Reformation Sunday

Martin Luther (1483-1546) is considered the founder of the German Reformation. An ordained (and later excommunicated) priest, doctor of theology, and professor of biblical interpretation at the University of Wittenberg, Luther launched a movement against the Catholic church’s practices in 1517 when he posted his 95 Theses, or Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences. Luther contributed to major theological reform by translating the Bible into vernacular German, which allowed people to hear and read the gospel of Jesus Christ in their own language.

Luther also strove to bring people closer to their faith by promoting the use of religious music. Luther loved music and believed that it was a gift from God that could both inspire and teach in church and at home. A musician, singer, writer, and composer, Luther began authoring hymns in 1523. He converted portions of the liturgy into easy, joyful congregational song for all (as opposed to chanting by the priest and choir alone). In his lifetime, he completed more than thirty hymns, the most popular of which is “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” written and composed in 1529.

“Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott (A Mighty Fortress is Our God),” excerpt from Vollständiges Marburger Gesang-Buch… (Full Marburger Song-book) (Germantown, Pa.): Christoph Saur, 1770, p. 102.