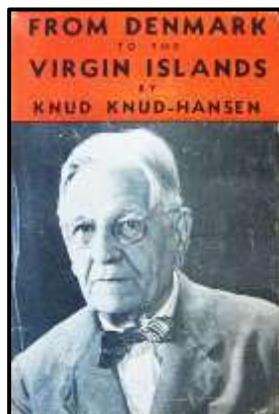


## #8 Lutherans in the Caribbean

American Lutherans have stayed close to their ethnic and national roots. However, there are plenty of American Lutherans who are not white, European or whose primary language is something other than English. Let's look for a moment at the 'other half' of the story!

The first Lutheran church in the continental United States may have been founded in 1699, but Danish Lutherans arrived in the Virgin Islands 33 years earlier. The story of Lutheranism in the Caribbean Islands is much different than that of the mainland. Danish Lutherans were quick to minister with, and to, slaves and indigenous peoples. This was not so true on the mainland.



Although many Caribbean Lutheran congregations were begun by Europeans or Americans, most members today are predominantly local people—Virgin Islanders, Guyanese and Surinamese, Puerto Ricans, and others. They worship in Spanish, English, French, and other local languages. Danish Lutherans did not keep their lantern under a bushel - No!

One might think the Caribbean story is unique. However, it is the actually the United States story that is unusual. Most places the Lutherans have gone (Africa, Asia, South

America, the Middle East) the church planted there has taken on the grace, beauty and identity of indigenous populations. For whatever reason, colonization happened differently in the United States.

As American Lutherans celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation we do so with peoples of all tongues, territories and tribes around the world. Half of us are not of European descent. And, as American Lutherans celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation, we might do well to recognize that the population of the United States also increasingly represents peoples of different tongues, territories and tribes. What a gift!



It may be time to become “Danish” once again - time to engage ministry with, and to, people different than ourselves. The Reformation, after all, was not about who we are. Rather, it is about who God is for all the world.

Rejoice! (More at [www.oregonsynod.org/500](http://www.oregonsynod.org/500))

With you on the journey,

Bp. Dave Brauer-Rieke