



CONFIRM

NOT CONFORM

LUTHERAN

SESSION 13

TRADITION: OUR NECK OF THE WOODS

Published by



SESSION 13:

TRADITION: OUR NECK OF THE WOODS

THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

One thing that sets apart the Lutheran tradition is that it is named for a single person: Martin Luther. No doubt most of the youth in your program will have at least heard the name, and many will have heard more than that. But we cannot assume that they have.

In addition, we cannot assume that youth have a nuanced view of Martin Luther and his role in the Protestant Reformation. His may be the only name they know, and only in terms of his heroic stand in the face of institutional pressure. It may be less understood that Luther never intended to be the lightning rod for Reformation controversy, or to establish what many at the time would have considered a heresy at best, if not a completely new religion.

Sometimes our moment to act takes us by surprise. Through knowing our deepest values in our bones, we can hope to be ready even when circumstances catch us off our guard. That is the lesson of Martin Luther we wish to convey in this session: far from being the lone, stalwart Reformation figure youth may have imagined, he was part of a religious community, asking tough questions and getting strong reactions. And when the reactions were strongest and persisting in his beliefs became most costly, Luther still stood in his truth. He could do no other.

Life Lessons

- **What you say can provoke strong reactions.**
- **Sometimes things can go out of your control.**

Life Skills:

- **Speaking truth to power**
- **Presenting yourself clearly**

PRE-SESSION CHECKLIST

Before the day of the session

- Review all the scripted and spoken parts of the session, paying particular attention to the things you should read aloud during the session. Remember, the provided text is merely a suggestion—improvise, add to it, or change it as you see fit.
- Review the timeline for this session. The timeline is a suggestion only, and you should feel free to adapt it if more time is needed for an activity or a high-energy discussion.
- **Make sure you have the following on hand:**
 - Post-it notes
 - Scratch paper
 - Poster board
 - Ball point pens and/or pencils
 - Felt tip and marking pens
 - Flip chart paper
 - *[Optional]* Copy of the 2003 movie *Luther* (or you can use a clip of the film from YouTube):
 - As of this writing, the whole movie can be found at http://youtu.be/xc6Ci_V23oE
 - A clip from the movie can be found at <http://youtu.be/DFSFMg091rA>
 - *Note:* our first choice is to show this YouTube video: *Martin Luther and the 95 Theses in Claymation*: <http://youtu.be/76ed3SyygGY>
 - DVD player (if you are using a DVD) and television or other screen ~or~
 - Laptop/computer, cables, and television or other screen (if you are using a YouTube clip)
 - *The Rules of the Road*
 - *Prayers of Martin Luther* Handout, one for each youth (found in the Session Materials)
 - The file box with youth file folders

On the day of the session

- **Set up the space [approximately 45 minutes]**
 - Check the space you'll be using for the Gathering and other activities. Is there enough room for everyone? Enough chairs and floor space?
 - Have copies of the handouts ready to distribute
 - Post the service project flip chart sheet.
 - Set up the computer and screen, ready to show the YouTube video ~or~
 - Select and cue up scenes from *Luther* movie (the clip starts at 36:40 and runs to 39:59).
 - Have the file box with youth folders available.
 - Post the *Rules of the Road* where youth can refer to them.

Timeline for a Ninety-Minute Session

-0:05 – 0:05	Gathering
0:05 – 0:10	Service Project Check-in
0:10 – 0:15	Bible Passage Check-In
0:15 – 0: 50	Presentation: Our Neck of the Woods
0:50 – 1:00	Discussion: Our Best Feature
1:00 – 1:25	Activity: An Ad for the Church
1:25 – 1:30	Closing Prayer

Timeline for a Sixty-Minute Session

-0:05 – 0:05	Gathering
0:05 – 0:10	Service Project Check-in
0:10 – 0:15	Bible Passage Check-In
0:15 – 0:45	Presentation: Our Neck of the Woods
0:45 – 0:55	Discussion: Our Best Feature
0:55 – 1:00	Closing Prayer

SESSION 13

GATHERING

~5 MINUTES

- Welcome youth as they arrive.
- When everyone has arrived, start the continuum activity.
- Let them know that, as in past weeks, they will respond to a few statements by moving to a spot in the room, indicating whether they strongly agree, strongly disagree, or stand somewhere in between.
- Indicate which end of the room means they strongly agree and which end means they strongly disagree.
- Then make the following statements.
 - I'm having a good day.
 - I like to watch viral videos.
 - I want to be in a viral video.
 - I like scary movies.
 - I close my eyes during the scary parts of movies.
 - I close my eyes during the scary parts of *Confirm not Conform* sessions.

SERVICE PROJECT CHECK-IN

~5 MINUTES

- Spend a couple of minutes checking in on the service project. Write down their answers on the flip chart paper from the previous sessions.
 - Ask if anyone has gotten more information on the charity or project.
 - Ask if there have been any developments or decisions about what they will be doing or when.
 - Ask what they need to find out or do next.
 - Ask who will be doing it.

BIBLE PASSAGE CHECK-IN

~5 MINUTES

- If there is any youth who has not yet settled on a passage to memorize, set up a time to meet individually.
- Check to make sure everyone has received the *Memorizing Your Bible Passage* handout; distribute extra copies if needed.
- Ask if anyone has come up with other memorization techniques that can be shared with the group.

[*Note: If you are doing the shorter sixty-minute version of this session, you will only have thirty minutes for this presentation instead of thirty-five.*]

- The next 30 minutes will be a *very* basic introduction to Lutheran history and tradition, focusing specifically on Martin Luther himself. Feel free to expand it or amend it as you see fit, or simply use the outline below.
- Say, using your own words or the following:
 - If you could change anything in the church, what would it be?
- If anyone has a suggestion off the top of their head, let them share it, but don't spend more than a minute in group discussion.
- Distribute the post-it notes. Then say:
 - Take about a minute and use the post-it notes and write down two or three things you feel need to be changed in our church.
- Give youth a minute or so to write down their suggestions.
- Then say:
 - If we want people to pay attention to our suggestions, we should put them someplace that others can see. Where should we post them?
- Allow youth to offer suggestions; you will also want to have an idea in mind.
 - **Note:** If someone suggests “on the door of the church,” we recommend that you direct *away* from that suggestion—unless people in your church really do post things on the door instead of a bulletin board. You might even suggest that they include this information in the church bulletin or on its Facebook page. Our hope is that youth will see how their actions can be *similar* to Luther's, not a re-enactment of his famous exploit.
 - **Also note:** If youth are not comfortable doing this, don't force them. That's actually an important thing for them to know, that it may be scary to share their criticism with the church. If they do not want to post their ideas, respect that decision, but do ask them why they decided against it. That in itself may be an excellent piece of feedback for your church.
- When you've settled on a place to post the suggestions, go and do that, placing post-it notes where people will be able to see them during the week (or doing the electronic equivalent of putting up the post-its).
- When you have returned to your session room, ask:
 - How did it feel to post your suggestions for everyone to see?
- Allow a moment for responses.
 - How do you think others will respond?
- Again, allow a moment for responses.

- Then ask (and depending on the Lutheran knowledge level of your group you may want to use a slightly sarcastic tone):
 - Who in Lutheran Church history does this remind you of?
- The expected answer is Martin Luther, though this action fits other people as well. Acknowledge all answers that fit the description. But stop when you get the answer “Luther.”
- Then say:
 - As Lutherans, we trace our heritage to Martin Luther who did something similar to what you did just now, and who really didn’t know at the time what a big impact his actions would have.
 - As you may know, in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517 Martin Luther posted his thoughts on how to change the church. His list had the catchy title *95 Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, and was posted to the equivalent of the bulletin board or Facebook page, which was the door of the local church. He also mailed it to a few people.
 - Let’s watch a dramatization of this event and what led up to it.
- Show the YouTube Video “Martin Luther and the 95 Theses in Claymation”
<http://youtu.be/76ed3SyygGY>
- ~or~
- the clip from the movie *Luther*, which is found at 36:40-39:59 in the film, or on YouTube at
<http://youtu.be/DFSFMg091rA>
- Say, using your own words or the following:
 - Let’s add a little more context to this situation.
 - As you saw, Martin Luther was objecting to the sale of indulgences. An indulgence was a certificate that the church sold to people, promising that their loved ones would get out of purgatory or that they could purchase forgiveness of sins and didn’t need to go to confession.
 - Many people—not just Luther—had a problem with this system of indulgences. In fact, the Church wasn’t allowed to sell indulgences in Luther’s region.
 - However, indulgences were an excellent fundraiser for the church. One person who thought indulgences were a terrific solution to his money issues was the Archbishop of Mainz, Germany. Mainz is about 300 miles away from Wittenberg, Luther’s hometown.
 - Although people weren’t able to buy indulgences in Wittenberg itself, one monk was coming right up to the edge of the Wittenberg region and selling them with the slogan, “When the money clangs in the box, the soul springs up to heaven.” He was doing a great business.
 - Meanwhile, back at Wittenberg U., Martin Luther was a priest and also a theology professor. He was used to having scholarly debates about religious topics. Given the

local situation, the issue of indulgences seemed like an important topic for scholarly debate.

- He begins the *95 Theses* by writing:

Out of love for the truth and from desire to elucidate it, the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and ordinary lecturer therein at Wittenberg, intends to defend the following statements and to dispute on them in that place. Therefore he asks that those who cannot be present and dispute with him orally shall do so in their absence by letter.

- In other words, he wanted a formal debate on his home turf about the issue of selling indulgences.
 - He mailed a copy to the Archbishop of Mainz and a few other bishops, expecting a scholarly, though possibly heated, debate.
 - He also posted the Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, which was typical for articles like this during that time. Think of it as an extremely primitive blog post.
 - Then other people began translating his Theses from the scholarly Latin he used into everyday German, which he probably did not expect.
 - And then it went really viral, using that new-fangled technology, the printing press.
- Ask: “Have you ever had something you said or wrote go out of your control?”
 - Allow a minute or two for youth to share any experience they may have had and how they handled it.
 - If no one has a personal experience, you may need to ask for hearsay.
 - Then say:
 - So you may have a good idea of what Luther was going through and how much bigger this was than he expected.
 - We often talk about this moment when Luther posted the 95 Theses as the start of the capital-R Reformation, a time when the Lutheran church and other protesting, or Protestant, churches started to form.
 - It seems pretty clear, though, that Luther was hoping to see his church—the Roman Catholic Church—change or reform, with a lower-case “r.” He wasn’t planning on starting a new church. In fact, such a thing was pretty much unthinkable, since the Roman Catholic Church was basically the only game in town.
 - One of the things we learn from Martin Luther’s example is that sometimes when your circumstances change, you might find yourself changing the world around you in ways you never expected.
 - Luther’s courage shows us that when the moment arrives, and everything you thought was going to stay in place forever suddenly gives way, you can go forward and do amazing new things.
 - Ask: “Have you ever had your life change unexpectedly?”

- Be aware that this might be a loaded question for some youth who have experienced death, divorce, illness, or financial disruption.
- Ask: “What has helped you get through those times?”
- Write down what has helped on a piece of flip chart paper.
- Say: “If you haven’t been through a life-changing experience, you probably will. When that happens, know that these are some of the things that might help you too.”
- Then say, using these words or your own:
 - Getting back to Martin Luther’s story, the Pope received a copy of the *95 Theses* and wasn’t happy about how it criticized the Pope directly.
 - The Papal Court started an inquisition against Luther, which led to Luther writing a lot more critical works against Rome.
 - Let’s just say, it got pretty ugly, and the upshot was that the Pope excommunicated Luther, meaning he was kicked out of the Roman Catholic Church, which is especially tough since the Church also supported Luther’s job and his life. It was almost like telling him he was no longer a citizen.
 - The good thing was lots of people supported Luther and the ideas he proposed.
 - After Luther got excommunicated, he promoted other radical changes from the way the Roman Catholic establishment did things, including:
 - Translating the Bible into German, and encouraging people to read the Bible for themselves;
 - Teaching that the Bible is a higher authority even than the Pope;
 - Advocating that everyone is part of the Priesthood of All Believers; he felt everyone was called, by their baptism, to be a priest or a minister;
 - Encouraging priests to get married. Luther himself got married and had six children;
 - Using popular song tunes for religious texts in weekly worship and daily life. Luther wrote many hymns himself, including “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”;
 - And emphasizing a deep understanding of the grace of God, that no one needs to earn or pay for God’s love or God’s forgiveness. It is a free gift.
 - Luther was not the only person involved in the capital-R Reformation. There were other people protesting the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. These include people with names like Melancthon, Calvin, and Zwingli who I’m not going to go into. You just need to know that Luther didn’t create the Protestant Reformation single-handedly.
 - One last thing to know is that even though he asked his followers not to name the movement after him, they still called themselves “Lutherans” and it has stuck for almost 500 years now!

[Note: If you are doing the full ninety-minute version of this session, your group will have ten minutes for this discussion followed by additional time to create and present some ads for the denomination. But if you've only got an hour, do the discussion for ten minutes and then skip ahead to the closing prayer without actually making the ads or any videos. You might encourage the youth to do that as a homework assignment, if you wish.]

If at all possible, we highly recommend that you create videos of the advertisements created by the youth and post them to YouTube, to be shared on your church's website, Facebook page, etc. For privacy reasons, leave names off of the videos and descriptions, but use this opportunity for youth to share their message about their church to the church and beyond.

- Inform the youth that they will be using the information they just learned to create an ad for their church.
- Let them know they will have 10 minutes to work as a larger group to come up with their concepts for an ad campaign and (if you are doing the 90-minute version of this session), another 15 minutes to work out the details.
- [If you have a larger group, quickly break them into groups of 3 or 4.]
- For the last 10 minutes, you will be filming their ad.
- Invite them to jot down ideas as they come to mind.
- Distribute scratch paper and ballpoint pens and/or pencils.
- Have a marker and flip chart paper ready to write down their ideas.
- Then begin the following brief discussion:

Discussion Question	Potential Follow-up Questions	Facilitator Notes
What's your favorite thing you heard today about Martin Luther or about the Lutheran tradition?	What's one thing that sticks in your mind?	<i>Write these down. Don't worry if it's all over the map. But also pay attention to what they say; what's most important to them and what they think is attractive or memorable may surprise you.</i>
What do you think would make the Lutheran Church attractive to people who don't know about it?	What do you think people ought to know about the Lutheran tradition/church?	<i>Again, write these down. They may bring up something that is specific to your congregation; write that down too. After all the ideas have been written, you may want to point out that not all congregations have/do this thing, but that it might be a good point to make about your specific church.</i>
If you could tell someone only one thing about the Lutheran tradition or the Lutheran Church, what would it be?		<i>There will undoubtedly be more than one "one thing" that people want to share. Make a note if more than one person agrees on that "one thing."</i>

What do you think would be a good slogan to get that idea across?	Fill in the blank: The Lutheran church is _____	<i>Allow for crazy brainstorming; this doesn't have to be the fill-in-the-blank response.</i>
---	---	---

- Then if you are doing the full ninety-minute version of this session, give the following instructions, using your own words or these:
 - Over the next 15 minutes, come up with a way to present your key message as an advertisement for the Lutheran Church.
 - Keep it short and focus on one main concept you want to get across.
 - You don't have to say the concept in words as long as you find a way to convey the point.
 - You can use skits or simply present the information.
 - You can use any props you can find around or create signs using poster board.
 - I'll give you a warning when you have five minutes left so you can run through your ad a couple of times.
 - Remember, you only have 15 minutes total to put this together, so keep it simple.
- Then let them work on the activity.
- Another option is to have them use one of the enclosed skits, record their performance, and share it on Facebook or the church's website.

ACTIVITY: AN AD FOR THE CHURCH

~15 MINUTES

[Note: If you are doing the sixty-minute version of this session, skip ahead to the closing prayer.]

- As mentioned above, give youth 10 minutes to work on developing their ad.
- If they ask for a specific prop or item, offer to help; otherwise, let them figure things out. Don't solve things for them.
- At the 5 minute mark, let them know they have 5 minutes to run through their ad before filming.
- At the 10 minute mark (or thereabouts), invite the group to come back together to film their ad.
- If you have time, you might want to give youth more than one take.
- Let them review what they've done.
- Inform them about your next steps, such as if you plan to post the videos to YouTube or elsewhere online. If you don't plan to post them, still try to find a way to share the work they've done with them by the next session.
- Thank them for their work and creativity.
- Then gather for the closing prayer.

- Distribute the *Prayers by Martin Luther* Handout.
- Invite youth to lead one or more of the following prayers, or another prayer that seems fitting for the time of day or the discussion you have had.

Prayer by Martin Luther (from *Luther's Works*)

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. Lord, fill it.

I am weak in faith; strengthen me.

I am cold in love; warm me and make me passionate, that my love may go out to my neighbor.

I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether.

O Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you.

In you I have the treasure of all.

I am poor; you are rich and help me to be merciful to the poor.

I am broken; you are upright.

With me, there is an abundance of what is wrong; in you is the fullness of righteousness.

Therefore I will remain with you.

Amen.

Or use this:

Luther's Morning Prayer (from the Small Catechism)

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Or this:

Luther's Evening Prayer (from the Small Catechism)

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray You to forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

POST-SESSION REVIEW

At some point before your next session, meet as a team (if there is a team) or on your own and spend a few minutes reviewing what went well and what could be changed. Some things to consider:

- Overall, how did this session go?
- How much progress (if any) have the youth made in planning their service project? Are they clear on what they need to do next?
- Has everyone selected a Bible passage to memorize? Are they clear on what to do next?
- What did youth think needed to be changed about your church? Were they able to share that information with the church?
- Were youth reluctant to share their criticism with the church? If so, did they explain why? Can that issue be addressed?
- When you asked if anyone had had a sudden life changes, did anything come up? Do you need to do any follow up with any youth? Does the pastor need to be informed about anything?
- What did the youth say was most important to them about their tradition?
- What's most important to *you* about your tradition?
- How did youth work together during the Ad for the Church activity? Do you need to make any adjustments to account for current group dynamics?
- How will you share the videos/ads you made during this session?
- If you were doing this session again, what would you do differently?
- What did you learn from leading this session?
- What affected you personally? What questions did this session raise for you? How will you address them?

For the Scripture memorization passages:

- Check over any more passages that youth have handed in. Make a personal call or meet with each youth to ask why s/he chose this passage. If you feel the youth has a good grasp on the passage, what it means, and its significance to her/himself, encourage the youth to get started memorizing. If you feel the youth could dig a little deeper into the passage, engage him/her in a discussion about it.
- Make a copy of the chosen passages for your files and send the original back to the youth.
- Call any youth who have not turned in a passage to memorize and remind them to get that to you by the date you set. Offer help if needed.
- Once you receive their passages, follow up with them as described above.

As you plan ahead:

- What needs to be done in advance of the meeting with the Church Council?
- What needs to be done in advance of the service project?
- What needs to be done in advance of the confirmation service?
- What needs to be done in advance of the *iConfirm* service?

Break these down into small, manageable pieces to help you get through them!

Be sure to take a look at the next session. Figure out:

- What needs to happen by then?
- What materials do you need to gather or purchase?
- Who will do these things?
- When will they be done?

SESSION MATERIALS

MEMORIZING YOUR BIBLE PASSAGE

Different people will find that different methods will help them memorize more effectively. Use as many of the following techniques as you wish to help you memorize your Bible passage. Or come up with your own. Do whatever works best for you.

FOR UNDERSTANDING

- 1) Read the entire book in which your passage is found.
- 2) Without looking at the passage, write out a summary of what the passage is saying.
- 3) Outline your passage.
- 4) Make flashcards using only key words from the passage.
- 5) Without looking at the passage, tell it to someone in your own words.

VISUAL TECHNIQUES

- 1) Create flash cards that contain key words or visual images/pictograms from your passage.
- 2) Create a PowerPoint slide show of your passage, using words, but also images and colors that the words evoke for you.
- 3) Write down the passage using only the first letters of each word in the passage (e.g., I t b w t W a t W w w G a t W w G [*John 1:1*]). Use this sheet of initials to recite your passage. If you get lost, look ahead a few letters to see if you can figure out where the passage is going and try again.

AUDIBLE/SOUND TECHNIQUES

- 1) Have someone else read the passage aloud to you (without looking at it yourself)
- 2) Say only the vowel sounds of the passage.
- 3) Sing your passage.
- 4) Close your eyes and say as many words from the passage that you can recall, not worrying about order or sense (e.g. God, beginning, Word, has, glory, been)
- 5) Record yourself reciting your passage and listen to it as you do other things.
- 6) If your passage has been set to music, listen to recordings of it (but be aware that many compositions use the King James Version).

PHYSICAL/ACTIVE TECHNIQUES

- 1) Write out the passage in longhand, organizing it into paragraphs that make sense to you, as opposed to what the passage looks like in the Bible.
- 2) Make a passage puzzle. Write out your passage on index cards in 3, 4, or 5 word chunks; shuffle them and then try to put them in order without consulting your Bible.
- 3) Clap or tap out the rhythm of your passage as you read it aloud; then clap or tap out the rhythm as you read it silently.
- 4) Read your passage (or have it read to you) while you are moving. Pump your fist or make some other gesture when you reach a word that has emphasis.
- 5) Bounce a tennis ball as you read or recite your passage.

OTHER METHODS THAT WORK FOR ME:

PRAYERS BY MARTIN LUTHER

Prayer by Martin Luther (from *Luther's Works*)

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. Lord, fill it.

I am weak in faith; strengthen me.

I am cold in love; warm me and make me passionate, that my love may go out to my neighbor.

I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether.

O Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you.

In you I have the treasure of all.

I am poor; you are rich and help me to be merciful to the poor.

I am broken; you are upright.

With me, there is an abundance of what is wrong; in you is the fullness of righteousness.

Therefore I will remain with you.

Amen.

MORNING PRAYER (from the *Small Catechism*)

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER (from the *Small Catechism*)

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray You to forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.