

THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH

October 25th, 2026



MARTIN LUTHER
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
St. Louis, MO
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CHIEF DIVINE SERVICE — HAUPTGOTTESDIENST

Service Notes

This year is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s *Deutsche Messe*—his German Mass or German Service. As part of his reform work he believed that it was important for God’s people to understand what was going on in church and to participate in the service. This “Divine Service” was first and foremost God’s service to them, as he came to them in Word and Sacrament to give them forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. It was also their service to God, offering their prayers and praise.

The service was translated into German and Luther wrote many hymns and other pieces of music for it. Other writers and composers added their own contributions. All of it was carefully laid out to follow the pattern of the Church from many centuries before.

Our Common Service is the living tradition of Luther’s service and the Ancient Church before him. Today’s service includes some notes that draw the connection to those Christians in 1526.

In fine, we institute this Order not for the sake of those who are Christians already. For they have need of none of these things; they have their Divine Service in their spirits. But it is necessary to have such an Order for the sake of those who are to become Christians, or are to grow stronger; just as a Christian has need of baptism, the word and the sacrament not as a Christian (for, as such, he has them already), but as a sinner. But, above all, the Order is for the simple and for the young folk who must daily be exercised in the Scripture and God’s Word, to the end that they may become conversant with Scripture and expert in its use, ready and skillful in giving an answer for their faith, and able in time to teach others and aid in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. For the sake of such, we must read, sing, preach, write, and compose; and if it could in any wise help or promote their interests, I would have all the bells pealing, and all the organs playing, and everything making a noise that could. (Preface to Luther’s German Mass).

THE COMMON SERVICE

Hymn ----- O Lord, Look Down from Heaven

CW 205

1. O Lord, look down from heav'n, behold, And let your pity waken.
How few are we within your fold, Your saints by all forsaken;
True faith seems quenched on ev'ry hand;
Your Word is not allowed to stand.
Dark times have us o'ertaken.
2. O God, root out all heresy, And of false teachers rid us
Who proudly say, "Now where is he Who shall our speech forbid us?
By right or might we shall prevail; What we determine cannot fail;
We want no lord and master!"
3. Therefore said God, "I must arise—The poor my help are needing.
To me ascend my people's cries, And I have heard their pleading.
For them my saving Word shall fight And fearlessly and sharply smite,
The poor with might defending."
4. Defend your truth, O God, and stay This evil generation,
And from the error of its way Keep your own congregation.
The wicked ev'rywhere abound And would your little flock confound,
But you are our salvation!

Stand.

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.



Congregational hymn singing was introduced and emphasized in Luther's service. Before this, most singing was relegated to a choir.

CONFESSION OF SINS

M: Beloved in the Lord: let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

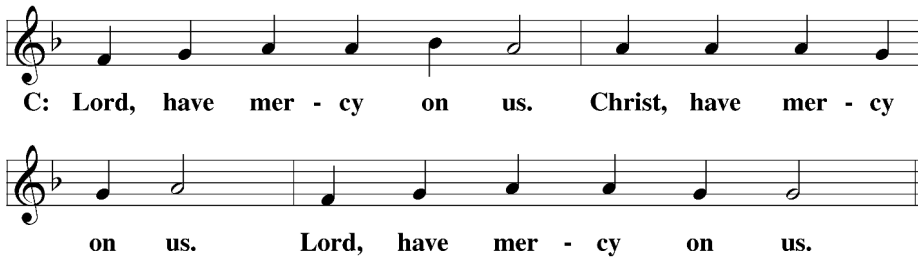
C: Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Luther's German Service did not include a confession and absolution. The people were expected to go to private confession. There they received absolution for their sins.

The Kyrie, however, was included, and the tune we use here was used in his German service.

Lord, Have Mercy

Kyrie



M: God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.



PRAYER AND PRAISE

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

Hymn ----- All Glory Be to God Alone

CW 262

1. All glory be to God alone, Forevermore the highest one,
Who did our sinful race befriend And grace and peace to us extend.
Among mankind may his good will All hearts with deep thanksgiving fill.
2. We praise you, God, and you we bless; We worship you in humbleness;
From day to day we glorify The everlasting God on high.
Of your great glory do we sing, And to your throne our thanks we bring.
3. Lord God, our King on heaven's throne, Our Father, the Almighty One;
O Lord, the Sole-begotten One, Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's Son,
True God from all eternity, O Lamb of God—to you we flee.
4. You take the whole world's sin away; Have mercy on us, Lord, we pray.
You take the whole world's sin away; Oh, listen to the prayer we say.
From God's right hand, oh, send today Your mercy on us, Lord, we pray.
5. You only are the Holy One; O'er all things you are Lord alone.
O Jesus Christ, we glorify You and the Spirit, Lord most high;
With him you evermore shall be One in the Father's majesty.

Prayer of the Day

M: The Lord be with you.



C: And al - so with you.

Prayer of the Day

M: Let us pray.

Gracious Lord, our refuge and strength, pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your Word, protect and comfort them in all temptations, defend them against all their enemies, and bestow on the Church your saving peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



Be seated.

Sunday services only had two readings; Epistle and Gospel. Other weekly services read from the Old Testament.

The lessons were chanted by the pastor.

First Lesson ----- Revelation 14:6,7

Then I saw another angel flying in the middle of the sky. He had the everlasting gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people. He said with a loud voice:

Fear God and give him glory,
because the hour of his judgment has
come.

Worship him who made the sky, the earth,
the sea, and the springs of water.

Psalm of the Day ----- Psalm 46

Choir

Second Lesson ----- Romans 3:19–28

Now we know that whatever the law says is addressed to those who are under the law, so that every mouth will be silenced and the whole world will be subject to God's judgment. For this reason, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by works of the law, for through the law we become aware of sin.

But now, completely apart from the law, a

righteousness from God has been made known. The Law and the Prophets testify to it. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all and over all who believe.

In fact, there is no difference, because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God pub-

licly displayed as the atonement seat through faith in his blood. God did this to demonstrate his justice, since, in his divine restraint, he had left the sins that were committed earlier unpunished. He did this to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so that he would be both just and the one

who justifies the person who has faith in Jesus.

What happens to boasting then? It has been eliminated. By what principle—by the principle of works? No, but by the principle of faith. For we conclude that a person is justified by faith without the works of the law.

Anthem ----- Salvation unto Us Has Come
Choir

Stand.

Gospel ----- Matthew 11:12–19

After the announcement of the Gospel, the congregation sings:



From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been advancing forcefully and forceful people are seizing it. In fact, all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. If you are willing to receive it, he is the Elijah who was to come. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.

“To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces who call

to others, ‘We played the flute for you, but you did not dance. We sang a dirge, but you did not mourn.’ John did not come eating or drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ But the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘See, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her actions.”

After the Gospel, the congregation sings:



Be seated.

Hymn of the Day ----- Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

CW 203

1. Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word;
Curb those who by deceit or sword
Would seek to overthrow your Son
And to destroy what he has done.
2. *(Choir)* Lord Jesus Christ, your pow'r make known,
For you are Lord of lords alone;
Defend your Christendom that we
May sing your praise eternally.
3. O Comforter of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth.
Support us in our final strife,
And lead us out of death to life.

Sermon ----- Revelation 14:6,7

Worship the Lord of the Everlasting Gospel

Stand.

Creedal Hymn ----- We All Believe In One True God

CW 271

1. We all believe in one true God, Who created earth and heaven,
The Father, who to us in love Has the right of children given.
He in soul and body feeds us; All we need his hand provides us.
He through snares and perils leads us, Watching that no harm betides us.
He cares for us by day and night; All things are governed by his might.
2. We all believe in Jesus Christ, His own Son, our Lord, possessing
An equal Godhead, throne and might, Source of ev'ry grace and blessing,
Born of Mary, virgin mother, By the power of the Spirit,

Made true man, our elder brother, That the lost might life inherit,
Was crucified by sinful men And raised by God to life again.

3. We all confess the Holy Ghost, Who, sweet hope and comfort giving,
Now with the Father and the Son In eternal light is living,
Who the Church, his own creation, Keeps in unity of spirit;
Here forgiveness and salvation Daily come through Jesus' merit.
All flesh shall rise, and we shall be In bliss with God eternally.

Be seated.

Offering

Stand.

Prayer of the Church

*The minister offers the petitions and the congregation joins with
"Hear our prayer."*

Online giving option:
mluther.org/give



Offerings support the spread
of the Gospel here and around the world.

Luther's service called for a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer and an exhortation to the people before taking Communion.

- M: Let us pray for the whole Church of God in
Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.
- M: Loving Father, though we deserve Your righteous wrath and punishment,
for the sake of Your Son do not remember our sins, but defend us from all
harm and danger of body and soul and be our very present help in time of
need. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**
- M: Gracious God, You have renewed Your Church in every age with the voices
of those who recall Your people to the Gospel and who speak Your Word in
all circumstances. Receive our thanks for Martin Luther and those who con-
tended for the Gospel against many and great enemies. Make us bold, that
we would also contend for the faith against those who would silence our
voices or distract Your people from the one true Gospel of the crucified and
risen Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

- M: Heavenly Father, bless the faithful proclamation of Christ's saving name throughout the world, that Your people's faith may be strengthened and Your kingdom extended. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**
- M: Lord, make us truly Your disciples. Keep us in Your Word, free us from all errors, and make our homes and families peaceful. Preserve all fathers and encourage them for their godly task, that children would be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**
- M: God of grace, do not let Your people fear though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. Rescue all people in need, [*especially _____,*] and comfort them with the promise that You are with them. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**
- M: O Lord, our God, You have given us the certainty of sins forgiven in Your Son, set forth as the propitiation by His blood to be received by faith. So lead us to eat and drink His holy body and precious blood in repentance and faith, now and always. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**
- M: Preserve Your Church, O Lord, and each of us as members of Christ's Body, that we may not surrender the true Gospel for any reason, but be kept in this faith and fear throughout the days of our earthly pilgrimage, until that day when we and all Your people shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the reward You have prepared for us and all who have loved His appearing; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C: **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

- C: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who tres-**

pass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.
Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

M: The Lord be with you.



C: And al - so with you.

Luther paid special attention to ancient rites. These responses were in use by Christians already in the second century AD.

M: Lift up your hearts.



C: We lift them up un - to the Lord.

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.



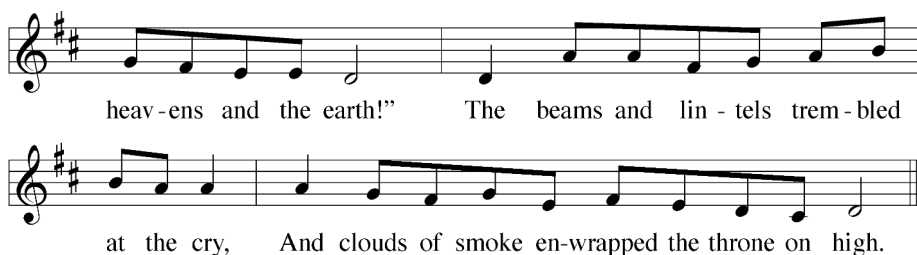
C: It is good and right so to do.

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who preserves his Church to the end of time when he will come again as king to judge all people and take his own to glory.

Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

The musical score is written on ten staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some slurs indicating phrasing. The lyrics are written below the staves, aligned with the notes. The text is as follows:

I - sa - iah, might-y seer in days of old, The Lord of all in spir-it
did be-hold High on a loft - y throne, in splen-dor bright,
With robes that filled the tem-ple courts with light. A-bove the throne were
flam-ing ser - a-phim; Six wings had they, these mes-sen-gers of him.
With two they veiled their fac-es as was right, With two they hum-bly
hid their feet from sight, And with the oth-er two a - loft they soared;
One to the oth-er called and praised the Lord: "Ho - ly is God, the
Lord of heav'n-ly hosts! Ho - ly is God, the Lord of heav'n-ly hosts!
Ho - ly is God, the Lord of heav'n-ly hosts! His glo-ry fills the



Words of Institution

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

The peace of the Lord be with you always.



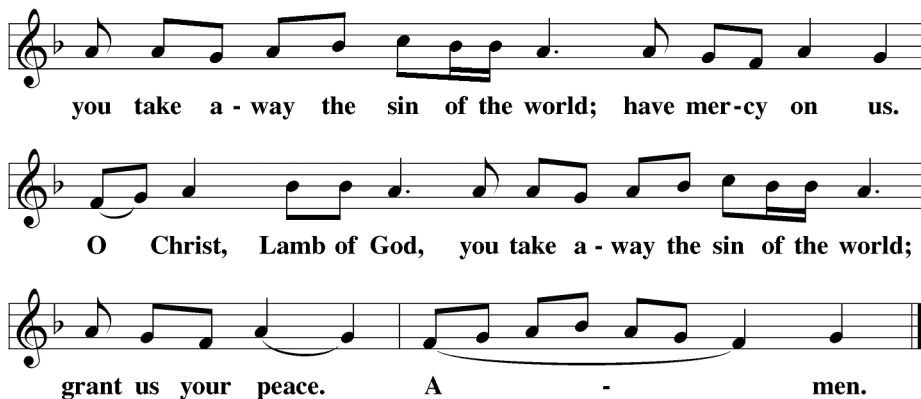
Luther wrote that the pastor “publicly and plainly chants the ordinance of Christ instituted in the Supper.” Other Reformation-era Lutheran churches directed that the Words of Institution be spoken loudly and clearly.

The congregation knelt during these words.

O Christ, Lamb of God

Agnus Dei





Be seated.

DISTRIBUTION

In Holy Communion we believe that Jesus gives us his own body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of our sins. We ask that, in keeping with God's Word, only confirmed members who are in confessional unity with our church (WELS and ELS) would come forward to receive this sacrament. If you have any questions or are interested in communicant membership, please speak with the pastor.

Luther thought that it would follow Christ's institution more closely to distribute the body of Christ first, and then when all had received it, to consecrate the wine and have everyone come up again to receive Christ's blood. This never caught on.

At that time men and women did not sit together in church. Men communed first, then women.

During the distribution, the congregation sings the following hymns:

Hymn ----- Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

CW 313

1. Jesus Christ, our blessed Savior, Turned away God's wrath forever;
By his bitter grief and woe He saved us from the evil foe.
2. As his pledge of love undying, He, this precious food supplying,
Gives his body with the bread And with the wine the blood he shed.
3. Jesus here himself is sharing; Take heed how you are preparing,
For if you do not believe, Judgment instead you shall receive.

4. Useless would be Jesus' passion If salvation you could fashion.
Do not come if you suppose You need not him who died and rose.
5. Christ says, "Come, all you that labor, And receive my grace and favor;
Those who feel no pain or ill Need no physician's help or skill."
6. Then hold fast with faith unshaken That this food is to be taken
By the souls who are distressed, By hearts that long for peace and rest.
7. Praise the Father, who from heaven Unto us such food has given
And, to mend what we have done, Gave into death his only Son.
8. If your heart this truth professes And your mouth your sin confesses,
Surely you will be his guest And at his banquet ever blest.

Hymn ----- O God, Our Lord, Your Holy Word

CW 204

1. O God, our Lord, Your holy Word Was long a hidden treasure
Till to its place It was by grace Restored in fullest measure.
For this today Our thanks we say And gladly glorify you.
Your mercy show And grace bestow On all who still deny you.
2. Salvation true By faith in you—That is your gospel's preaching,
The heart and core Of Bible lore In all its sacred teaching.
In Christ we must Put all our trust, Not in our deeds or labor;
With conscience pure And heart secure
Love you, Lord, and our neighbor.
3. Lord, you alone This work have done By your free grace and favor.
All who believe Will grace receive Through Jesus Christ, our Savior.
And though the foe Would overthrow Your Word with grim endeavor,
All he has wrought Must come to naught—Your Word will stand forever!

4. Since you are mine, My Lord divine, Death holds no dreadful terrors;
Your precious blood, My highest good, Has blotted out my errors.
My thanks to you—Your Word is true! Fulfill your promise ever,
And mercy give While here I live And heav'nly bliss forever.

After the distribution is finished the congregation stands and sings:

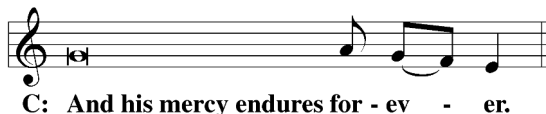
Song of Simeon

Nunc Dimittis



C: Lord, now you let your servant de - part in peace ac-cord-ing
to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have pre-
pared be - fore the face of all people, a light to light - en the
Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of your peo-ple Is - ra - el.

M: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.



C: And his mercy endures for - ev - er.

M: We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this Holy Supper. We pray that through it you will strengthen our faith in you and increase our love for one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Luther first wrote this prayer for his German service.



M: The Lord bless you and keep you. *Der Herr segne dich und behüte dich!*

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. *Der Herr lasse sein Angesicht leuchten über dir und sei dir gnädig!*

The Lord look on you with favor and † give you peace. *Der Herr hebe sein Angesicht über dich und gebe dir Frieden.*



Be seated.

Hymn ----- A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

CW 200

1. A mighty fortress is our God, A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need That has us now o'ertaken.
The old evil foe Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal.

2. (Choir) With might of ours can naught be done;
Soon were our loss effected.
But for us fights the valiant one Whom God himself elected.
You ask, "Who is this?" Jesus Christ it is,
The almighty Lord. And there's no other God;
He holds the field forever.
3. Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done!
One little word can fell him.
4. The Word they still shall let remain, Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain With his good gifts and Spirit.
And do what they will—Hate, steal, hurt, or kill—
Though all may be gone, Our victory is won;
The kingdom's ours forever!

“On Holy Days and Sundays we would have the usual Epistle and Gospel to continue, and have three sermons. ... Hereby we provide that the layman has preaching and teaching enough : but, if a man wants more, he may find it on other days.”

Luther intended for his Deutsche Messe to be the main service (or “Chief Divine Service”) out of three different services that would be held every Sunday.

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