

Luther Memorial Newsletter for August, 2017
The Small Catechism

Last month, I wrote about the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession*. This month, want to focus on *The Small Catechism* as we gear up to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in October. *The Small Catechism* is a handbook, a manual, and guide on being a Christian. The Medieval Roman Catholic church in Luther's day was always looking for what man had done for God. Luther, however, looked toward the good work God had done *for us* in Jesus Christ. *The Small Catechism*, written by Martin Luther in 1529, is a collection of questions and answers on six topics: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Our Father (the Lord's Prayer), the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar. Luther wanted the Catechism to be used by the head of the household to teach the family the Christian faith. *The Small Catechism* was designed to be the family's Christian handbook. In fact, some have referred to the Small Catechism as the "layman's Bible" because it provides such an excellent, brief, and clear summary of God's Word.

For children, every word will not make sense at first. Understanding will come in time, but learning the words of *The Small Catechism* must begin right away. We are making a serious mistake if we wait to have children memorize the Catechism until they can understand every word. They need to learn to speak the language of the Faith before they can understand it. Like wearing their father's sport-coat at a young age, children will grow into the coat. In the same way, children will grow into the *Small Catechism* and its meaning. Families might be surprised at how quickly children can memorize the words of the Catechism. Martin Luther wrote in his Preface to the *Small Catechism*, "So adopt whatever form you wish, and then stick with it at all times. Keep to a single, fixed and permanent form and wording, and teach them first of all the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., according to the text, word for word, so that they can repeat it after you and commit it to memory."

Luther felt strongly about the need for a clear explanation of the Christian faith and life! Learn and even memorize the words from the *Small Catechism* during this Reformation anniversary and "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:13)."

In Christ,

Pastor Barkley