

## Resources for Congregations Participating in the Reformation 500 Trees Planting

### Sample Paragraphs for use in Bulletin/Newsletter:

Five hundred trees are being planted by congregations in the Minneapolis Area Synod this spring as a way to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation. As a part of this effort we at \_\_\_ (church) are going to plant \_\_\_ trees \_\_\_ (where) – be sure to keep your eye out for these new additions to our property/community!

Luther was known to have a great love of trees and, as a great scholar of the Bible, he would have been aware of how important trees are to God. A tree was for Martin Luther a symbol of God's love in creation. Planting a tree is an expression of trust in God's promise for restoration of creation and the healing of all nations.

Many Lutheran theologians see the 're-forming' needed for the world today as environment-related, calling for an "EcoReformation" that claims our earth is not to be exploited for profit but to be stewarded for the common good.

The word 'Reformation' itself evokes the words 'reform' and 'renew.' Seedling trees are a fitting way to mark and celebrate these values at the heart of our Lutheran tradition – literally planting seeds for the future and nourishing the health of our neighborhood.

(News story on the synod website: <http://mpls-synod.org/news/ecofaith-tree-planting-project/>)

### Congregational Tree Blessing Litany (Adapted from Synod Assembly):

Invitation: We bless the trees we are planting here at \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran (or at \_\_\_\_\_ Park or School or Organization) that are \_\_\_ of 500 trees being planted throughout the Minneapolis Area Synod to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. It is our prayer that these trees will bring renewal to the land and serve as witnesses to our hope in Christ.

Litany of Blessing:

L: O God of solar systems and grains of sand, watersheds and power grids, sidewalks and tilled fields, bless these trees to live among us as a message of hope for the future and a reminder of your call to care for all creation.

C: As its roots grow deep and strong, may our faith grow ever deeper and more compassionate. As its branches open wide to the sky, may our arms open wide to embrace the greatest and smallest of your creatures. As its leaves provide food and nourish the air, may we provide food for the hungry and hope for the lost.

L: May these trees call us into growth and renewal, both in our lives and in our communities. May we be ever-aware of the ecological crisis we face and the steps we can take to participate in the healing of creation. May we be restorers of the breach, replanting that which has been torn up and advocating for justice.

C: In our blessing, we remember the ways trees connect our past and our future. We honor that trees have supplied us with paper, a critical ingredient in our Lutheran story centered in the pages of Scripture. We honor the trees that convert carbon dioxide into oxygen, as they support and nurture our breath in the interconnectedness of life.

L: Together with many other Lutheran communities of faith near and across oceans, we plant these trees as a symbol of hope, grace, growth, and reform through God's continuing power to create, redeem, and sustain the whole of creation, encompassing every living thing and every neighborhood.

C: Amen