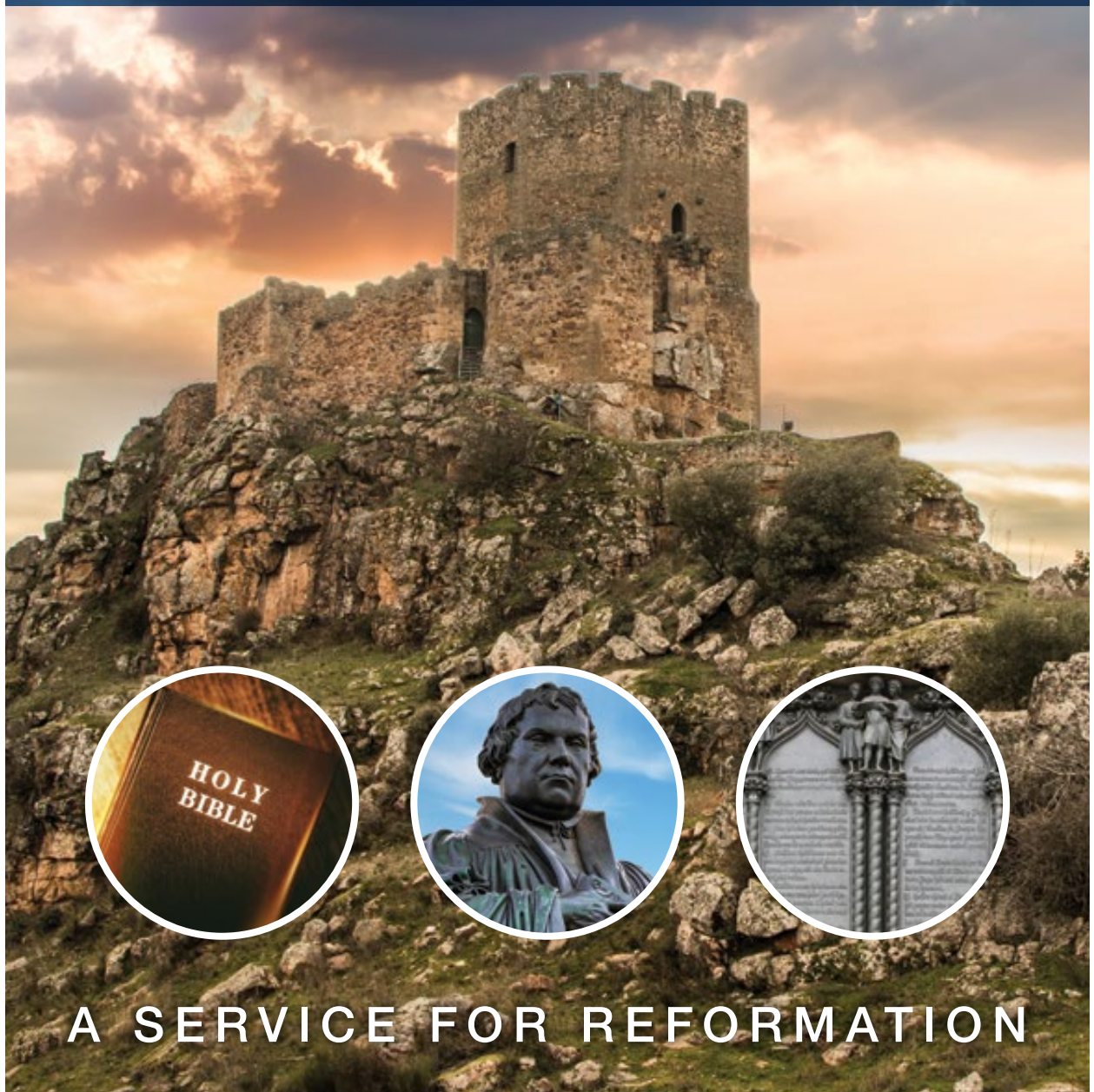


— GOD IS OUR —  
REFUGE *and* STRENGTH



A SERVICE FOR REFORMATION

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## ABOUT THIS SERVICE

This service for Reformation looks at the stirring words of Psalm 46, which Martin Luther used as the basis for his signature hymn, “A Mighty Fortress.” The Psalm’s image of a firm and sturdy fortification ties well with the solid tenets of the Reformation. By grace alone, by faith alone, by Scripture alone, we will not be moved. A sermon and a children’s sermon serve as the foundation of the service, along with readings, prayers, and hymns that make the message clear that we are kept safe by our God, who saved us through Christ. Other hymns include “Rock of Ages,” “How Firm a Foundation” and “Jesus, Refuge of the Weary.”

This service contains: a complete order of service • a sermon • a children’s sermon • prayers • music for the accompanist

Everything you need for the service is contained on digital files with text of the entire service in .rtf (rich text format), newsletter/bulletin notices, hymns, visual media recommendations, contemporary music song suggestions and a PowerPoint document of the services with images and text (along with a copyright release) for use on screens.

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COMPLETE SCRIPT FOR WORSHIP  
LEADERS

- If desired, an **Environmental Projection** is shown on a screen or on the walls of your worship space to set the tone for the service before the service begins or throughout the service at various points:

[shutterstock.com/image-photo/ancient-fortress-tower-on-blue-sky-1761758009](https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/ancient-fortress-tower-on-blue-sky-1761758009)

- This **Theme Verse** is read aloud by the pastor at the start of the service or is read silently by the congregation before the service begins:

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.  
Psalm 46:1*

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Ein Feste Burg (Rhythmic) 87 87 55 56 7, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

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.

With might of ours can naught be done; soon were our loss effected.  
But for us fights the valiant One whom God himself elected.  
Ask ye, "Who is this?" Jesus Christ it is, of Sabaoth Lord  
And there's none other God; he holds the field forever.

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.

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 take they our life, goods, fame, child and wife, though these all be gone,  
Our vict'ry has been won; the kingdom ours remaineth.

- The **Invocation and Reformation Psalm 46** are spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

**P** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C** Amen.

**P** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

**C** **Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,**

**P** though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

**C** **There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.**

**P** God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

**C** **The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.**

**P** The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

**C** **Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth.**

**P** He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire.

**C** **“Be still, and know that I am God.**

**P** I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

**C** **The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.**

- The **Confession and Forgiveness** is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

**P** O God, our strong and mighty fortress, you have been firm, but we have wavered. You have been solid, but we have fallen down.

**C** **We confess to you all the ways that we have not stayed sure in you. We have crumbled under the pressure of sin and disobeyed your commands. We have wandered away from your path and stumbled in our devotion to you by not treating others and ourselves as you would have do. We have stood on the shaky ground of earthly pleasures instead of planting our feet firmly on your foundation of faith, hope and love. Forgive us, we pray, and guide us to remain committed to you through your Son, Jesus.**

*(Please observe a time of self-examination to reflect on our sins.)*

**P** Receive this Good News: All your sins are forgiven through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, who is your Rock that will not move and your Help that will not fail. You are free to live for Christ and build up your faith in him through the work of the Holy Spirit. Rejoice in this fresh start and keep returning to God for support.

**C** **We look to our God for refuge and strength. Amen.**

- The **Hymn of Response** is sung by the congregation to the tune O Du Liebe Meiner Liebe 87 87 D, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Jesus, refuge of the weary, blest Redeemer, whom we love,  
Fountain in life's desert dreary, Savior from the world above:  
Often have your eyes, offended, gazed upon the sinner's fall;  
Yet upon the cross extended, you have borne the pain of all.

Do we pass that cross unheeding, breathing no repentant vow,  
Though we see you wounded, bleeding, see your thorn-encircled brow?  
Yet your sinless death has brought us life eternal, peace, and rest;  
Only what your grace has taught us calms the sinner's deep distress.

Jesus, may our hearts be burning with more fervent love for you;  
May our eyes be ever turning to behold your cross anew  
Till in glory, parted never from the blessed Savior's side,  
Graven in our hearts forever, dwell the cross, the Crucified.

- The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ O God who towers over us all, fortify your people with your presence. Make us bold to proclaim your deep love for us, as Martin Luther did. Show us again and again that it is your grace that keeps us connected to you, and not our own works. Open your door to us with the gift of your redemption in Christ. Cover us with the Good News that we are saved through the cross and empty grave of Jesus. Stir us to spy windows of opportunities to share our faith with others and then build the groundwork for trust in you to thrive within us all. Amen.

- The **Children’s Sermon** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

*(Needed: a picture of a fortress, perhaps:*

*shutterstock.com/image-photo/ancient-fortress-tower-on-blue-sky-1761758009)*

☐ Happy Reformation, boys and girls. Today is a day when we celebrate the time when Martin Luther posted *95 Theses* to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. These *Theses* were simply statements for discussion and the church door was like the bulletin board in your classroom or a Facebook page on your computer where you post what you are thinking. These statements that Martin Luther wrote all had to do with the wrong things that the Church was teaching at the time. Luther wanted people to know the solid truth from the Bible that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus, who died on the cross and rose again on Easter to give us forgiveness and life in heaven. Nothing we do ourselves can save us, Luther said. Only Jesus can do that.

To help people understand what he was saying, Martin Luther wrote a hymn called “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” The hymn reminds us all that our God is like a fortress. Do you know what a fortress is? *(Allow the children to respond and then hold up the picture of a fortress.)* That’s right! It is like a castle or a fort that has thick walls and big towers and is a very strong and sturdy building. Those who dwell inside of a fortress are safe and protected.

Our God is like a fortress because he is strong and mighty. He keeps us safe and protected. Our sins cannot tear us down, the devil cannot overpower us and death cannot have a hold on us when a Mighty Fortress is our God.

Martin Luther helped people to realize that we do not have to be afraid of sin, death and the devil anymore because our God is here to be with us and to stand firm for us like a tall and solid structure that will never fall over.

So be like Martin Luther today and spread the news that we have a God who towers over us all with power and glory to help us and save us and love us forever.

- The **Old Testament Reading**, Zechariah 9:9-13, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double. For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword.

- The **Epistle Reading**, Ephesians 6:10-20, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

- The **Gospel Reading**, Matthew 7:24-27, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.



- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Foundation 11 11 11 11, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

How firm a foundation, O saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!  
What more can he say than to you he has said  
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?

“Fear not! I am with you, O be not dismayed,  
For I am your God and will still give you aid;  
I’ll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,  
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose  
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake!

“When through fiery trials your pathway will lie,  
My grace, all-sufficient, will be your supply.  
The flames will not hurt you; I only design  
Your dross to consume and your gold to refine.

“Throughout all their lifetime my people will prove  
My sov’reign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And then, when gray hairs will their temples adorn,  
Like lambs they will still in my bosom be borne.”

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

☞ Grace, mercy and peace be to you, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

On this day of celebration for the Reformation, we turn our minds back to over 500 years ago when a young monk named Martin Luther lived in a much different world than we do today. In his time there was only one church, not the many church bodies we have today, and in his time the people did not participate much in worship or the workings of the church. Since a majority were illiterate, most people knew only what the clergy told them about the Bible. They had no other way of knowing what the Scriptures said.

Unfortunately, this led to corruption within the church leadership. They decided to sell pieces of paper called indulgences that they said would rid people of their sins. As we know, Martin

Luther became so angry about this practice that he decided to write 95 theses or statements for discussion on the matter. You see, he was actually reading the Bible at the time as a part of his life as a monk and he knew from Scripture itself that forgiveness came only through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross for us, not from any piece of paper.

Luther's words written in the *95 Theses* ran like wildfire through Europe and opened people's eyes to the grace of God, which saves us, not because of anything we have done, but because of what God has done in Christ. Our faith in Christ assures us that we have a place with God in heaven when we die, and nothing on this earth can change that.

To help bring the message of the Gospel home to people in his day, Martin Luther wrote hymns that explained the theological tenets found in the pages of God's Word. Luther most well-known hymn even to this day is "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." It is a hymn based on the words of Psalm 46. Take a listen to some of the Psalm's powerful words:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (v. 1)

Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea. (v. 2)

God will help her when morning dawns. (v. 5)

The Lord of hosts is with us. (v. 7)

Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! (v. 10)

Luther was drawn to the concept of a refuge, a fortress, a stronghold, a fortification, hinted at in Psalm 46:1. People in that day lived in places where forts and castles and high towers were common or at least known. People knew that such buildings were places of strength and might and authority. People who dwelt within the walls of fortresses were known to be safe and secure and were seen as well protected and highly important.

The metaphor of God being a Mighty Fortress, therefore, was a meaningful one. Think about the confidence the following words from Luther's signature hymn would bring about:

He helps us free from ev'ry need that has us now o'ertaken.

But for us fights the valiant One whom God himself elected.

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.

He's by our side upon the plain with his good gifts and Spirit.

In every battle we may face spiritually, we have a place to go, Luther says: a Mighty Fortress who is our God. He fights for us. He rises victorious over every enemy of the soul, over sin, death and the devil. We can always escape to his safe space, surrounded by the thick walls of his love and care, which protect us from any slings and arrows of evil shot toward us.

When Luther himself was in hiding from his enemies in the church who had declared him an outlaw and heretic, he spent 300 days in Wartburg Castle in 1521-1522. He used his time behind these fortified walls to translate the New Testament of the Bible into German. He felt safe to immerse himself in the Word here, and the Germans were glad for it.

This experience of Luther's reminds us that we are called to use our time protected by the Mighty Fortress of our God to read, learn and inwardly digest Scripture without any fear or worry about what we are taking part in. Our life with our Mighty Fortress allows us the freedom to pray to him with abandon and with no question about what exact words we should use. We only need to speak from the heart about what is on our minds and in our souls to say.

Luther wrote secret letters to friends during his time in Wartburg Castle, using the moniker Knight George. His actions within these fortress walls help us to remember to communicate to our fellow brothers and sisters in the faith even when we are staying close beside our Mighty Fortress. Think about what you would like to write or text or tweet to loved ones this week about the greatness of our God you have experienced.

Once out of hiding from the castle, Martin Luther went about teaching and preaching about the saving grace of Jesus from town to town, very much in the line of Jesus himself in his ministry. Our purpose as people of the faith is to fan out into all the world, too, and share the Good News of God's love in Jesus to those who have not yet heard the powerful truth of being saved by grace. With Luther we say as we witness, "Here I stand. I can do no other."

We, unfortunately, live in a world that still to a high degree believes that there is something we must do to earn eternal life. It is our goal to tear down that perception and build up the proclamation that the battle is done, the victory is won. Christ has conquered all our foes for us on the cross. Nothing more needs to be done by us to gain heaven. He has opened the way to heaven on our behalf.

There we will be strong and secure in the dwelling place of God forevermore. Amen.

- The **Offering** is collected at this time. If desired, this **Mini Movie** (purchased by you from Worship House Media: [worshiphousemedia.com](http://worshiphousemedia.com)) is presented on a screen at this time for reflection on the theme of the service:

[worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/70828/the-reformation](http://worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/70828/the-reformation)