

This Week in Eden History
November 10 | Martin Luther



The stained glass window in the McCarthy Room, designed by Emil Frei Studio, depicts Martin Luther's defense at the Diet of Worms in 1521. The inscription in German reads, "The just shall live according to their faith."

Martin Luther was born on **November 10, 1483**, in Eisleben in present-day Saxony-Anhalt, Germany (died Feb. 18, 1546). He is best known as an early leader in the attempt to reform the Catholic Church, leading to the formation of Protestant movement. His insistence that salvation was God's gift through faith

in Christ alone and not through good works was a seminal idea of the Reformation.

The influence of Lutheranism on the development of the Evangelical Synod of North America was significant but not obvious. Although the denomination was modeled after the [Evangelical Church of Prussia](#), which united Lutheran and Reformed congregations, the majority of the Evangelical Synod's immigrant members and early pastors came from Lutheran state churches or united churches with a strong Lutheran presence. The Lutheran influence was obvious in the hymnals, worship books, and liturgical customs immigrants brought with them.

A further Lutheran influence was the teaching and writings of Andreas Irion, who became professor at Eden's predecessor in Marthasville, Missouri in 1853 and serving as "Inspektor" (president) from 1857 until his death in 1870. His pietistic but orthodox Lutheran, classroom instruction had a deep impact on the young denomination through the many seminarians he taught. His concern for catechetical instruction resulted in his 1862 revision of the denomination's *Evangelical Catechism*. The resulting *Small Evangelical Catechism* was mostly Lutheran in form, reflected Irion's Lutheran understanding of the sacraments, and became the universally used textbook used in confirmation classes. His *Explanation of the Small Evangelical Catechism* became the standard manual for catechetical instruction throughout the Evangelical Synod and the denomination's most systematic statement of faith. Irion's influence continued well after his death through this written legacy.

Recognition of the Evangelical Synod's roots in Luther and Lutheranism might account for the beautiful stained glass window depicting Luther's defense of his faith at the Diet of Worms in 1521, located in the McCarthy Room in Press Hall.

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