

Let's have a slide show today!

1 MOUNTAIN SCENE

We celebrate Lutheran Women's Missionary League Sunday using the theme from their convention earlier this year in Portland, Oregon:

2 LOGO Portland Convention

Look to the Hills...God Reigns!

Our Scripture texts – 2 of them – move our eyes and lift our senses to hills and mountains. Turn your mind's eye to the Word of the Lord:

***Psalm 121 I lift my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.***

***Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who
bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who
proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God Reigns.”***

Put the two together. Look to the Hills, God Reigns!

3 CLOUDS AND RAIN

Here in the Northwest, if we say, “God reigns,”
this is what most people would think of first! That God sends rain
month after month -- 45 or so inches a year.

The weatherman tells us that the “rainy season” starts in earnest this week!

What to do with all that rain? Well, first we receive it and use it thankfully!

The Oregon Convention Center where the LWML met in June, has a
nine-acre roof. Nine acres! And the rains that God sends there?

Those nine acres of rainfall don't go into the storm drains and into the Willamette
River behind the Convention Center.

No, they have a Rain Garden that captures those nine acres of rain and waters
the grass and shrubs and trees and flowers surrounding the Convention Center.
They are “green” over there! They are catching on ... catching rain.

When we receive rain, how about singing “Praise God from whom all blessings flow”?

At the convention, President Schumacher suggested that everyone turn their umbrellas upside down and catch the blessings while in Portland.

We didn't bring umbrellas into the sanctuary today, so let's do the next best thing:
Take your hands and make little umbrellas.
Now turn them upside down, catch the blessings God gives, and sing a happy response with me to our generous Creator:

4 DOXOLOGY

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts, Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen!**

Our God Reigns – He Rains blessings on us abundantly!

5 2009 PORTLAND LOGO

The LOGO for the convention directed eyes to the hills.

Look to the Hills, our God Reigns!

Does the majestic word “REIGN” come up in day-to-day conversation very much?
Except for some young teens who say “Hannah Montana reigns”
or “the Jonas Brothers reign,”
we don't use the word much anymore.

We have fewer monarchies in the world today,
so the use of the word “reign” has declined in our daily speech.

Therefore I must explain word “Reign”.

A King's “reign” is the time during which He rules His subjects.

What did it mean to the original hearers of the Isaiah 52 passage when they heard to say that “God Reigns?”

*“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news...
GOD REIGNS”?*

It sure didn't look like it! God Reigns? ...

6 BAGHDAD PICTURE

Here they were – in Babylon – which is modern day Baghdad, Iraq.
The hottest and flattest city in the Middle East!

God's people were in the Babylonian Captivity, for heaven's sake ... without a hill
or mountain in sight!

Exiles. Captives. Trapped!

Can you imagine any good news in their situation?

7 LOGO 2009 PORTLAND CONVENTION

This much we can be sure of...

The Exiles remembered what hills looked like as they re-lived their days before being
deported from Israel.

It would be awesome good news to know that someone else besides the
Babylonians would soon reign!...
and that they could return to their homeland
and see their lovely hills again.

But for now they were in exile, and it seemed that God had lost his power.

Around them they saw the magnificent ceremonies of the gods of the
Babylonians.

Do you ever feel like that?

There is so much that happens around us - there are other powers which look much
greater and more powerful than we do as the church of Christ.

Christians seem to be losing influence. Christians are ridiculed.

8 The NONE ZONE

Our Pacific Northwest, in fact, is sometimes called THE NONE ZONE.

When religious preference surveys are taken out here in the Northwest,
the most popular choice checked is NONE!

What is your religious preference?

Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran... None?

More than any other choice here in Oregon, people check “NONE”

Powerful gods are worshipped in our society!

Groups gather in large buildings, but those buildings or stadiums or malls are not churches!

And what they worship is not the true God.

Like those Israelites, we live in a place where we sometimes feel as if we are held captive. We too need GOOD NEWS.

The way our soldiers do...

Just now, American military personnel are spending some pretty lonely time in Iraq, the site of ancient Babylon.

In their lonely times, they remember the families back home in Oregon, and maybe a favorite view of Mt. Hood.

For them, the next best thing to going home is to get a message from home.

E-mails and videos bring Good News to them.

Those messages say: Here at home, FREEDOM STILL REIGNS!

Right now you are LOVED!

Some day soon you're coming HOME!

In the same way, the prophet Isaiah was a Good News bringer.

To the captives he wrote: “As impossible as it might seem, OUR GOD REIGNS!”

9 MOUNTAIN SCENE – MT HOOD

Hearing the prophet's words, their faith's eye could survey the horizon!

They could see those blessed hills!

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who say to Zion,, “‘God reigns.’”

What a promise, even in the midst of despair.

Some day soon, you get to go home! Our God Reigns!

Not many years later, Isaiah's message came true. The people went home.

10 JESUS PICTURE

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote to people who knew something about politics, power, and reigning monarchs called Caesars.

Using the power-word of the convention theme “God Reigns,”

Paul speaks right to our hearts, where God wishes to reign as our sovereign and Lord. The word “reign” is used in the following bible passage – listen for it...

Romans 5: For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

According to Paul, You Reign!

With your conquering Savior Jesus, ladies and gentlemen, you REIGN!

He says more in Romans 5:...so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Even better, Grace reigns! The Risen Jesus is now our reigning Lord and Savior.

If trespasses have been reigning in your life, now Your God Reigns!

If debts have reigning in your life, now Your God Reigns!

If fear has been reigning in your life, now Your God Reigns!

The English Book of Common Prayer taught us, as we were growing up, to say,

“forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

England is a little country.

The lots are small and the yards are often fenced.

One of the worst things you can do in England is trample over somebody else's property.

NO TRESPASSING! It is not cool.

For all who TRESPASS, there is very Good News... In Jesus, GOD FORGIVES!

Shout it from the hill tops!

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet that bring you that Good News.

Forgiveness is ours!

11 LOGO – 2009 PORTLAND CONVENTION

I lift my eyes to the hills...My help comes from the Lord.

Look at those mountains in the logo, dressed in Gold, Purple and Green.

Those colorful mountains remind us that God is Dressed as...

Our Golden Creator;
Our Royal Purple Redeemer;
Our Green Growth Sanctifier.

The awesome reigning God dresses His creation in golden waves of grain,
purple mountain majesty,
and the green, green grass of home and health and growing faith.

Gold, Purple, and Green.
Look to the Hills... GOD REIGNS!

I don't think I need to ask if you like Gold, but how about Purple?
Do you like it? Do you wear it?

The official colors of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League are purple and gold.

Those colors were adopted back in 1951.
Those LWML ladies who dress in purple are following Him who was dressed in purple for us!

12 JESUS DRESSED IN PURPLE AND A CROWN

Jesus was dressed in purple, crowned with thorns, and mocked as royalty.

So says Mark 15: The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace.... They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Jesus decided to reign in love and sacrifice and not with might and power.
Jesus, mocked in purple, crowned with thorns, reigns!
Jesus, mocked in purple and crowned with thorns, gave Himself
so that each of us can have the courage to wear purple for the rest of eternity.

How beautiful are the feet of Jesus, who brings us Good News.

13 BAPTISM PICTURES

When Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He began to reign!

Ever since He rose,
we've been announcing it,
going to the ends of the earth, baptizing and making disciples.

The LWML has followed the leading of the Holy Spirit to help proclaim the saving message of the one with beautiful feet who washes away the sin of the whole world.

With the Word and the Holy Sacraments, with preaching and baptizing,
we believers have been his hands and feet,
proclaiming His unconditional love by word and deed.

The Book of Acts tells us how it started.

Acts 1:8 "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Good news bubbles up and gets shared.

In the book of Acts, in 30 short years, we find recorded
95 people by name in 54 cities, in 32 countries, and 9 Mediterranean Islands.
It is said that they turned the world upside down, proclaiming the Good News of
Jesus.

And it's been bubbling over ever since.

From Jerusalem to Antioch to Rome, to Wittenberg, to Oregon City,
to the Pacific Rimeven to Babylon's Baghdad...

Around the world, witnesses of the mighty acts of God
who have come to believe it themselves can't help but be a league of missionaries!

How about YOU?

Repeat after me: Good News... / God Reigns!

14 COMMUNION PICTURE

All this from a Savior in a purple robe, a crown of thorns, seven words from the cross,
and an empty tomb, and an empty table that holds the very body and blood of the
resurrected one, Jesus.

In Holy Communion we share the reality of Jesus Christ
who proclaims the good news, peace, good tidings, and salvation.

He reigns and His royal decree is that we share this feast of the Lord's Supper when we are together in His Name.

We can have the courage to wear His purple robe, now a robe of righteousness that He puts on us in His love.

Lydia was one of those 95 names in the book of Acts. And she wore purple.

15 LYDIA

Lydia lived in about A.D. 50 and was a business woman from Thyatira.

In her business she sold purple cloth, which at that time, was associated with high social rank and great wealth.

Because it was difficult to produce, the dye and garments of that color were expensive.

As a dealer of the purple cloth, Lydia made a good living for herself and her family. She was wealthy and well respected in her community.

She wore purple, to be sure. But there was something more important.

She threw open her home
and welcomed missionaries Paul and Silas.
She made a place for their beautiful feet
and so became a Good News bringer through her hospitality.

Color her purple! Her life showed that God Reigns!

16 FIREWORKS

Our God is an awesome God...he reigns from heaven above...

In every age, God performs mighty acts among us.

We are built up, refreshed, and renewed with the sense of awe at God's reign.

So how do you teach old Lutherans new "awe?"

You take them to a fireworks display!

There you can't stifle it, especially when the big ones go off.

Think about the 4th of July and fireworks...every year it's awesome!

The concussions of the big boomers...

The bright star bursts of light...

When you see them, what do you say?

The first one goes off... "oohh!"

Then a really colorful one fills the sky... "ahhh!"

There's a giant, big orange one followed by a dozen baby whistlers..."wow!"

Awesome!

Our awesome God reigns! Oohh! Aaah! Wow!

Our Fireworks happen here, right here in the heart.

That's what the Emmaus disciples said: "Did not our hearts burn within us?"
It happened when they came into the presence of Jesus and listened to Him.

We experience that glow, those fireworks,
when we listen to His Word and believe it,
when we kneel together at the Communion table
when we sing together a song of His triumph
and when we bring that Good News to a sad heart.

"Oohh... Ahhh... Wow!"

Look at someone and repeat each of these three phrases...

Were not our hearts burning within us?

While he talked with us on the road?

And opened the Scriptures to us?

17 LOGO 2009 PORTLAND CONVENTION

There, you've done it!

You've shared the oohh and ahhh of the resurrection
that is experienced every time the Word is spoken,
the Bread is broken,
the Hearts are awed that God Reigns!

To that we can all say: Amen.