

**AMERICAN LUTHERAN PUBLICITY BUREAU
500th ANNIVERSARY MEDALLION NUMBER TWO**
THE REFORMATION: FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNION
—THE FIRST JOINT COMMEMORATION OF THE
REFORMATION—LUTHERANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS
TOGETHER



The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau Board of Directors is pleased to issue the second of two three inch high-relief medallions during the 500th Anniversary Year of the Reformation and in doing so continuing a long tradition marking significant commemorations in Lutheran history.

The first such medal produced by the ALPB was in 1983 for the 500th Anniversary of Luther's birth. Then in 1999, in cooperation with Concordia Historical Institute, a three inch medal was struck to commemorate the 500th birth year of Katharina von Bora. This was followed in 2014 with a medal, "What Would Luther Do? Today!" celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the ALPB. Already in 2011 the ALPB began to look to 2017 and the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation by approving the striking of a series of nine medals that would terminate with the last being struck in 2017. The medals are called "Countdown" and are one and a half inches in size produced primarily for use by churches in teaching children about the life of Luther and the events leading up to 1517. To make them affordable to churches the quantity of each of the nine medals produced was 7,000 and in the very inexpensive metal of aluminum, anodized with gold coloring. With the issuing of each medal there came a hymn verse that could be sung by a congregation and ideas for children's sermons. A very limited number of each of the nine medals was also struck for adults and collectors of Luther medals: 150 in antique bronze and 100 in .999 silver. Collector boards were also made available with ten spaces for storing and displaying the reverse of all nine medals and one space for showing a medal's obverse. This project is believed to be the most lengthy series of medals ever

struck connected with Luther and the Reformation and the largest amount in numbers struck outside of coins produced by government agencies in Germany.

It is widely known that had it not been for the invention of the printing press around 1440 by Johannes Gutenberg, the posting of Martin Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* on the door of the Castle Church on October 31, 1517 might have ended in nothing more than a theological debate among the scholars and students at the University of Wittenberg. However, within two weeks the Latin *Theses* were translated into German and several weeks later the printing press enabled Luther's *Theses* to be known throughout Europe and translated into local languages. But what is far from being known is that the 16th century also witnessed the flowering of new means for striking medals and coins. Artists, sculptors, woodcutters, and other craftsmen could now make these durable miniature pieces of art to propagate the reform of the church creatively through the words of Scripture, symbols and stories from the life of Luther and events of the Reformation. For a rather low price, the new middle class arising in Europe could collect these objects that were easy to store, display and transport. The expectation was that they would be treasured by future generations, bringing to remembrance events of which their ancestors were a part. The Reformation message was spread not only by the printing press but also the medal press.

Luther has remained through the years a popular subject of numismatic art. It is estimated that there are now well over three thousand different medals and coins associated with Luther and the Reformation, the earliest going back to 1520.

**2017 Three Inch Medallion Number 1:
500th Anniversary of the Reformation**

The first three inch medal released in January of 2017 depicts on the obverse Luther and Prince Frederick the Wise together lifting a basket off a brightly shining candle, symbolizing the unveiling of the gospel, and the reverse shows Luther with his *Ninety-five Theses* in one hand and a hammer in the other with printers in background running off copies of the *Theses* from a printing press.

**2017 Three Inch Medallion Number 2:
Joint Commemoration of the Reformation—
Lutherans and Roman Catholics Together**

Design Concept of the Obverse

Martin Luther is in his doctor's robe and hat based on an oil painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1529) holding in his left hand

a book with three German words, the third of which is partially shown on the cover: **DIE / HEILIGE / SCHRIFT** (= The Holy Scripture). Luther is facing slightly toward Pope Francis who is wearing a cassock with a short shoulder cape (pellegrina) and pectoral cross with details not legible but suggesting the cross he always wears with an image of Christ standing from the center of the cross to the bottom holding a lamb over his shoulders and filling the cross bar behind him with numerous sheep to his left and right. Above Jesus' head at the top is a descending dove that appeared at his baptism (Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3: 21-22, John 1:32).

Above Luther's shoulder on the left is his coat-of-arms (crest or rose) that he designed and said was a compendium of his theology: The cross set on the heart reminded him that faith in the crucified Christ saves us. The heart placed on the rose shows that faith brings joy, comfort and peace into bloom like a flower, and the ring around the seal attests that in Christ we will live eternally.

Above Pope Francis' shoulder on the right is his coat-of-arms. In descending order from the top is his headpiece called a mitre which Francis and his predecessor, Benedict XVI, preferred over the traditional papal tiara. Below the mitre are two keys, symbols of St. Peter, and then the emblem of the Jesuits (Francis' order) of a shining sun within which IHS (first three letters in Greek for Jesus) is over a cross and toward the bottom a star and branch of spikenard, symbols respectively of St. Mary and St. Joseph. Spikenard is a plant from which ointment for making perfume is taken (Matthew 26: 7-9, Mark 14: 3-8), John 12: 3).

Above the heads of Luther and Pope Francis in a circle is a dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, descending upon them and here being reminiscent of part of Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed in his *Small Catechism*, that it is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity that "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church..."

