How do we observe the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation?

The first instinct for many will be to throw a big party. Give thanks! Celebrate! And there will be plenty of that as we near the year 2017, five hundred years since Martin Luther posted the Ninety-five Theses in Wittenberg, Germany.

But there is more to marking this milestone. Luther and a number of his reforming companions were teachers—of university students, of pastors and bishops, of laypeople. So education has a rightful place in our observance. They took part in conversations—with varying success—with Christians of various traditions. So ecumenical connections deserve to be included in our plans. It's also true that the events of the Reformation era resulted in divisions in the church that continue to this day. So an element of repentance will color our observance. Still, over these centuries the grace of God has abounded in the church and in ever-expanding ways throughout the world. So we return to thanksgiving and praise. These are just a few of the dynamics of this anniversary, which extend to the fields of worship and music, the sciences and cultural studies, social action and public witness, and many more.

The Lutheran church is diverse, and it is decentralized—meaning that no one will be giving congregations a blueprint for how they should observe this anniversary. Those choices will vary, depending on your context. Here is an invitation to begin thinking about the plans your congregation will make. Through several avenues, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Augsburg Fortress will be highlighting a wide range of ideas and possibilities from various sources. Some of those ideas and possibilities will be selected and published in the years ahead. This sampler gives you just a taste of what is to come.

By mid-2016, Reformation 500 Sourcebook: Anniversary Resources for Congregations will be available. See page 3 for more information about the Sourcebook. In addition, colorful studies about the Lutheran expression of Christianity—for adults and for children—are in preparation. You'll find a bit of information about those on page 13. Other ideas, resources, and opportunities, including Web sites related to this anniversary, are noted on page 15. We hope the information in this sampler whets your appetite to start planning today.

How will Lutherans observe this anniversary in ways that are forward-looking, outward-directed, and focused on the amazing mercy of God in Jesus Christ? Blessings to you and your congregation as you seek to answer that question in the places where you live and serve.

IN THIS SAMPLER—

3  Reformation 500 Sourcebook: Content Overview
4  Sample Essay: Ongoing Reformation: Worship in an Ecumenical Age
6  Sample Prayer Service: Evening Prayer / Oración de la Tarde
8  Sample Worship Series: Midweek Lenten Series: Luther's Catechisms
10 Sample Art/Music Event: The Church's Journey in Art and Song
12 Sample Reproducible Resource: Bulletin Insert
13 Learning about the Reformation in Today's World
14 Planning Checklist
15 More Resources to Explore

Contributors of sample resources: "Ongoing Reformation: Worship in an Ecumenical Age," Craig Mueller; "Midweek Lenten Series: Luther's Catechisms," Kenneth Ruppa; "The Church's Journey in Art and Song," Scott Weidler

Reformation 500 Sampler
Copyright © 2015 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.
As congregations plan the ways they will mark the Reformation's five hundredth anniversary, this Sourcebook will be a useful guide. Gathered in this Sourcebook will be a variety of helps for worship, education, song, service, connection with other Christians, and more.

On the following pages of this sampler, you will find a teaser of a few of the contents that will be in the Sourcebook, including——

- A discussion starter about the ways worship has changed over the centuries and in recent years. Sometimes these changes were begun by Lutherans, but we have also inherited valuable insights from ecumenical cousins. Other essays on a variety of topics will be included. Some, such as a brief study of the Ninety-five Theses, will be accompanied by discussion guides and leader helps.
- An outline of an evening prayer service in English and Spanish from the Lutheran World Federation. Additional LWF Reformation resources, especially some being prepared for ecumenical use, will also be featured.
- A Lenten worship series outline based on Luther's Small Catechism. In addition to materials like this, the Sourcebook will provide prayers, litanies, hymn suggestions, preaching helps, and more to enrich observances of the Reformation within your congregation and in joint services.
- Some ideas for how to present a hymn festival that lifts up many themes from the Reformation. A gala hymn festival was presented at the July 2015 Worship Jubilee, but it was designed so it can be adaptable to many different contexts. The Sourcebook will have more specific helps, links, and files.
- A sample bulletin insert about the Augsburg Confession. A series of these inserts will be provided on a CD-ROM included with the Sourcebook, dealing with various aspects of the Reformation. This is just one example of reproducible and/or customizable files that will be included to help congregations make use of the Sourcebook contents and adapt as needed in their setting.
- Other Sourcebook contents not sampled here will include such elements as ideas for service learning activities, helps for engaging in ecumenical conversation, and media guides for communicating about this event in your congregation and community.
- Reformation 500 Sourcebook and related anniversary resources from Augsburg Fortress will coordinate with additional resources on the ELCA's Web site at elca500.org.

The Sourcebook will be published by mid-2016. See the back cover of this sampler for order information.
ONGOING REFORMATION
Worship in an Ecumenical Age

REFORMATION REFORMS
Worship is the primary gathering of the church. As we observe the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, a logical starting place is to name a number of liturgical reforms that date back to that period:

- Mass (word and sacrament) in the vernacular
- Communion in both kinds (bread and wine)
- Centrality of scripture
- Emphasis on congregational singing
- Two sacraments (baptism and holy communion)
- Removal of sacrificial language in the canon of the mass (what we call the eucharistic prayer)
- Texts available to worshipers (advent of the printing press)
- Emphasis on preaching (law and gospel)
- The presence of Christ in the sacrament described as real presence, “in, with, and under,” rather than either transubstantiation or mere symbolic presence
- Worship as nourishment for laity living their baptismal vocation in the world

VATICAN II REFORMS
For over four centuries, worship in Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches would have looked significantly different. Yet the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) brought these reforms to Roman Catholic liturgy:

- Mass in the vernacular
- Communion in both kinds (in principle, though not always in practice)
- Scripture and preaching given new emphasis
- Emphasis on congregational song
- Liturgy defined as the full, active, and conscious participation of all worshipers
- Concelebration of the eucharist (by multiple priests) de-emphasized
- Increased use of “real presence” to describe the presence of Christ in the sacrament and in the assembled body of Christ
- The laity take on expanded roles in the liturgy
ECUMENICAL CONSENSUS

In a ripple effect, the reforms of Vatican II brought significant changes in Protestant worship. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the fruits of Vatican II not only affected Lutheran worship reforms, but also brought about a growing ecumenical consensus regarding the central movements, texts, actions, and theology of liturgy.

For Lutherans, the unity and continuity of the church through the ages is a guiding principle. The Lutheran Confessions set our liturgical life within the mainstream of Christian worship: “We do not abolish the Mass but religiously keep and defend it. . . . We keep traditional liturgical forms” (Apology to the Augsburg Confession, 24).

In the decades that followed Vatican II, an ecumenical approach to worship brought Christian denominations together. What many saw as innovative worship reforms—such as the greeting of peace shared by the congregation—were actually a restoration of practices from the early centuries of the church. In addition, common liturgical texts and a three-year lectionary—held in common with Roman Catholics—began appearing in the worship books of Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and many others.

ECUMENICAL REFORMS SINCE VATICAN II

Consider also these reforms in the liturgy from the past several decades that have developed ecumenically in many churches:

- Vestments: albs and chasubles
- Centrality of baptism in faith and life
- Weekly service of word and table
- Recovery of Lent as a season for baptismal preparation and renewal
- Recovery of the Three Days, including the Vigil of Easter
- Free-standing table altar
- Ecumenical three-year lectionary
- Fuller use of sacramental signs (generous use of water; real bread for communion)
- Restoration of thanksgiving prayers in baptismal and eucharistic rites
- Anointing with oil (baptism, healing)
- Expanded use of processions (gospel and offering processions)

As we celebrate the Reformation in 2017 there is a striking resemblance in the rites of the major branches of Western Christianity—a reason to celebrate our oneness in baptism even as we long for greater unity at the Lord’s table.

*This discussion guide has been abridged for this sampler. The complete guide will appear in the Sourcebook.*
We may listen to drumming or other music.
We attend to the sound of a bell or gong.
We light a candle.
We sing an evening song.
We pray with words inspired by Psalm 121.
My help comes from you, O God, you made heaven and earth.
You do not let my foot be moved, you watch over me.
You are my keeper, my shade, the sun shall not strike me by day, nor the moon by night.
You preserve me from all evil, you keep my life.
You watch over my going out and my coming in, from evening until morning, now and always. Amen.
We listen to a short reading of scripture.
We meditate in silence.

God, our creator and protector, you illumine the world and breathe life into us. You heal the world with your outstretched arms. You rescue creation and inspire your church. We thank you for this day.

Podemos hacer oir el tambor u otra música.
Escuchamos el sonido de la campana o del gong.
Escendemos el cirio.
Cantamos un cántico vespertino.
Hacemos oración inspirada en el Salmo 121.
Mi socorro viene de ti, Oh Dios, que has hecho el ciclo y la tierra.
No dejas que mi pie se deslice, tú velas sobre mí.
Tú eres mi guarda, mi sombra, el sol no me herirá de día, ni la luna de noche.
Tú me proteges de todo mal, guardas mi vida.
Tú cuidas de mi salida y de mi entrada, desde el atardecer hasta el amanecer, ahora y siempre. Amén.
Escuchamos una breve lectura bíblica.
Meditamos en silencio.

Dios, creador y protector, tú iluminas el mundo e infundes vida en nosotros. Sanas al mundo con tus brazos extendidos. Rescatas la creación e inspiras a tu iglesia. Te damos gracias por este día.
Let us remember your gifts and your promises in our thoughts and actions, in our communities and churches. Amen.

On our hearts and on our houses, the blessing of God.

In our coming and our going, the peace of God.

In our life and our believing, the love of God.

At our end and new beginning, the arms of God to welcome us and bring us home. Amen.

After the final bell or gong the candle is extinguished.

Haznos recordar tus dones y tus promesas en nuestros pensamientos y acciones, en nuestras comunidades e iglesias. Amén.

En nuestros corazones y casas, haya bendición de Dios.

En nuestro ir y venir, haya paz de Dios.

En nuestra vida y en nuestro creer, haya amor de Dios.

En nuestro final y en nuestro nuevo comienzo, estén los brazos de Dios para recibirnos y llevarnos al hogar. Amén.

Después de sonido final de la campana o del gong, se extingue el cirio.
OVERVIEW
Early in its history the Lenten season became a time of education in the basics of the Christian faith for new converts seeking baptism at the Easter Vigil. Martin Luther encouraged preaching on the catechisms, especially during Lent. Using the catechisms as a basis for midweek Lenten worship provides an opportunity to revisit some of the basic teachings of the Christian community. In addition to Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms, worship leaders and preachers are encouraged to consider Luther’s hymns, prayers, and sermons for insights into the series.

While Luther’s catechetical hymns reinforce the teachings of the catechism, their absence from the most recent hymnals illustrates the difficult musical settings available. If worship planners want to share these hymns with the assembly, they might consider reading the text or printing it in the bulletin for worshipers to read.

The use of a repeated gathering hymn ("Lord, keep us steadfast in your word") and Luther’s evening prayer near the end of each service are suggested to create continuity within the six-week series.

PATTERN FOR WORSHIP
Opening
• Gathering Hymn
• Dialogue

Word
• Readings
• Reflection
• Hymn of the Day

Prayers
• Prayers
• Luther’s Evening Prayer (ELW, p. 1167 or Small Catechism)
• Lord’s Prayer
• Blessing
• Sending Hymn