Bishop Gustafson preached at our worship this past Wednesday at the Bishop's Convocation and I want to borrow a story from him. There were two churches. The first church was older. They did not hear the cry of babies or chatter of young children. In fact, they had more people from their congregation dying as opposed to new people joining the church. Each week, their question was, "What are we going to do? Our members are dying and nobody new is coming." Their greatest fear was coming true as their attendance was dropping and they did not see any hope of growing.

The second congregation is a younger congregation. On any given Sunday, they heard children chatting away during worship. There were young families, middle aged adults and senior citizens all worshipping together. Each week, they would look at the attendance and offering numbers for the previous week and say, "Well our attendance is looking pretty good" or "Our offering is holding its own."

At first glance, it looks like these two congregations have nothing in common, but in reality, they share the same basic fear. They both are afraid of dying. They are afraid that their church will not last forever.

Bishop pointed out that we know where this journey begins and we know where it will take us. For many of us, our journey begins at our baptism. With Alyssia, her journey began a while ago as she first learned about God's love for her and today it becomes stronger as she is baptized. The destination we are striving to reach is heaven where we will live with God for ever. So the only thing we really have to worry about is the here and now.

What we do here and now is what counts. You may be wondering what this all has to do with Reformation but when you stop and think about all that Martin Luther argued, he was concerned about the here and now of his time. He too knew the beginning and the end of the journey and so the only thing to worry about was the current time.

And that is what he did. Martin Luther was trying to improve the Roman Catholic Church but they just were not hearing what he had to say. I believe that if he was alive today and standing here among us, he would push for the same thing today as he did then.

I believe Martin Luther would encourage the Lutheran Church to get back to the five foundational areas of doctrine that he fought for that are known as the Five Sola's of the Reformation.

Sola Scriptura is scripture alone. This doctrine emphasizes that the Bible alone is the source of authority for Christians. By saying, "Scripture alone," the Reformers rejected both the divine authority of the Roman Catholic Pope and confidence in sacred tradition.

Sola Gratia refers to grace alone which emphasizes grace as the reason for our salvation. In other words, salvation comes from what God has done rather than what we do. Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Sola Fide is faith alone which emphasizes salvation as a free gift. The Roman Catholic Church of the time emphasized the use of indulgences or the buying of forgiveness. Good works, including baptism, were seen as required for salvation. Sola fide stated that salvation is a free gift to all who accept it by faith

Solus Christus emphasizes the role of Jesus in salvation. Basically this doctrine states that we are saved through Christ and Christ alone.

Soli Deo Gloria which means to God alone be the Glory. This doctrine emphasizes the glory of God as the goal of life. Rather than striving to please church leaders, keeping a list of rules, or guarding our own interests, our goal is to glorify the Lord in all that we do.

The five solas of the Protestant Reformation were meant to correct the faulty practices and beliefs of the time and they remain relevant today. Instead of worrying about whether this congregation will be around in a hundred years, we are called to focus on Scripture, accept salvation by grace through faith, magnify Christ, and live for God's glory.