

Trinity Tribune

Trinity Lutheran Church ✠ Paola, Kansas

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American Iconoclastic Controversy: What Would Luther Do?

A longer version of this article appeared in the national publication *The Federalist* (www.thefederalist.com/2017/08/21/lessons-historys-iconoclasts-handle-controversial-public-monuments-without-vandalism).

Throughout recorded human history there have been periodic episodes of iconoclasm [eye-CON-oh-clasim], the destruction of images, usually with a religious or anti-religious motivation. Perhaps the earliest, and one of the most destructive, was in approximately 1349 B.C. when Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep IV became a worshipper of Aten, the sun disc, changed his own name to Akhenaten, "Benevolent One of Aten," and proceeded to have the name of Amun, formerly the pre-eminent Egyptian god, systematically obliterated from monuments and documents throughout Egypt's vast empire.

As Egyptologist Erik Hornung notes: "Care was taken to erase the name of Amun even from the letters in the diplomatic archive, commemorative scarabs, and the tips of obelisks and pyramids; the distant regions of Nubia were also affected, as far as Gebel Barkal at the Fourth Cataract of the Nile" (*Akhenaten and the Religion of Light*, Cornell University Press, 1999).

An even more wide-scale and far-reaching instance of iconoclasm began in the same vicinity two millennia

later, under the rapid expansion of Islam beginning in the 7th century A.D. Based on a prohibition in their Hadith against the depiction of living beings, either animal or human, this generally involved violent acts of total destruction.

Most fortunate for art history, when Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, finally fell in 1453 A.D. and Hagia Sophia, the grandest church in Christendom at the time, was converted into a mosque, its extraordinary mosaics were for the most part only whitewashed or plastered over. In a very rare instance of iconoclastic reversal, these glorious remnants of Christian history were exposed again in 1935 when Hagia Sophia was made into a museum. However, during Ramadan beginning in 2016 it has controversially been used again as a mosque, and there are growing demands by Turkey's Islamists to return it to mosque status full-time.



St. George's Lutheran Church in Eisleben, Germany, where Luther was a chorister and altar boy while in boarding school during his teenage years, is an example of the "conservative" nature of the Lutheran Reformation, "conserving" artworks that are not in themselves contrary to the Gospel. As the Apology of the Augsburg Confession says, "Nothing should be changed... without good reason" (Article XV).

Islamists have recently added to their millennia of destruction a long list of religious monuments and other historic, artistic, and archaeological treasures: the Buddhas of Bamiyan; the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud; the Graeco-Roman treasures of Palmyra; even many Muslim sites such as the Tomb of the Prophet Jonah, and the Grand al-Nuri Mosque with its famous leaning al-Habdaminare. Having worked as an archaeologist in the Middle East, it was sickening to see a picture of Islamists recently taking *jackhammers* to priceless ancient artifacts in Iraq's Mosul Museum.

Christianity too has had its own bouts of iconoclasm. There is actually an incident in early church history known as the "Iconoclastic Controversy." And as we celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation this year, we would do well to remember that many medieval treasures were lost in the Reformation's wake. In a 1529 letter the Swiss theologian Erasmus described such destruction in Basel: "They heaped such insults on the images of the saints, and the crucifix itself, that it is quite surprising there was no miracle. . . Not a statue was left either in the churches, or the vestibules, or the porches, or the monasteries. The frescoes were obliterated by means of a coating of lime; whatever would burn was thrown into the fire, and the rest pounded into fragments. Nothing was spared for either love or money" (Epistle MXLVIII).

Among the Lutherans themselves such outbursts were limited in scope, thanks to the attitude of Martin Luther. While Luther was in hiding at Wartburg Castle, his associate Andreas Karlstadt launched a radical reformation in Wittenberg, including a purge of religious imagery. Coming out of hiding, Luther ordered a stop to the destruction, deposed Karlstadt from office, and later had him exiled from Saxony.

In a series of seven sermons, Luther then taught the people how necessary changes should occur in the church: not by physical force or violence, but by the power of God's Word and the persuasion of the Gospel. The Lutheran Reformation is thus described by historians as "conservative," in the sense that only minimal changes were made when something was deemed contrary to Biblical doctrine, but otherwise that which could be was *conserved*.

This attitude of Luther was codified in the Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran Church, which declared that "no conspicuous changes have been made" in public worship (Article XXIV), and the later Apology of the Augsburg Confession, which affirmed: "We gladly keep the old traditions set up the church . . . Nothing should be changed . . . without good reason, and to foster harmony those ancient customs should be kept which can be kept without sin or great disadvantage" (Article XV).

Thus, on the recent tour Terese and I took of Lutheran sites in Germany, several times I was asked as the only clergyman in the group, "Is this a Lutheran Church? It sure looks Catholic to me!" I explained that's because it was Roman Catholic—500 years ago. And for the most part, "no conspicuous changes have been made . . . without good reason."

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Having worked as an archaeologist in the Middle East, it was sickening to see a picture of Islamic iconoclasts recently taking jackhammers to priceless ancient artifacts in Iraq's Mosul Museum.

Even statues and other images that *could* have a non-Lutheran significance were often kept, if some way could be found to explain them in an evangelical manner.

A modern American example occurred in the 1980's when Concordia University Wisconsin, a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod university that is now the largest Lutheran institution of higher education in North America, purchased for its new campus a former Roman Catholic convent built in the 1960's. It included a magnificent chapel featuring an enormous stained-glass window with a 35-foot-tall Virgin Mary showing her Assumption into heaven—an unbiblical teaching not held by Lutherans. What to do? Fortunately, the studio that originally created it was still operating, so they were hired to merely replace the female face of Mary with the male face of her Son—and with that minimal change the Assumption of Mary was elegantly transformed into the Ascension of Jesus.

The chapel also came adorned with a series of exquisite Italian carvings of the Stations of the Cross, which had not been removed by the Sisters and taken to their new home because they are integrated into the marble columns in such a way that removal is nearly impossible. Though Stations of the Cross are not typically found in Lutheran churches, they were retained by CUW and

reinterpreted in a Lutheran manner. It even became customary for a series of chapel sermons to be preached on them during Lent, and they have actually been highlighted recently with new lighting.

How can these "conservative," anti-iconoclast principles of Luther be applied to today's American controversy about public statues and other images? In his first sermon back in Wittenberg, Luther advised that we "*need patience*" in such matters, and he perceptively explained that violent iconoclasm will generally backfire: "*You rush, create an uproar, break down altars, and overthrow images! Do you really believe you can abolish the altars in this way? No, you will only set them up more firmly*" (American Edition, Vol. 51, pp. 71, 83). We have seen the truth of this insight in statues that for decades were largely ignored by everyone suddenly becoming controversial rallying points.

In many cases, the solutions that had been proposed for dealing with these monuments are in line with Luther's principles. Rather than wanton destruction, where possible retain the images but reinterpret them in a less offensive way, perhaps by adding context with additional images or historical information. Or, move the images to less controversial locations or more appropriate settings, such as museums or cemeteries. If originally donated by some private group, which was often the case, give them back if the group is still in existence and let them find a place to display them if they wish. Or, simply put them in semi-permanent storage, to be displayed when appropriate. For, it is estimated that over 95% of all museum collections worldwide are not on display but in storage, so not every sculpture must always be on permanent public display.

The controversy has arisen not so much because of these proposed solutions but rather their clumsy implementation. As Luther scolded the Wittenbergers upon his return from exile, "*The cause is good, but there has been too much haste. For there are still brothers and sisters on the other side who belong to us and must still be won*" (American Edition, Vol. 51, p. 72).

Most Americans have a spirit of goodwill toward their fellow citizens of all races, and could be led to understand the inappropriateness of certain monuments in some settings and communities—such as New Orleans, with dozens of such monuments but a population now over 60% African-American—and the need for reasonable action addressing them. However, in contrast to Luther's sage advice, no effort was made to create a public consensus in this matter.

What would Luther do? It was the wise leadership of Martin Luther that largely prevented in Lutheran lands the widespread iconoclasm that led to many treasures being lost in other Protestant countries. As we celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, Luther's perceptive principles of conservative consensus building are still needed today to solve our own American iconoclastic controversy.

Pastor Kevin Vogts

*Building
for the
Future*

The preliminary schedule for our building project is now to begin construction around next February and be done by October. With this in mind, our 150th Anniversary Committee has scheduled our Anniversary Celebration for Reformation Sunday, October 28, 2018. If the new addition can be completed as hoped it will be dedicated as part of the festivities that day.

Our project was delayed because the engineering survey revealed the existing septic tank was directly under the footprint of the proposed addition. Because of the complexity and potential high cost of a new septic system, and uncertainty about what type of system the county would require, we worked with the builder on an alternate plan that

will keep the same features but place the addition and new drive-thru entry on the north side of the building.

This addition will mirror the wing currently extending from the south side of the building and create a T-shaped structure. In addition to saving a great deal of effort and expense replacing our septic system, this new layout also has other benefits over the original proposal.

We are currently finalizing plans with Legacy Builders of Paola, who have recently completed several church additions in our area. When the new plan is completed it will be shared with the congregation. If you have questions please contact chairman Greg Windler—and thanks for your patience!

REFORMATION
50 
Hymn Festival

***Reserve Hymn
Festival Tickets
September 5***

The Johnson & Miami County LCMS congregations are hosting a *Reformation 500 Hymn Festival* for the Kansas City area at Helzberg Hall at the Kaufman Center for the Performing Arts on Sunday, October 15. Our Trinity Lutheran Foundation is the major sponsor of this event in honor of our congregation's own 150th Anniversary next year.

The Kaufman Center box office began ticket reservations for the 7:00pm performance while Pastor Vogts was on vacation in Germany—and much to everyone's great surprise all 1,600 seats were gone in 30 minutes, something that has never happened before in the history of the Kaufman Center! Because the opportunity to reserve tickets had never

even been announced in many congregations, including ours, a matinee performance has been added at 4:00pm.

Normally there are no "block" reservations allowed at the Kaufman Center, but because we are the major sponsor our congregation has now been allotted a block of 50 tickets for the matinee. However, if you have access to the internet please attempt to reserve your own tickets before claiming one of these block tickets. *Free tickets for the matinee will be available on Tuesday, September 5, beginning at 10:00am.*

Tickets may be reserved online at tickets.kauffmancenter.org or by calling the box office at 816-994-7222. Online reservation is preferred because the phones get busy quickly—and remember last time they were all gone in 30 minutes, so don't be late!

The tickets are free but be aware you have to "buy" them as part of the Kaufman Center's reservation process, but at the end the price will be \$0.00. Each person can reserve up to four tickets. Even if you do not need four, perhaps you could reserve extra for distribution to other members of our congregation without internet access.

A signup sheet will be on the counter in the church office beginning September 10 to claim tickets from our church's block of 50, or for listing extra tickets that you were able to acquire. Please speak to Pastor Vogts if you have any questions—and good luck getting your tickets!

CHURCH
Anniversary
PREPARATIONS

Our 150th Anniversary Committee has now set our 150th Anniversary Celebration next year for Reformation Sunday, October 28, 2018. All are invited to help plan this and other anniversary activities and events. For questions or to help please contact Phyllis Trickett, Erin Meyer, or Greg Windler.



Betty Lou Oberheide
 Born March 10, 1932
 Entered Eternal Rest
 August 20, 2017

*"Come unto Me, all you who
 are weary and heavy laden,
 and I will give you rest. . . you
 will find rest for your souls."*
 Matthew 11:28-29



Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services—and you are encouraged to remember in your personal prayers—specific missionaries around the world who are supported by our congregation through our mission offerings to our Synod.

September 3
 Rev. James & Angela Sharp
 Uruguay

September 10
 Graham Guenther
 South Korea

September 17
 Cindy Wrucke
 Czech Republic

September 24
 Shara Osiro
 Kenya



Sermon Topics for September

Sermons by Pastor Vogts are available in both printed and audio form on our church web site, www.trinitylcms.org/sermons, as podcasts under "Kevin Vogts" in the iTunes store, online at www.kevinvogts.podbean.com, or at www.kevinvogts.podbean.com/mobile for mobile devices. Printed copies of the current Sunday's message and those from the past several weeks are also available in a small literature rack in back of the church.

September 3
"We Have Different Gifts"
 Romans 12:4-8

September 10
"There I Am Among Them"
 Matthew 18:20

September 17 (Blocktoberfest)
"Hold Firmly to the Word"
 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

September 24
*"Adam: Be Content
 with What You Have"*
 Genesis 3:1-4:1



After Church Snacks

Could you—individual, family, or group—serve snacks sometime after worship? One Sunday in September is still open! The sign-up sheet is by the table with the snacks. Thanks to all those providing snacks for Coffee Hour!

September 3
 Sharon & Gladys Prothe

September 10
 Need Volunteer

September 17
 Blocktoberfest

September 24
 Jan Minden



Our first choir rehearsal for the new season is Wednesday, September 6 at 7:00pm. All are encouraged to join—only requirement is to enjoy singing! For questions or more information contact Janette Reinke or Jan Minden.

Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings in the church balcony. We usually sing each Sunday except the last Sunday of the month. Everyone is invited to participate—you will enjoy being part of Trinity's excellent choir! Come join the fun and fellowship!



DVD Study "A Man Named Martin" Begins in October

During September in Adult Bible Class we will conclude our current study on *Pondering the Parables*. In commemoration of the 500th Anniversary this year of the Lutheran Reformation, in October we will begin a new study of *A Man Named Martin*, looking at the life, work, and teachings of Martin Luther, and the impact on the world of the Reformation he began when he posted his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg, Germany on October 31, 1517.

In this DVD-based study from Lutheran Hour Ministries viewers encounter the complex person of Martin Luther, a monk, priest, theologian, and professor, whose Spirit-inspired grasp of the Gospel was the cornerstone of the Reformation. This study will help you understand what it really means to be a Lutheran.

Join in Sundays at 9:00am in the Overflow for *Pondering the Parables* during September, and our new study of *A Man Named Martin* beginning in October!

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Our records of birthdays and anniversaries may not complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the Church Office at 913-849-3344 or email Church Secretary Stacey Elkinton at trinitylutheranblock@gmail.com.

- Sep 1 Noel Wendte
- Sep 2 Mary Ann Green
- Sep 2 Gladys Prothe
- Sep 3 Shane Honn
- Sep 3 Rebecca Hurst
- Sep 3 Ron Raines
- Sep 4 Lance Belsanti
- Sep 4 Mary Ann Maisch
- Sep 4 Dennis Peckman
- Sep 4 Steve Windler
- Sep 4 Sarah Vogts
- Sep 5 Dena Kaiser
- Sep 6 Emerson Bunch
- Sep 6 David Gatlin
- Sep 6 Les Jones
- Sep 6 Gay Stubbs
- Sep 7 Cindy Belsanti
- Sep 7 Teri Minden
- Sep 8 Tore Smithhisler
- Sep 8 Lloyd Ohlmeier
- Sep 10 John Henry
- Sep 10 Evan Kettler
- Sep 10 Nickolas Davis
- Sep 11 Connie Barnett
- Sep 11 Gary Peckman
- Sep 11 Kristie Weaver
- Sep 11 Carol Wray
- Sep 12 Casey Maisch
- Sep 12 Pam Thompson
- Sep 13 Donald Smithhisler
- Sep 13 Sally Wood
- Sep 15 Aaron Prothe
- Sep 16 Conni Holte
- Sep 18 Grant Haley
- Sep 18 Anna Peckman
- Sep 18 Skyler Prothe
- Sep 18 Liam Simonson
- Sep 18 Josslyn Fuller
- Sep 18 Rolland Prothe
- Sep 21 Katie Lindsey
- Sep 22 Sarah Reyelts
- Sep 22 Jackson Lester
- Sep 23 Karen Brack
- Sep 23 Weston Davis
- Sep 23 Lindsey Rausch
- Sep 23 Amanda West



Fall Sermon Series

Life Lessons from the Old Testament

Beginning September 24 we are having a special Fall Sermon Series on *Life Lessons from the Old Testament*, looking at characters from the Old Testament and what lessons we can learn from their lives. *“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”* (Romans 15:4).

September 24

“Adam: Be Content With What You Have”
Genesis 3:1-4:1

October 1

“Abraham: It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time”
Genesis 16:1-4

October 8

“Jacob: God Will Provide”
Genesis 27:1-36

October 15

“Joseph: Do Not Seek Revenge or Bear a Grudge”
Genesis 50:15-21

October 22

“Moses: I Know the Plans That I Have For You”
Exodus 3:1-15

October 29 (Reformation Sunday)

“Josiah: God’s Extreme Renovation”
2 Kings 22-23

November 5

“Joshua: Dare to Be Different”
Joshua 24:15

November 12

“Ruth: He Will Give You Your Heart’s Desires”
Ruth 4:13

November 19

“David: Nip Temptation in the Bud”
2 Samuel 11:26-27

November 26

“Job: The Comforting Hope of Everlasting Life”
Job 19:23-27

- Sep 24 Dawson Bruce
- Sep 24 Kevin Debrick
- Sep 25 Jennifer Boydston
- Sep 25 Olivia Mitchell
- Sep 25 Clinton Peckman
- Sep 25 Ginny Peckman
- Sep 27 Scott Golubski
- Sep 27 Geraldine Holtz
- Sep 27 Ryan Holloman
- Sep 27 Leslie Thoden
- Sep 28 Kaiden Armstrong
- Sep 28 Margie Monthey
- Sep 29 Kathy Korsten
- Sep 29 Mary Shay

- Sep 30 Gale Nowasell
- Sep 5 Jerry & Reita Woodall (63)
- Sep 7 Jason & Sacred Davis (21)
- Sep 8 Jamey & Dena Kaiser (10)
- Sep 11 James & Shannon Fanning (18)
- Sep 12 Dennis & Norma Peckman (63)
- Sep 13 Johnny & Sharon Grother (53)
- Sep 15 Ray & Janet England (55)
- Sep 17 Kerry & Carole Brandt (34)
- Sep 18 Paul & Kathy Haley (41)
- Sep 19 Randy & Helen Maisch (20)
- Sep 21 Ryan & Tamara Mitchell (21)
- Sep 25 Kelly & Valerie Gerken (41)
- Sep 28 Gary & Rose Peckman (32)



Blocktoberfest Outdoor Service & Lunch September 17

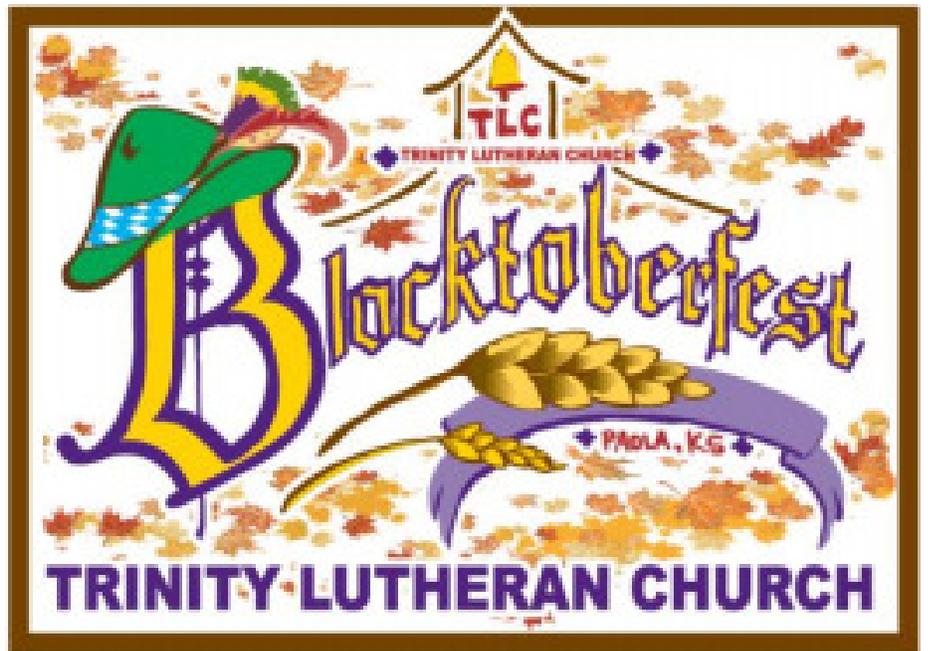
On Sunday morning, September 17, we will again have our “Blocktoberfest Outdoor Service” in the Shelter House, at our regular worship time of 10:00am. Following the service there will again be a free lunch for everyone provided by the Blocktoberfest Committee.



Blocktoberfest Meal Donations & Help Needed

The TLC Youth will once again be running the food stand at Blocktoberfest on September 16. The funds raised at this awesome event allow our kids to attend local, state, and national events. It is a lot of work and we could use your help!

We can use donations of German Potato Salad, pie/strudel, and apples for applesauce (do you have a tree we can come pick from?). We are also seeking extra help serving at the event, as many of our youth are graduating and moving on! Kids, parents, grandparents, friends—all are welcome! If you would like to donate items or your time, please let us know. The recipe for the potato salad is located in the Church Office. Contact Janette Reinke, Susan Schmitt, Pam Peckman or any youth parent



Trinity's Fifth Annual



Blocktoberfest

**Saturday, September 16
Noon–6:00pm**



**Blocktoberfest Outdoor Service
Sunday, September 17, 10:00am
In the Shelter House**

Come Join the Blocktoberfest Fun for the Whole Family!

