**Martin Luther and Reformation Day**

Martin Luther was a German priest in the early 16th century. He was dedicated to a religious life, but it drove him to deep spiritual despair. In 1507 when Luther became a priest in shortly thereafter he was offered a position to teach theology at the University of Wittenberg in Germany. By 1512 Martin Luther had earned his Doctor of Theology spending the rest of career in that position at the university.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther is said to have nailed his ‘95 Theses’ to the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg. These were 95 revolutionary ideas that served as the catalyst for the eventual breaking away from the Catholic Church and were later instrumental in forming the movement known as the Protestant Reformation. Luther’s ‘95 Theses’ called for a full reform of the Catholic Church and challenged other scholars to debate with him on matters of church policy. Many of Luther’s views the Catholic Church deemed heretical, his refusal to recant these views eventually got Luther excommunicated from the Catholic Church in 1520.

In 1521, after a month of hearings before religious and government authorities, Martin Luther was declared an outlaw, requiring his arrest as a “notorious heretic.” On his way to jail, Luther was “kidnapped” by masked horsemen. But it was a staged event by a wealthy supporter of Luther named Frederick III. The kidnappers ended up delivering Luther to the safety of Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, Germany. Remarkably, during a year of protective custody here at the Castle, Luther performed the incredible feat of translating the Bible’s New Testament from Greek to German. By 1534 Luther and his associates completed the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into German and published the entire Luther Bible. Luther’s version of the Bible quickly became popular and influential, contributing to the development of the German language and literature. It also influenced other common language translations, such as William Tyndale’s English Bible. So that is the story of Martin Luther theologian, rebel, outlaw, Bible translator and spark for the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago.