

REFORMATION

The

Word

Shall Yet Remain



LEADER'S GUIDE

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Leader's Guide

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REFORMATION

The *Word* Shall Yet Remain

Notes and Ordering Information

In this Reformation worship service, we are reminded that while other things on this earth may come to an end, the Word of the Lord will stay with us forever. Bible readings, hymns, prayers, a homily and a children's message assure us that the message of our salvation by grace through faith will stand the test of time. Hymns include "A Mighty Fortress," "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word," "God's Word Is Our Great Heritage" and "O Word of God Incarnate."

Printed bulletins (8 1/2" x 11") are available. Code RF3A

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REFORMATION

The *Word* Shall Yet Remain

Newsletter/Bulletin Notices

Newsletter Notice

We invite you to the stirring Reformation service, “The Word Shall Yet Remain,” in which we sing, speak and celebrate the fact that the truth of God’s Word still stands firm in our hearts, souls and lives and will continue to endure to life everlasting. Grounded in Scripture and steeped in the history of the Reformation, this service will leave you confident in the truth of God’s grace and salvation.

Bulletin Notice

Today we join with the long line of the faithful before us in celebrating and proclaiming that it is God’s Word, and not the fleeting things of this world, that will stand the test of time and carry us through to everlasting life with Jesus, our Savior. As you sing, speak and listen to the truth of God’s Word in this service, let the grace and salvation revealed there sink deep into your hearts, souls and minds.

The
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Shall Yet Remain

Complete Script For Worship Leaders

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Erhalt Uns, Herr LM:

Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word;
Curb those who by deceit or sword
Would wrest the kingdom from your Son
And bring to nought all he has done.

Lord Jesus Christ, your pow'r make known,
For you are Lord of lords alone;
Defend your holy Church, that we
May sing your praise triumphantly.

O Comforter of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth;
Support us in your final strife
And lead us out of death to life.

- The **Confession and Absolution** is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

P The Word of God reminds us through the First Epistle of John: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Therefore, let us now reflect on our lives and confess our sins to God: For those times when we have ignored your Word, despised your Word, misused your Word to hurt others, distorted your Word to our own ends, and kept your Word to ourselves instead of sharing it with others,

C **We ask for your forgiveness, O Lord.**

P Receive this good news: God’s Word of promise is the forgiveness of your sins in the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus. By his blood, you are washed clean from sin. Cling to the promise of God’s Word now and forever.

C **Amen.**

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Reuter 87 87 65 66 7:

God’s Word is our great heritage
 And shall be ours forever;
 To spread its light from age to age
 Shall be our chief endeavor.
 Through life it guides our way;
 In death it is our stay.
 Lord, grant while time shall last
 Your Church may hold it fast
 Throughout all generations.

- The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken by the pastor:

P Holy, gracious God, your Word calls us to lives of faithfulness: to trust in your promise, to share your love with others in speech and action, to return to you when we sin, and to always give you thanks. Help your Church to be always more faithfully reforming in response to your Word, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

- The **Responsive Psalm** (from Psalm 119:49-52) is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

P Remember your word to your servant,

C **in which you have made me hope.**

P This is my comfort in my affliction,

C that your promise gives me life.

P The insolent utterly deride me,

C but I do not turn away from your law.

P When I think of your rules from of old,

C I take comfort, O LORD.

- The **Children’s Sermon** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

(As with any invitation for input, feel free to change out the particular examples given below in order to use the responses you get. Depending on the children, you may even ask them to help you explain what the various names for Jesus tell us about who he is, especially if they gave you one of those names.)

P How many names can you think of for Jesus? *(Give time for answers, and invite the adults to help.)*
That’s a great list!

The Bible gives us so many names for Jesus, and each one tells us something about who Jesus is for us. The name *Jesus* means “he save us.” The name *Christ* is defined as “God anointed him,” just like the name *Messiah*. *Son of God* reminds us that Jesus is God. *Son of Man* tells us that Jesus is human, born of Mary. The name *Bridegroom* expresses to us the depth of Christ’s love for the Church and the great hope we have in the promise of his return. Jesus even called himself *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. *The Way* means that Jesus is the only one who can take us to the Father. *The Truth* means that we can always believe Jesus. *The Life* reminds us that Jesus gives us eternal life and everything we need to live now. *(Feel free to add others.)*

Whew, that’s a lot of names. But there’s one we didn’t mention. It comes from the Gospel of John, which tells us that another name for Jesus is *Word of God*. This special name for Jesus reminds us of two things. First, Jesus is one with the Heavenly Father, who made us and everything that exists. Second, we can trust what he says. His words of promise can help us through tough times and bring us joy when things are going well. In fact, we’ll hear a very important word of promise from Jesus during the reading from Matthew. Make sure to listen closely for it, because his words are very meaningful to our lives.

Let’s pray: Jesus, we thank you for everything you mean to us. Help us to trust your promises, and to tell other people about them. Amen.

- The **Old Testament Reading**, Isaiah 40:6-9, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

¶ A voice says, “Cry!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”

- The **Epistle Reading**, Hebrews 13:8-15, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

¶ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

- The **Gospel Reading**, Matthew 28:16-20, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

¶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Ein Feste Burg 87 87 66 66 7 (isorhythmic):

A mighty fortress is our God, a sword and shield victorious;
 He breaks the cruel oppressor's rod and wins salvation glorious.
 The old satanic foe has sworn to work us woe.
 With craft and dreadful might he arms himself to fight.
 On earth he has no equal.

No strength of ours can match his might! We would be lost, rejected.
But now a champion comes to fight, whom God himself elected.
You ask who this may be? The Lord of hosts is he!
Christ Jesus, mighty Lord, God's only Son, adored.
He holds the field victorious.

Though hordes of devils fill the land all threat'ning to devour us,
We tremble not, unmoved we stand; they cannot overpower us.
Let this world's tyrant rage; in battle we'll engage!
His might is doomed to fail; God's judgment must prevail!
One little word subdues him.

God's Word forever shall abide, no thanks to foes, who fear it;
For God himself fights by our side with weapons of the Spirit.
Were they to take our house, goods, honor, child or spouse,
Though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day.
The Kingdom's ours forever!

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

¶ By now you've probably picked up the dark undercurrent of this service, but in case you've missed it, listen closely as I read to you what you just sang:

Were they to take our house, goods, honor, child, or spouse,
Though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day.

That's been the dark undercurrent of the service: loss. Loss of everything, including life itself. Yet we cry out in faith that God is still with us. How can this be?

Overeducated, theological types will sometimes talk about the *opinio legis*, or the opinion of the law—the idea that if we do right, good things will happen to us, and if we do wrong, bad things will happen to us. This works out in a strange way in our lives.

When we see something bad has happened to someone else, we figure they did something to deserve it. When something bad happens to us, we convince ourselves that we're not that bad, that surely this is someone else's fault. When we see something good happened to someone else, we wonder derisively what they did to deserve it. When something good happens to us, we convince ourselves that we deserve it.

Odd how this happens, but, of course, it's what we want to be true. Most folks don't think of themselves as bad people. Outside of theater, people don't go around calling themselves villains. In fact, recent movies have tried to show how even classic villains are just misunderstood. So if

everybody's not that bad, why do bad things happen? Why do we lose the people and things we care about?

This question is very old. The author of Hebrews refers back to Temple law and to the pagan worship of his time when he writes about people being strengthened by particular foods and blood sacrifices. Such an approach is one answer to the question of why bad things happen: because you haven't made the right sacrifices. Make the right sacrifices, and things will go well for you. This is the *opinio legis*.

Isaiah had a different encounter with the question of loss and bad things happening. He looked around him and saw creation dying. Grass withering, flowers fading. His response? "The word of God will stand ... Judah, behold your God!" How is this a response to the question of loss and bad things happening?

Believe it or not, this question of why bad things happen, of why we lose those people and things we care for, sparked the Reformation, albeit from the minority view. You see, Martin Luther was convinced he was a bad person. He was convinced that God hated him, and by the opinion of the law, only bad things should happen to him. For a time, he tried making the right sacrifices. We have stories about Luther confessing every time he had a bad thought, every time his mind wandered during a sermon, even every time he passed gas! It got so bad that at one time, his confessor told him to go away and actually sin before he came back to confession. But Luther was scared, you see, that he would die and go to hell. And he wasn't the only one who thought this way.

Indeed, the Church actually taught this at one point. Through plays and priests out on the streets, with rules and regulations, even tabulations for the penalties of various sins, the Church used people's fears to separate them from their money, telling them that this sacrifice could save them and their family members from eternity in hell.

Then Luther encountered the Word of God and, empowered by the Spirit, called the Church to repent from trusting in their own actions to save them and to keep bad things from happening to them. The Holy Spirit showed Luther the wondrous mercy of Jesus, who as the only acceptable sacrifice for our sin, suffered and died, not in the Temple, but in the world: in the halls of government where justice was perverted, through the streets and markets where jeers of derision were hurled at him, and outside the gates of the city where misery and death awaited him.

God opened Luther's heart and mind to see, as the author of Hebrews reminds us, that Jesus' suffering and death—which happened in those places where the world hurts—sanctified those places. This did not remove the suffering and loss, but sanctified it, made it holy. Jesus' suffering and death makes everyday life holy, despite the opinion of the law. This is the promise of Jesus, the Word of God.

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- The **Closing Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Munich 76 76 D:

O Word of God incarnate, O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging, O Light of our dark sky:
We praise you for the radiance that from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps, shines on from age to age.

The Church from you, dear Master, received the gift divine;
And still that light is lifted o'er all the earth to shine.
It is the chart and compass that, all life's voyage through,
Mid mists and rocks and quicksand still guides, O Christ, to you.

Oh, make your Church, dear Savior, a lamp of burnished gold
To bear before the nations your true light, as of old;
Oh, teach your wand'ring pilgrims by this their path to trace,
Till, clouds and darkness ended, they see you face to face.