January. For the second time, we will meet for this in the cozy **Mount Alverno Centre**. It is going to start with supper on Jan 28 and end with lunch on Jan 30. Join us for this weekend of good fellowship in having time together, singing and Bible reading.

Price is about the same as last year: \$ 118.00 for the weekend, accomodation and food included. Please contact Pastor Mielke if you like to participate. The address is: 20704 Heart Lake Road, Caledon, Ontario L7K 2A2, (Close to Orangeville) - Carpooling Will Be Provided.



In October I was conducting a special service: "ReReading Theodor Fontane's Stechlin". If you are interested, you can find a collection of quotes from "Der Stechlin" on our website (www.martinluther.ca, German homepage, photos archive, photos 2010, October 24). In January, I am going to conduct a similar special service about "Michael Ende and his father, the surrealist painter Edgar Ende – 50 years after Jim Knopf".

We very cordially thank all those who donated for the Foodbank and our sister congregation in Brazil during this time of Thanksgiving! In

Guarulhos they were able to celebrate the successful renovation of their Cabucu building which has a beautiful chapel now too. Children meet regularly for music lessons and youth group. But they got in problems also, because of a sudden hail and snow storm in September which did damage to the church windows as well as to the roof.



Our present confirmation class (from left to right):

Arvind Haefele, Derek Frantzke, Samuel Rosati, Philip und Marc Schwentek, Jana Walkowski, Veronika Mielke, Amy Schweiger, Sebastian Schill, Graham Buceta



Pastor Guenter Dahle has retired this autumn. For more than 40 years, he has served our Lutheran Church; in his position of Assistant Bishop he even was the longest serving in all of North America. On behalf of the Church Council, Heinz Gutsch wrote the following for thanking him:

The Martin Luther Church with Pastor Mielke, Church Council and the many friends you have in our congregation, would like to extend our very best wishes on your well deserved retirement.

We can not thank you enough for the always devoted, dedicated work and assistance you provided to our congregation whenever we asked for your support.

Having known you for over 40 years and as a church elder, I have the privilege to recall a few events and on many occasions of special importance.

- The first time was during Pastor Karl Wulf's 40th year Jubilee of Ordination in 1965.
- In 1985 when you were our guest for a special sermon celebrating the founding of our church 30 years ago.
- Again in 1995 to celebrate our 40th anniversary
- In 1999 for the special festivities service and sermon for Pastor Schwantes retirement after 35 years in our congregation. We were particular pleased that you and your wife could join us on this day.
- The installation of Pastor Stefan Wolf in 2000 and Pastor Alexander Mielke in 2007.

Finally the memories, when about 25 congregational members visited the "Kirchentag" 2003 in Berlin, Germany and you later joined us on a bus-tour, tracking the legacy of Martin Luther in many cities and places well known to our Lutheran Church.

Martin Luther, whose name we bear as a congregation, once wrote:

*"Faith and love are the whole essence of a Christian person.
Faith receives, love gives.
Faith brings people to God, love brings God to people.
Through faith he lets God be benevolent towards him,
through faith he is benevolent towards people."*

Assistant Bishop Dahle with the MLC Church Council on occasion of Pastor Mielke's installation in September 2007



Here We Need Your Help

Flowers on the altar make our church beautiful for the Sunday. Flower donations which can be made in memory of loved ones are very much appreciated. Please sign up in the the list which you find in the entrance hall, for a Sunday which is still free and convenient for you. For coordination it might be helpful if you leave your phone number on a card.

Please also have a look at the **Coffee Duty List** – thank you for helping on a Sunday!

For the following **wedding anniversaries**, our best wishes and God's blessings:

Melvin and Agnes Zabel, 50th wedding anniversary

Gustav and Lydia Schafrick, 50th wedding anniversary

Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

FUNERALS

Sigi Krueger, at the age of 73 years
October 15, 2010

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:39

Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church
2379 Lake Shore Blvd. West, Toronto, ON M8V 1B7
Telephone: 416-251-8293, Fax: 416-259-2889

www.martinluther.ca

Pastor Alexander Mielke

Email: alexander.mielke@rogers.com

Radio Devotion (in German) every Sunday 9:30 a.m. on AM 530

Editor of MLC Newsletter: Pastor Alexander Mielke

Homepage and List Administrator: Mona Frantzke; Mailing List: Anita Ratz

Email-Distribution List:

Please add my name and my email address to the MLC-distribution list:

Name: _____

Email-Address: _____

*Please send to: Mona Frantzke, List Administrator, mona.frantzke@rogers.com, or:
Martin Luther Church, 2379 Lakeshore Blvd West, Toronto, ON M8V 1B7*