

# Leader Guide

## Reformation Sunday

In this event, kids of all ages can gather together to celebrate Reformation Sunday. Plan this event for the Sunday closest to Reformation Day, which is October 31. The event is written for kids of many ages to learn and explore together, so plan to hold this event in a larger room. Prepare supplies as directed. Read through "About Reformation Day."

**Scripture Reference:** Romans 3:19–28

**Lectionary Sunday/Church Season:** Reformation Sunday

**Lesson Focus:** God's grace is a free gift of his love.

**Bible Memory Verse:** "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law." Romans 3:28

### Supplies for Gather

- Nametags
- Markers
- Calendar
- Martin Luther costume such as robe, beret, and monk wig
- Hammer
- Long rolled-up paper

### Supplies for Open the Bible

- Spark Bibles
- Pieces of paper rolled up and tied with ribbon

### Supplies for Activate Faith

- Footprints PDF
- Luther's Seal PDF
- Meaning of Luther's Seal PDF
- Cardstock
- Markers
- Metallic crayons
- Scissors
- Glitter glue
- Highlighter pens
- Stickers
- Tacky glue
- Red, white, blue, and black felt
- Foam core, posterboard, or card stock
- Newspapers or plastic tablecloth
- Large piece of mural paper or fabric
- Letter stencils or stamps
- Felt or colored paper

## Supplies for Send

- None

## About Reformation Day

When we teach kids about Reformation Day, we could just focus on why Luther was so right and the Roman Catholic church was so wrong. But reality is more complex than that. Many of the things that Luther was against were eventually changed in the Roman Catholic Church. Besides, Luther didn't try to form a new church; he wanted to reform his own church from within. So be mindful of the way you speak about the Catholic faith during this session! There are probably interfaith marriages in your congregation and Roman Catholic members of your community. Emphasize that Luther worked to reform the church of his day, and today we follow in his footsteps by being open to the ongoing reforming of the church.

## Before the Event

Download a picture of Martin Luther and post it in your classroom.

Use a Footprints PDF to cut 30 footprints (15 left and 15 right) from construction paper. Write dates and notable events from Luther's life on the footprints for Activate Faith. A timeline of Martin Luther's life can be found in *The Lutheran Handbook II*, pages 39-41, or on the Internet.

Print out the Luther's Seal Pattern PDF onto cardstock. Cut out the pattern pieces. Use the pattern to cut the cross, heart, rose, blue background, and yellow ring out of felt, cardstock, or foam for young kids to use during Open the Bible. (Older participants may cut their own pieces.)

Print out the Meaning of Luther's Seal PDF. Make one copy for each participant to take home.

Cut square pieces of foam core board large enough to glue the assembled Luther's seal onto, one per participant, for Open the Bible.

Make a sample of Luther's seal as described in Open the Bible.

Locate an adult volunteer who would be willing to visit the class as Martin Luther in the activity described in Activate Faith.

## Gather (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** Nametags, markers, calendar, Martin Luther costume (robe, beret, monk wig), hammer, long rolled-up paper

Invite an outgoing, dramatic adult volunteer to dress up like Martin Luther. Use online images of him as a guide to clothing and hair. Make sure this person is unseen as kids

arrive in your gathering area.

Welcome kids and invite them to make a nametag that has a symbol on it. The symbol can be an existing one from a favorite organization or superhero, or it could be one that kids make up to represent themselves. Older kids can help prereaders write names.

Hold up a calendar and show the month of October. **What do we celebrate around this time of year?** Many kids may answer with a loud Halloween! Acknowledge their excitement. **On October 31, Lutheran churches and many other churches all around the world celebrate Reformation Day.** Point to October 31 on the calendar. **October 31 is a day when we remember Martin Luther and a time in history called Reformation. The Reformation started almost 500 years ago!**

**Martin Luther was a Roman Catholic monk and teacher who lived in Germany. He was born a long time ago in 1483. That is over 500 years ago! On October 31, 1517, he hung a paper he had written on the door of a big church. The paper listed 95 things he wanted to debate with others about rules or teachings that aren't in the Bible. It was a bold move to put this paper on the door of a church in the city of Wittenberg, Germany.** Have the Martin Luther character knock on the door and "interrupt" your lesson. Improvise a scene where you answer the door with Martin Luther and express surprise and delight that he has stopped in to talk with your group.

**It looks like we have a very special guest—Martin Luther himself!** Improvise a scene between the two of you where you interview Martin. He can use his hammer and rolled up paper of 95 theses for dramatic effect. You can use the facts about Luther's Life on the Footprints PDF as a guide. Rehearse this interview with Martin before this event. If your Martin is open to questions from kids, open the floor to their questions! The goal is to encourage deeper understanding of Luther's life and times and to show kids that one person made a big difference.

After a few minutes of interviewing him, say goodbye to Martin.

## **Open the Bible (15 minutes)**

**Supplies:** Spark Bibles, pieces of paper rolled up and tied with ribbon

**That was quite a visit! Martin Luther really wanted people during his time and today to know that the Bible says a lot of really important things ... and that there are some things that are NOT in the Bible. Martin Luther saw what the church did and then he read the Bible and said, "Wait a minute! What they're teaching isn't what the Bible says!"**

Group kids so there is a mix of ages. Each group should have at least one kid with a Spark Bible. **I want you to listen to the Bible stories I'm going to tell now. When I'm done with each story, I'll ask, "Is that what the Bible says?" You'll tell me if anything was wrong in the way I told the story. You're trying to listen for things that are different**

from what the Bible really says. You can also check your Spark Bibles.

### Story 1

The first story is from the Book of Jonah. That story starts on page 1008 in your Spark Bibles. Wait for kids to open their Bibles to this story. **Jonah was a prophet who tried to run away from God. God told him to go to Nineveh. Instead, Jonah got on a boat heading away from Nineveh. After a while, there was a huge storm and the sailors decided to throw Jonah overboard. He was swallowed by a whale, and while he was in the belly of the whale, he learned how to speak whale from a fish named Dory. He escaped from the whale by getting the whale to spew him out of the blowhole. Is that what the Bible says?**

**No, of course not! You may recognize that ending from the movie *Finding Nemo*, but it's certainly not in the Bible. What really happened?** Allow for kids' responses. Kids may remember that Jonah was in the belly of a fish for three days before God made the fish spit Jonah out onto dry land. Then Jonah spread God's message to the people of Nineveh and they repented.

### Story 2

The second story is about Noah. You'll find it starting on page 7 in your Spark Bibles. Wait for kids to open their Bibles to this story. **Noah got some unusual instructions from God. God told Noah to build a huge boat and gather two of each animal in it. After Noah had done all his work, building the boat and gathering the animals and bringing his family along, God made it rain for 40 days and 40 nights. When the rain stopped, and Noah wanted to find out if there was any dry land, he sent a pig out to see if there was any mud on the earth. He knew it was dry out there when the pig couldn't find any mud. Is that what the Bible says?**

**No, of course not! What really happened?** Allow for kids' responses. It wasn't a pig that Noah sent out after the rain ended. First, Noah sent out a raven, and then he sent out a dove. After neither found dry land, he waited for several more days. The next time he sent out the dove, it brought back an olive leaf, which told Noah that there was dry land out there.

### Story 3

The third story is about Pentecost. You'll find it starting on page 1204 in your Spark Bibles. Wait for kids to open their Bibles to this story. **On the Day of Pentecost, after Jesus had been resurrected, his followers were all together worshipping. Suddenly a great wind blew through the place where they were, little tongues of fire sat on their heads, and they all heard each other speaking in their own language. Then Peter, who was preaching, said, "This is way too freaky for me. I can't handle this." And he ran away. Is that what the Bible says?**

**No, of course not! What really happened?** Allow for kids' responses. The first part happened as described, even though it's really unbelievable. But Peter did not run away from the Pentecost scene. He kept preaching, and said that God would send the Holy

Spirit on everyone. It was a scary but exciting time for the early Christians.

**When Luther studied the Bible, he discovered that Christians are saved by grace. It is the grace of God that saves us, not anything that we can do or anything that we can buy. Many people during Luther's time thought that they could be saved by their actions or the purchase of indulgences.** Hold up a piece of paper. Ask a few kids if you could sell it to them. Tell them if they buy it they will go to heaven. Expect lots of disbelief! **Indulgences were papers that the Roman Catholic Church sold to promise that people would get into heaven. Luther's 95 Theses challenged the current practices of the church by claiming that we are saved through Jesus' death on the cross and through the gift of faith.**

**Reformation Day is important in the life of the Christian church because the Reformation changed the church forever. Martin Luther made a lot of changes in the church; he is the reason that the religious tradition called "Lutherans" began. There are almost 70 million Lutherans in the world today.**

**Let's look up one more place in the Bible and see what it really says.** Invite volunteers to help read Romans 3:19-28 aloud.

Ask kids if there are any rules they have to follow, and encourage them to name a few. Ask kids why think we need to follow rules. Allow time for responses.

**Humans need rules and laws so we can live safely with each other. Traffic laws tell us how fast we can safely drive. They also tell us when to stop at an intersection, when to go, and when to let people cross the street. These rules help us get to places safely. We have rules in our homes so that we can live safely there, too.**

**But God doesn't love us because of how well we follow rules and laws. God loves us because God created us and wants a relationship with us. A very important verse from our reading is Romans 3:28. It says "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law."**

**It was an important verse for Martin Luther because he realized there is nothing that any human being can do to fix his or her relationship with God. Hold up one of the indulgence scrolls. There is no law we can follow or piece of paper we can buy to create faith or make our faith stronger. We receive faith through Jesus' death and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God's love for us and our faith are gifts from God alone. That's really what we celebrate today!**

## **Activate Faith (15 Minutes)**

Choose one or more of the following activities for your group.

### **Activity 1: In the Footsteps of the Reformer**

**Supplies:** Footprints PDF

Mix the dated footprints up and display them on a table. Instruct kids to place them on the ground in chronological order, as if they were walking. This could be a team activity, done as a competition. Then walk in the reformer's footsteps to review his life. Younger kids will need help with reading and ordering numbers, and be sure to place the footsteps close enough for the kids to walk in Luther's footsteps.

### **Activity 2: Luther in the Lightning Storm**

**Supplies:** Cardstock, markers, scissors, glitter glue, highlighter pens, stickers

Set craft supplies on a work table. Gather kids around the table. **Martin Luther was once in a very dangerous storm. He prayed to God to save him. He made a promised that if God would save him, he would become a monk. That is a religious position that is sort of like a pastor or priest. The storm got worse and Martin Luther prayed very hard. He survived the storm and kept his word and did what he said he would. He became a monk.**

**To think about that part of Martin Luther's story, let's think about that storm. Have any of you been in a big storm? What was that like?** Take time to hear kids' response. Then make storm sounds together. Sit or stand around the table with hands on knees and get very quiet. Kids should repeat the sounds you make with your hands. Start with a soft breeze (a light tap on your thighs), then a light rain (tap a little harder), then a clap of thunder (a loud clap of your hands), then hard, driving rain (slap your thighs hard and fast), then more thunder with lightning bolts. Slow down and reverse the hand sounds as the storm subsides.

After your "storm," help kids create lightning bolts by outlining and cutting out lightning shapes on cardstock and then adding glitter glue, stickers, or other decorations and coloring the lightning bolt with highlighter pens.

### **Activity 3: Luther's Seal**

**Supplies:** Luther's Seal PDF; Meaning of Luther's Seal PDF; kid-safe scissors; tacky glue; red, white, blue, and black felt (with precut pieces for younger kids); foam core, posterboard, or card stock

**In honor of Luther's teaching, we are going to create Luther's seal. A seal is a picture or image where each part has specific meaning. The seal helps us remember how Luther taught about God's grace. As we make the seals today, think about ways that God's love and blessings have touched your life.**

Give each child a handout of the description of Luther's seal that they can take home. Discuss the meaning of the parts that make up the seal as you look at the sample seal created in advance:

Black cross on a red heart: Faith in the Crucified Jesus saves us and gives us life. The cross keeps the heart alive.

White rose: Faith brings joy, comfort, and peace—like a pleasing rose. White is the color of the spirits and angels.

Blue background: Blue is the color of heaven. Faith in the spirit points to the heavenly joy that will come. We hope for this heavenly joy.

Golden ring: Heaven's blessings endure forever and ever. Just as gold is precious, heaven's riches are more precious than anything on earth.

Set out the pattern for Luther's seal, along with felt, markers, scissors, and glue. Using the pattern, kids trace each piece of the seal on the appropriate color of felt. Give precut pieces to younger kids. Cut out the pieces, assemble them, and glue them onto a square of foam core, posterboard, or a cardstock square. Now kids have their very own copy of Luther's seal to display at home.

#### **Activity 4: Reformation Banner**

**Supplies:** Luther's Seal PDF, newspapers or plastic tablecloth, large piece of mural paper or fabric, markers, letter stencils or stamps, felt or colored paper, kid-safe scissors

Set supplies on a table, placing newspaper or a plastic tablecloth underneath to protect the surface. **Our group will work together to create a group banner to remember Luther's reforms. We can include Luther's Rose, but we can also include other symbols to help us remember things about Martin Luther. A symbol is a picture or design that helps us remember something really important.** Ask kids to share about the symbols on their nametags.

Using the Luther's Seal PDF as a guide, kids can create Luther's seal at the center of the banner and use the letter stencils or stamps to spell out "Luther's Reforms." They can use the other patterns to make felt cutouts of other words and symbols to glue onto the banner. Encourage participants to work in groups to create the banner, picking the reforms they wish to celebrate.

Here are some ideas for symbols:

*Cross:* Luther's theology of the cross and the realization that we are justified by the grace of God, not by anything we do.

*Bible:* Luther's focus on Scripture as the authority in Christian living.

*People:* The Priesthood of All Believers, which means that all people have access to God and can be in ministry to God and each other.

*Open book:* Luther's reform to make faith accessible to ordinary people by translating the Bible into German and writing the Small Catechism for families. It is also a focus on our calling to be lifelong learners in the faith.

*Music notes:* Luther's German Mass and the many hymns that he wrote.

Arrange to display the banner somewhere in your church.

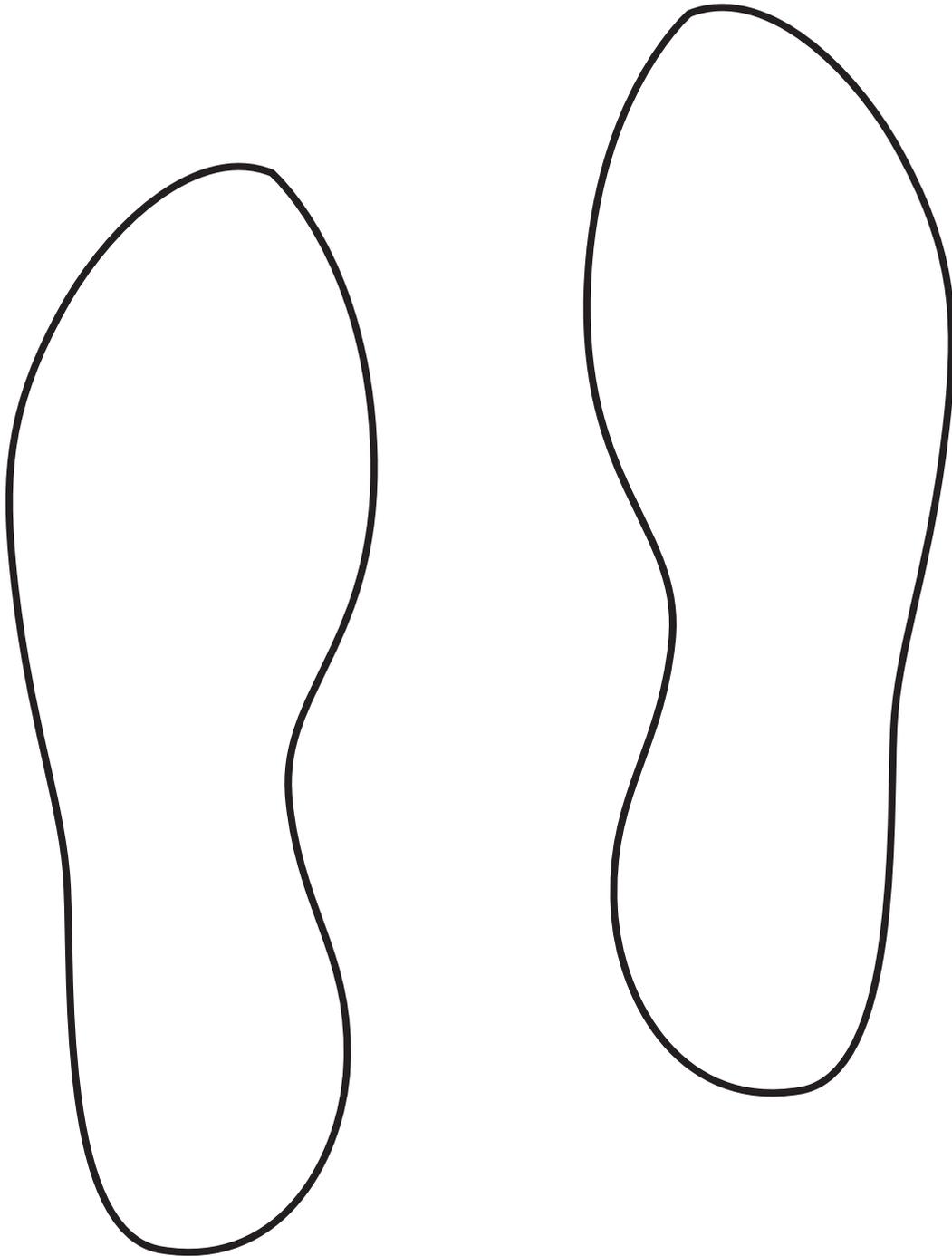
#### **Send (5 Minutes)**

**Supplies:** none

**I hope you learned a lot about Martin Luther today. What are some of the things you learned about Luther today?** Give time for responses. **What surprised you?** Encourage kids to share their reflections. Then lead kids in a prayer.

**Let us pray. God, we thank you for loving us even though we aren't perfect. Thank you for sending us reformers like Martin Luther and others who recognize times when the church needs to change so the news of Jesus can be shared with all people. Help us to understand what the Bible means and to remember what you have taught us. Help us to reach out to all people with the good news of Jesus Christ, too. Be with us now, as we go out into the world to change what we can and make this world a better place. Amen.**

# Footprints



# Luther's Seal



# Meaning of Luther's Seal

## The meaning of Luther's Seal

### **Black Cross on a Red Heart**

Faith in the Crucified Jesus saves us and gives us life. The cross keeps the heart alive.

### **White Rose**

Faith brings joy, comfort, and peace—like a pleasing rose. White is the color of the spirits and angels.

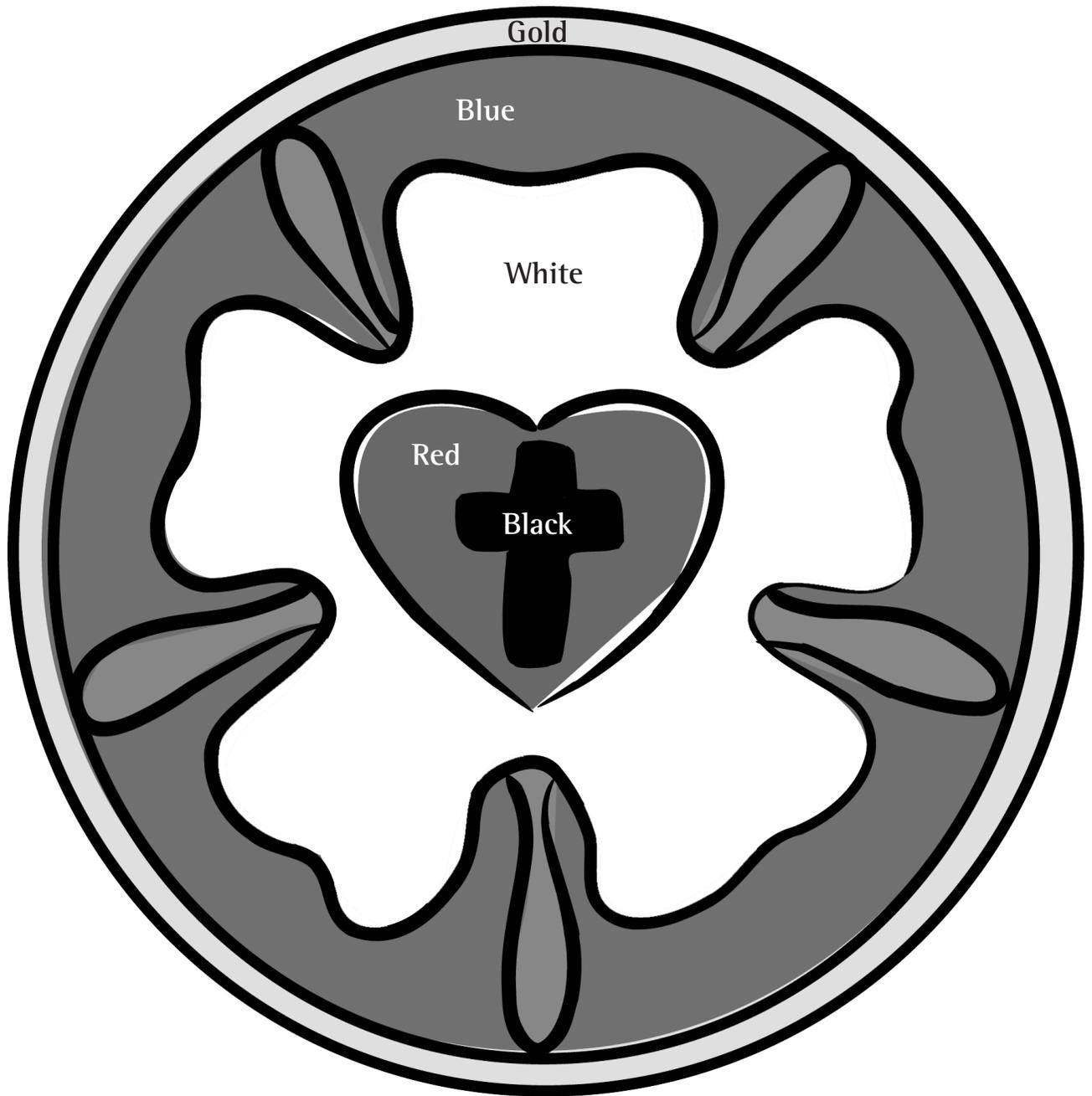
### **Blue Background**

Blue is the color of heaven. Faith in the spirit points to the heavenly joy that will come. We hope for this heavenly joy.

### **Golden Ring**

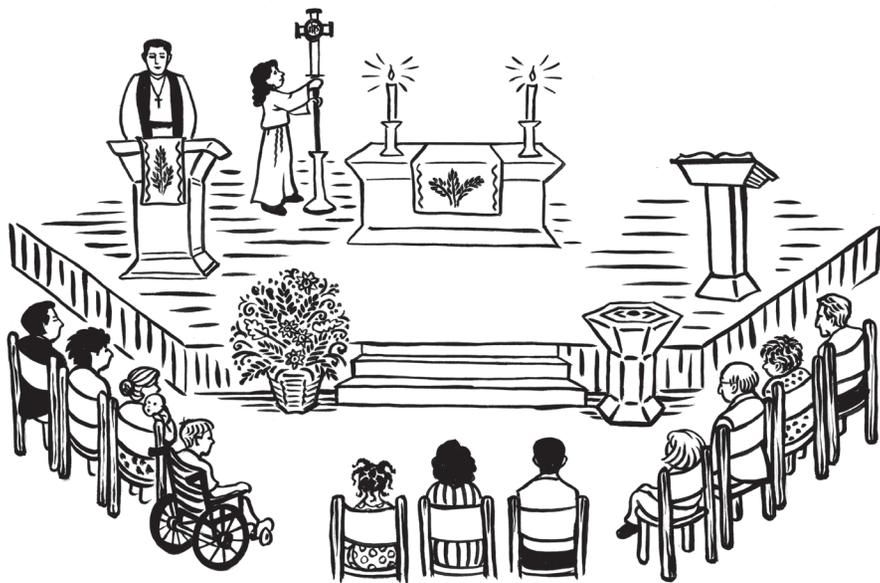
Heaven's blessings endure forever and ever. Just as gold is precious, heaven's riches are more precious than anything on earth.

# Meaning of Luther's Seal



Reformation Sunday celebrates the beginning of the Lutheran church—the Lutheran church's birthday. Let's have a party!

**Decorate this church below with balloons, streamers, and confetti.**



# PRE-READER

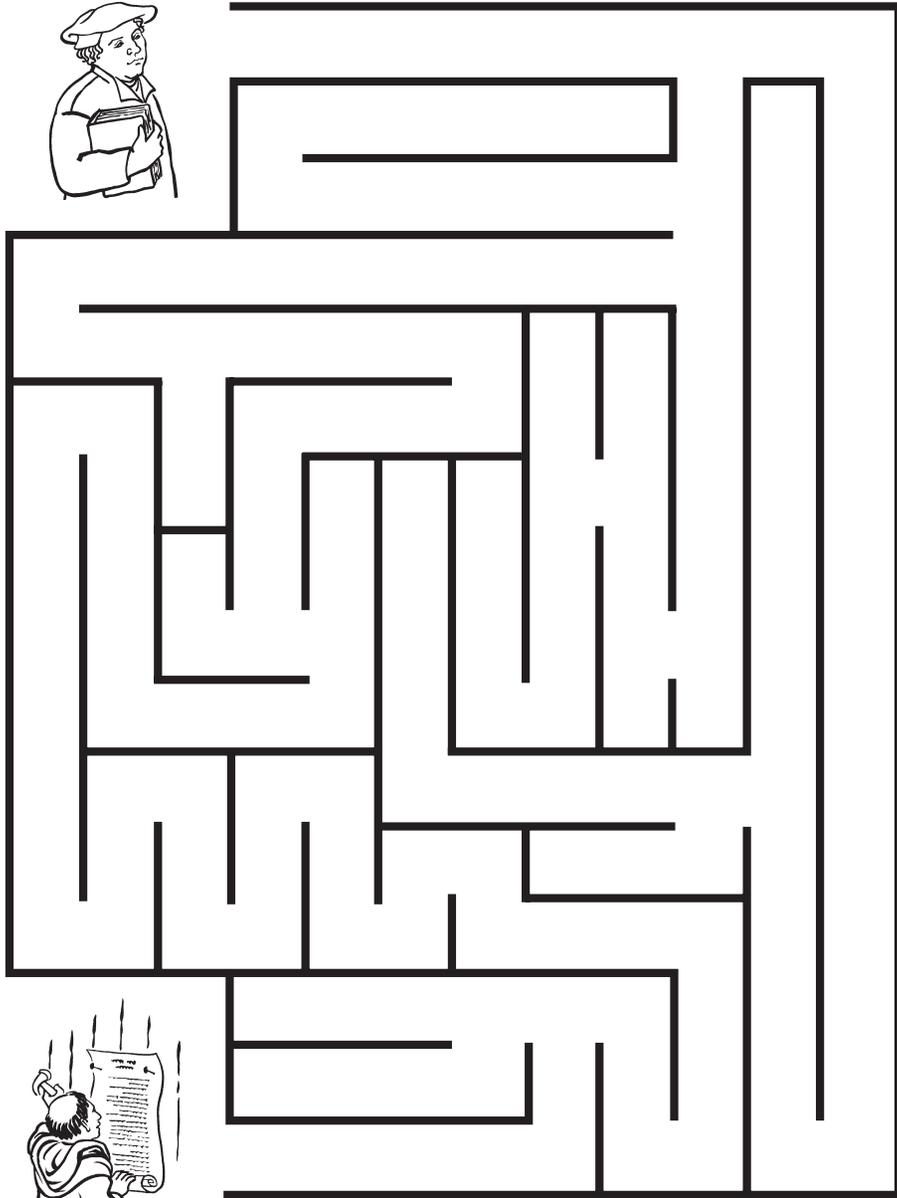
Reformation Sunday

- Today is **Reformation Sunday**.
- Today we remember the beginning of the **Lutheran Church**.
- Let's celebrate our **history and our future!**

**Martin Luther is the father of the Lutheran church. Give him some eyes, a nose, and a mouth.**



**Can you help Martin Luther nail the 95 Theses on the church door?**



Reformation Sunday celebrates where we've been and where we're going. Here's what a church might have looked like in Martin Luther's day.

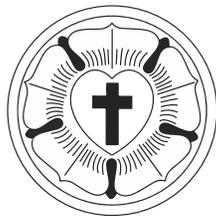
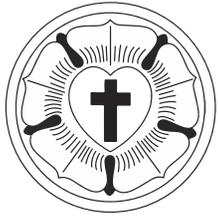


**What does your church look like today?  
Draw it here.**



# The L Word

Martin Luther is the father of the Lutheran church. Before or after worship, or during the Sharing of the Peace, ask people around you what it means to be Lutheran. Write your answers inside the box.



# READER

Reformation Sunday

- Today is **Reformation Sunday**.
- Reformation Sunday celebrates the beginning of the **Lutheran Church**.
- Today we **honor our past** and **celebrate our future**.

## The Face Behind Reformation Sunday

Today, we remember Martin Luther, the man who started the Lutheran Church. Look at the small image and try to draw Martin Luther's face.



## A Vision for the Future

Martin Luther came up with some fabulous ideas for how to make the church better, and the result was the Lutheran church! He wrote his ideas on a sheet of paper and nailed them to the church door. Can you think of some ideas that would make your church even better? More singing? Donuts during coffee hour? Serving at the local food shelf every Saturday afternoon?

# My Theses

By \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Church of Reformation Past, Present, and Future

Reformation Sunday celebrates where we've been and where we're going. Here's what a church might have looked like in Martin Luther's Day.



Draw what churches look like today.

Draw what churches might look like in the **FUTURE**.