



REFORMED  
INSTITUTE *of*  
METROPOLITAN  
WASHINGTON

# Resources for Celebrating Reformation Sunday 2007

October 3, 2007

Dear Friends:

We are pleased to be able to provide you a collection of materials designed to be of assistance to pastors, educators and others involved in the planning of worship services and Christian education for Reformation Sunday.

Feel free to use these materials as you choose, adapting them to the needs of your congregation. We have assembled this collection with the assumption that the materials will be used selectively, and we have cast them in a form that should allow you to do that easily.

The packet includes these items:

- 1) A one page descriptive statement about the Reformation, intended for use in bulletins and bulletin inserts. This statement is constructed in such a way that it can be used in its entirety or in a shorter form (only the initial paragraph, e.g.).
- 2) A brief list of recommended readings, intended to serve the same purpose.
- 3) Education resources about the Reformation which may assist you or a lay leader in planning a class for youth, a children's sermon or even a Reformation project.
- 4) Liturgical resources, including music, and an outline of a Service for the Lord's Day with notes explaining the service.
- 5) Remarks about Presbyterian and Reformed worship which may be used in the bulletin or in an educational setting.

We also recommend the use of a special bulletin cover, such as the ones provided for use on Reformation Sunday by the Presbyterian Historical Society. A collection of those covers and other resources is available online at: [www.history.pcusa.org](http://www.history.pcusa.org).

The preparation of this packet has been a collaborative effort. I want to thank in particular Dr. Donald McKim for his contributions. Dr. McKim is Executive Editor for Theology and Reference at Westminster John Knox Press and the author of many works about the Reformed tradition. Dr. Wayne Earnest, formerly the Minister of Music at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, and Mr. John Lintner, Director of Music at Georgetown Presbyterian Church, also provided assistance in the area of music. Other contributors are noted in the pages that follow.

We appreciate your interest in this offering of the Reformed Institute, and we hope you will find it to be of value in making your preparations for the celebration of Reformation Sunday.

Sincerely,

R. Bruce Douglass  
Director, Reformed Institute



The Reformed Institute of Metropolitan Washington has been created by a group of Presbyterian churches in the Washington D.C. area to promote understanding and deepen appreciation of the Reformed tradition among the staffs and members of Presbyterian churches.

# THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation is one of the most important developments that has taken place in the entire history of the Christian church. It began early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with a series of actions taken by a German monk (and Biblical scholar) named Martin Luther who loved the Bible and came to believe that the church of his day was not faithful to the teaching of Scripture. After having tried privately (and unsuccessfully) to convince his superiors of the need for change in the church, Luther went public with his criticism by posting a series of 95 “theses” on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517—an action which eventually resulted in his excommunication. In the years that followed Luther took many actions that departed dramatically from the established religious practice of the day—including the translation of the Bible into the native language of the people and rejection of the authority of the papacy—and the example he set was soon followed by people in many other parts of Europe. But even though Luther enjoyed great respect among those who were attracted to the cause of reforming the church, by no means all of them agreed with him in every respect. In particular there were disagreements about how far to go in departing from the teaching and practice of the Catholic church, and out of those disagreements came the diversity that has characterized Protestant Christianity ever since. As early as the 1520’s the proponents of church reform had split into factions, and it was not long before those factions turned into organized movements that were known by such labels as “Lutheran,” “Anabaptist,” and “Reformed.”

The Reformed movement, which is the source of Presbyterianism, arose out of the work of such figures as Ulrich Zwingli (a German-speaking Swiss priest), John Calvin (a French lawyer turned pastor who spent most of his life in the Swiss canton of Geneva), and John Knox (a Scottish priest)—all of whom were Luther’s contemporaries. The members of this movement, which spread throughout much of central Europe (east and west), soon got into the habit of characterizing their cause as “Reformed,” and they did so to indicate that they were prepared to go farther than most other “Protestants” (including Luther’s followers) in changing the church. In their minds, however, all the changes they had in mind—from the elimination of bishops and the involvement of lay people in the governance of the church to the removal of all “graven images” from places of worship—were the fruit of their desire to be faithful to Scripture and return the church to its original form.

The Reformation did not succeed everywhere; in some places it had little appeal. Indeed, in some countries (Spain, e.g.) its main effect was to spark a vigorous counter-movement among Catholics. But in the places where the ideas of the reformers caught on they typically brought profound changes in people’s lives—and not just in the religious realm. Everything from economic practices to the laws governing marriage was affected, and in the process a whole new way of life was born—one that was to play a major role in the creation of the modern world.

R. Bruce Douglass, Director  
Reformed Institute of Metropolitan Washington



## For further reading on the Protestant Reformation, the Reformed Institute recommends...



*Benedict, Philip.* Christ's Churches Purely Reformed—A Social History of Calvinism (Yale, 2002)

A big book (500+ pp.), providing thorough treatment of a complex subject; the best scholarly work devoted entirely to the subject of Calvinism currently available; by a distinguished historian who is not himself a Christian; invaluable resource for those who are prepared to devote some sustained time and effort to the book.



*Calvin, John.* John Calvin—Selections from His Writings (HarperCollins, 2006)

A new entry in the HarperCollins Spiritual Classics series, this volume includes a foreword by Marilynne Robinson. It is the best short edition of Calvin's writings now available in English, and it covers a wide range of different topics. Each selection is introduced with a brief interpretive statement by Elsie Anne McKee of the Princeton Seminary faculty. An excellent resource for the first-time reader of Calvin.



*Collinson, Patrick.* The Reformation—A History (Modern Library, 2004).

A short, readable introduction to the story of the Reformation by a distinguished English historian.



*Dentiere, Marie.* Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre & Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin (Chicago 2004)

Marie Dentiere was a French noblewoman who in the 1520's left the convent she had joined to work for religious reform. She married a former priest, and they found their way to Geneva, where she was active in the movement to bring about reformation of the church there. Her epistle to Marguerite de Navarre, written in 1539, shortly after Calvin had come to Geneva, was the first explicit statement of Reformed theology by a woman to appear in French. It is clearly the work of a person who grasped the theological issues at stake in the Reformation well and could express herself eloquently.



*MacCulloch, Diarmaid.* The Reformation—A History (Viking, 2003)

Another big (but quite readable) book by a distinguished scholar; it provides an excellent overview of the entire Reformation, with in-depth analysis of virtually all the major movements involved, from the Anabaptists to the Jesuits. Excellent concluding chapters on the impact of the Reformation on daily life.



*McGrath, Alister E.* A Life of John Calvin—A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture (Blackwell, 1990). A concise, readable overview of the life, times, thought and historical influence of John Calvin by a respected scholar who is sympathetic to Calvin but not uncritical.



*McGrath, Alister E.* In the Beginning—the Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language and a Culture (Anchor, 2001) A stimulating, brief book—the tale of one of the most important developments in modern English history told by a gifted story teller and distinguished historian.



*Mouw, Richard.* Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport—Making Connections in Today's World (Zondervan, 2004) A short, easy read by the current president of Fuller Theological Seminary; designed to make a case for the relevance of (orthodox) Calvinism to contemporary life.

## Liturgical Resources

In this section you will find links to several web sites that provide a wide variety of worship resources which may be used or adapted for use in your congregation. Please be certain to include a note in the bulletin indicating “used by permission” when appropriate.

*A Litany* which uses both the spoken word and singing, based on the famous Reformation hymn A Mighty Fortress Is Our God and Psalm 46, can be found on the web site of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at this link:

<http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/worship/mightyfortresslitany.htm>

*The World Alliance of Reformed Churches* (WARC) has published a booklet entitled “Renewing the Church” with resources for use on Reformation Sunday. You will find the booklet at the WARC web site, [www.warc.ch/](http://www.warc.ch/). Prayers from around the world, litanies for worship, Bible studies and stories abound in this resource which offer an emphasis on economic justice. It is a terrific way to feel the worldwide connection of the Reformed movement. The booklet may be accessed at [http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/news\\_file/doc-768-1.pdf](http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/news_file/doc-768-1.pdf).

*The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship*, <http://www.calvin.edu/worship/>, publishes a magazine called *Reformed Worship*, a gold mine of valuable worship resources. If it is not on your bookshelf, you may wish to subscribe to this quarterly. There are materials specifically for “Reformation Day” each year. The online version of *Reformed Worship* can be found at: <http://www.reformedworship.org/template/index.cfm>.

Permission is granted to use or adapt the resources online. The web site says the following. “Readers may photocopy or reprint the articles, services, music, and graphic images in the print version of *Reformed Worship* in the bulletins of their worship services or their church newsletters unless a specific copyright notice appears with that element. Include an appropriate credit along these lines: ‘From *Reformed Worship* 80. Used by permission.’ We encourage readers to adapt resources for use in their own communities. Include a credit along these lines: ‘Adapted from *Reformed Worship* 80. Used by permission.’ Further reproduction or use of this material without the written permission of Faith Alive Christian Resources is forbidden. Online users may copy text only from the web version of *RW* with appropriate credit.”

There are several resources in the archives of this magazine (search under “Subject” and then “Reformation Day”), including an entire service constructed by Morris N. Greidanus, with a structure which “follows Calvin's French liturgy in Strasbourg around 1540. This service preserves the unity of Word and sacrament, a unity Calvin valued highly.” The link to Greidanus’ article and the service is:

[http://www.reformedworship.org/magazine/search\\_results.cfm?topic\\_id=611&istopic=1](http://www.reformedworship.org/magazine/search_results.cfm?topic_id=611&istopic=1)

Another set of resources comes from the web site of the *Institute for Reformed Worship of Erskine Seminary*. You will find there a whole series of prayers and other worship aids adapted from the works of Calvin, the Puritans, etc. that could easily be used in worship on Reformation Sunday: [http://www.erskineseminary.org/Academics\\_Files/IRW.html](http://www.erskineseminary.org/Academics_Files/IRW.html)



## **An Affirmation of Faith for Reformation Sunday**

We are a confessional church. If you use a traditional ancient creed each Sunday, consider substituting a piece from one of our Reformed church's confessions. In addition to those in the PCUSA's Book of Confessions, our denomination has recommended for study the Belhar Confession, written in rejection of the defense of apartheid in South Africa. It is now a confession in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. The Belhar Confession is printed below; consider using part of it in worship or holding a study of this confession for youth and adults on Reformation Sunday. The Office of Theology and Worship of the PCUSA has prepared an inclusive language version that may be accessed at:

<http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/confession/belhar.pdf>.

1. We believe in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for his Church by his Word and his Spirit, as He has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.

2. We believe in one holy, universal Christian Church, the communion of the saints called from the entire human family

We believe

that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the Church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another [Eph 2:11-22];

that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the Church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain [Eph 4:1-16];

that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe; that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the Church and must be resisted [John 17:20, 23];

that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one Name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ; that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity [Phil 2:1-5; I Cor 12:4-31; John 13:1-17; I Cor 1:10-13; Eph 4:1-6; Eph 3:14-20; I Cor 10:16-17; I Cor 11:17-34; Gal 6:2; II Cor 1:3-4];

that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God [Rom 12:3-8; I Cor 12:1-11; Eph 4:7-13; Gal 3:27-28; Jas 2:1-13];

that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this Church;

Therefore, we reject any doctrine which absolutises either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutisation hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation; which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace whilst believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;

which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin;

which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the Church.

3. We believe that God has entrusted to his Church the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ; that the Church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world; that the Church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the Church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells [II Cor 5:17-21; Mt 5:13-16; Mt 5:9; II Pet 3:13; Rev 21-22].

that God by his lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity;

that God, by His lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable His people to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world [Eph 4:17-6:23, Rom 6; Col 1:9-14; Col 2:13-19; Col 3:1-4:6];

that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian, but in which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity;

that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.

Therefore, we reject any doctrine which, in such a situation, sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and colour and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.

4. We believe that God has revealed himself as the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among men; that in a world full of injustice and enmity He is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged and that He calls his Church to follow Him in this; that He brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that He frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind; that He supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly; that for Him pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering; that He wishes to teach His people to do what is good and to seek the right [Deut 32:4; Luke 2:14; John 14:27; Eph 2:14; Isa 1:16-17; Jas 1:27; Jas 5:1-6; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 6:20-26; Luke 7:22; Luke 16:19-31; Ps 146; Luke 4:16-19; Rom 6:13-18; Amos 5];

that the Church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the Church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;

that the Church as the possession of God must stand where He stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the Church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Therefore, we reject any ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

5. We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only Head, the Church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence [Eph 4:15-16; Acts 5:29-33; I Pet 2:18-25; I Pet 3:15-18].

Jesus is Lord.

To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honour and the glory for ever and ever.





## Web Sites and Resources For Reformation Sunday

Whether building a Sunday school class for Reformation Sunday or planning the children's moment, keep in mind some of the most important gifts of the Reformation:

- ◆ an emphasis on God's grace which is available to everyone, regardless of status in society or in the church
- ◆ putting the Bible into the hands of the people, not just the clergy, for through it we come to know God's grace; this points to the necessity of learning to read and having the Bible available in local languages
- ◆ living a life of gratitude to God, assured that God is working out God's good purposes in and for the world; in gratitude we can pray directly to God, knowing we are heard, and serve God gladly by sharing the Gospel with others in word and in deed
- ◆ being welcomed to the Table for the gifts of bread and cup
- ◆ living in covenant with God and with our neighbor, and being connected as Reformed Christians through the church

### *Ecclesia Reformata, Semper Reformanda*

What does the church's motto mean? How has it been used and, sometimes, misunderstood? What difference does it make to be reformed "according to the Word of God?" Introduce the church's motto through a research project for 5<sup>th</sup> graders and older using articles like the following by Anna Case-Winters:

<http://www.pcusa.org/today/believe/past/may04/reformed.htm>

Include an opportunity to respond artistically, perhaps by

- a) writing a litany for use in worship
- b) having an older class create a "children's moment" about the importance of the Bible in our tradition
- c) making bookmarks with the motto to be handed out at the end of class or worship
- d) having the class create a symbolic image out of clay or paper or cloth that represents the meaning of the motto

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) has published a booklet entitled "Renewing the Church" with resources for use on Reformation Sunday. In that booklet is a children's story, entitled "Restoring Our House Together," which I commend to you. Using the image of a house that has fallen into disrepair, it makes the point that "The Reformers spoke out against the deterioration of the church, not the building but the family of God and how it was behaving." Some of the important people are also mentioned by name. You will find the booklet at the WARC web site, [www.warc.ch/](http://www.warc.ch/). The link to the story on pages 26 and 27 of the booklet is: [http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/news\\_file/doc-768-1.pdf](http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/news_file/doc-768-1.pdf).

The Presbyterian Historical Society has bulletin covers, puzzles related to Bible translations, Erasmus and a search for answers on the bulletin cover itself. It also boasts an online exhibit called *Foundations of the Faith* which has images and concise biographies of the people involved in the Reformation, perfect for many youth and adult classes to browse or use for presentations and debate. Go to their web site, [www.history.pcusa.org](http://www.history.pcusa.org) and click on Services for Congregations to find the link to Reformation Sunday.

Just for fun, show your class the site for the International Museum of the Reformation in Geneva, <http://www.musee-reforme.ch/index-e.php>, and delight your students with pictures and ideas, like a theological banquet table for working out your differences! This is another great connection with the part of the world in which the Reformed movement had its beginnings.

In the back of the *Book of Confessions* are photographs of nine Banners for each of nine confessions from our common Christian tradition and our particular Reformed tradition. These banners add measurably to the worship experience on Reformation Sunday with their depictions of symbols that speak of the power of God's word, martyrdom, conflict and the faith of generations. Consider launching a banner-making project with the goal of completion by October of next year. All of the banners have been made by Lewinsville Presbyterian Church in McLean, VA and are hung each year on Reformation Sunday. If you would like advice on how to organize such a project you may contact Ms. Michelle Gottke by telephone, 703-827-8205, or email, [bmsfr@verizon.net](mailto:bmsfr@verizon.net).

For a project on a smaller scale, don't forget to continue to introduce the seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), its symbols and their meaning, to children and adults. Consider having an intergenerational church school on Reformation Sunday during which each participant may make a banner of the seal to take home along with a copy of the Brief Statement of Faith.

Whatever you choose to do on Reformation Sunday, mark this important day in our heritage by reminding young and old that we are connected through a common history to a story and a tradition. Our inheritance is that we are called to live in grace and with gratitude for the gifts of our sovereign and merciful God.

Mary J. Hill  
Program Coordinator, Reformed Institute



## **Music Suggestions for Reformation Sunday**

Dr. Wayne Earnest, Former Minister of Music  
Old Presbyterian Meeting House

### ***ORGAN LITERATURE***

Ein' feste burg ist unser Gott (A Mighty Fortress Is Our God) – Johann Pachelbel

Partita on Ein' feste Burg – Charles Callahan

A Mighty Fortress is Our God -- Jan Bender

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God – Wilbur Held

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God – Donald Hustad

A Mighty Fortress is Our God – David N. Johnson

Built On A Rock the Church Doth Stand -- Wilbur Held (arr. For 2 trumpets & organ)

Erhalt uns Herr, bein deinem Wort (Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word) – Johann Gottfried Walther

The Church's One Foundation – Robert Hobby

Beautiful Savior (Fairest Lord Jesus) – Flor Peeters

Lift High the Cross – Gordon Young

### ***CHORAL LITERATURE***

Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation – arr., John Ferguson

Psalm 46: God Is Our Refuge and Strength – David Cherwein

Built on a Rock the Church Doth Stand – Carl Mueller

Lift High the Cross – Carl Schalk

Beautiful Savior (Fairest Lord Jesus) – F. Melius Christiansen

## ***HYMNS***

Contributed by Mr. John Lintner  
Director of Music  
Georgetown Presbyterian Church

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (*Ein' feste Burg*)

Number 259 in the Presbyterian Hymnal (isometric version)

Number 260 in the Presbyterian Hymnal (rhythmic version)

Based on Psalm 46

I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art (*Toulon*)

Number 457 in the Presbyterian Hymnal

Words by John Calvin

Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation (*Westminster Abbey*)

Number 416 in the Presbyterian Hymnal

Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation (*Regent Square*)

Number 417 in the Presbyterian Hymnal

## Service for the Lord's Day

### Call to Worship

- L:** Let us worship God.  
Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
- L:** It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High;  
**P:** **To declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night.**  
**L:** To the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre.  
**P:** **For you, O Lord, have made us glad by your work; at the works of your hands we sing for joy.**

### \*Hymn of Praise

All People That on Earth Do Dwell

PH 220

### \*Confession of Sin

- L:** If we claim to be sinless, we are self-deceived and strangers to the truth. If we confess our sins, God is just, and may be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every kind of wrong.

Let us confess our sin before God.

- P:** **Almighty God: in Jesus Christ you called us to be a servant people, but we do not do what you command. We are often silent when we should speak, and useless when we could be useful. We are lazy servants, timid and heartless, who turn neighbors away from your love. Have mercy on us, O God, and, through we do not deserve your care, forgive us, and free us from sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### \*Declaration of Pardon

- L:** Hear the good news!

This statement is completely reliable and should be universally accepted: Christ Jesus entered the world to rescue sinners. He personally bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might be dead to sin and be alive to all that is good.

Friends: Believe the good news of the gospel.

- P:** **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.**

### \*Gloria Patri

PH 579

## **Prayer for Illumination**

**L:** Prepare our hearts, O God, to accept your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own, that, hearing, we may also obey your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Old Testament Lesson**

## **Anthem**

## **New Testament Lesson**

## **Sermon**

## **\*Creed**

**We believe in God the Father,  
who created all the world,  
who will unite all things in Christ  
and who wants all people to live together as brothers and sisters in one  
family.**

**We believe in God the Son,  
who became [a human], died and rose in triumph  
to reconcile all the world to God,  
to break down every separating barrier  
of race, culture, or class,  
and to unite all people into one body.  
He is exalted as Lord over all,  
The only Lord over every area of [our] life.  
He summons both the individual and society,  
Both the Church and the State,  
to seek reconciliation and unity between all  
and justice and freedom for all.**

**We believe in God the Spirit,  
the pledge of God's coming Reign,  
who gives the Church power  
to proclaim the good news to all the world,  
to love and serve all people,  
to strive for justice and peace,  
to warn the individual and the nation of God's judgment  
and to summon them both to trust the good news  
and to obey Jesus Christ as King.**

## **\*Hymn**

**A Mighty Fortress Is Our God**

**PH 260**

## **Concerns of the Church**

### **The Prayers of the People**

#### **The Peace**

**L:** God sent Jesus Christ into the world. Since God loved us so much, we too should love one another.

**P:** **Let us love one another, since love comes from God.**

**L:** The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**P:** **And also with you.**

#### **Offering**

**L:** Freely you have received, freely give.

#### **\*Doxology**

**PH 593**

#### **\*Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**L:** Holy God: you have chosen us to serve you, and appointed us the agents of your love. We thank you for prophets who recall us to your will. We are grateful for every impulse to confess and correct wrongs, to keep faith pure and purposes faithful. We praise you for your Holy Spirit always reforming the church, so we may better serve as disciples of your Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

#### **\*The Lord's Prayer**

#### **\*Hymn**

**My Song Forever Shall Record**

**PH 209**

#### **\*Charge**

**L:** Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold on to what is good; return no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak, help the suffering; honor all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### **\*Benediction**

**L:** The grace of our Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be and abide with you and with all those whom you love, and with all those whom no one loves, both now and forever. Amen.

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\*Indicates those who are able will stand.

L: Leader

P: People

PH: *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990)

## Notes to the Service

Contributed by Donald K. McKim  
Executive Editor for Theology and Reference  
Westminster John Knox Press

The structure of this Service for the Lord's Day is from *The Worshipbook* (1970). It is the joint work of three Reformed churches: the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

**The Opening Sentences** call the congregation to worship. "Our help is in the name of the Lord" was a call to worship frequently used by John Calvin (1509-1564).

**The Call to Worship** is adapted from Psalm 92:1-4 (NRSV). It is called a "Psalm for the Sabbath Day" and enjoins worshipers to assemble in praise and thankfulness to God, declaring the character of God in "steadfast love" and "faithfulness." Worshipers employ all forms of music and joyful singing as they remember the works of God's hands.

**The Hymn of Praise** is based on Psalm 100. "All People That on Earth Do Dwell" is an historic and much beloved hymn in the Reformed theological tradition. It is the metrical version of Psalm 100 by William Kethe (1560) and appeared in the Anglo-Genevan Psalter (1561). Kethe fled to the European continent from England during the reign of Queen Mary and was one of the translators of the Geneva Bible.

The tune Old Hundredth was composed or adapted by Louis Bourgeois (c. 1510-c. 1561) and was soon associated with Kethe's text.

The Reformed tradition has always stressed the use of the Psalms in worship. This hymn captures Reformed emphases on the greatness and goodness of God and the total commitment of praise and service to God. This is the response of "all people" to the "Lord" who is "God indeed."

**Confession of Sin.** The call to confession is based on 1 John 1:8-9. Humans who claim to be sinless before God are fooling themselves and believing nonsense. But instead of self-



deception, we can trust God who is true to God's own nature and as a just God will forgive the sin we confess.

We confess that we sin by failing to be God's servants and disobeying God's command. We commit sins of "omission" by being silent and heartless, turning "neighbors away from your love." We do not deserve God's care. We ask for forgiveness and freedom from sin.

The text of the Confession of Sin is from *The Worshipbook* (p. 26).

**Declaration of Pardon.** Sinners who confess their sin hear the good news of forgiveness in the declaration of pardon. The words of 1 Timothy 1:15 and 1 Peter 2:24 ring in our ears as we hear of the wondrous work of Jesus Christ who came into the world to save us, through his death on the cross, so that we "might break with sin and live for righteousness" (translation of James Moffatt, a Scots Presbyterian scholar who translated the whole Bible—1926).

The response of forgiven people is to believe this wonderful message and proclaim that we are forgiven in Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to confess our sin and to affirm and receive the declaration of sin's forgiveness in Jesus Christ. The Declaration of Pardon may be freely offered since it is the work of the Spirit which makes it effective in our lives.

**Gloria Patri.** The response of forgiven people to forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace with God is to praise the one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Prayer of Illumination.** In preparation for the reading of God's Word in Scripture and the proclamation of God's Word in the sermon, a prayer is offered. God is asked to help us hear and to obey God's Word.

**Old Testament Lesson.** The Scriptures of the Old Testament are read as God's Word.

**Anthem.** An anthem sung by the choir expresses the congregation's joy as the worshiping community.

**New Testament Lesson.** The Scriptures of the New Testament are read as God's Word.

**Sermon.** The sermon is the "Word of God" proclaimed. The Second Helvetic Confession indicates that "the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God" (*Book of Confessions* 5.004). As the human word (preaching) proclaims the written Word (Scripture), the living Word (Jesus Christ) becomes present. The Holy Spirit applies the written and preached Word to the lives of those who hear. Faith is given by the Spirit and nurtured by the Spirit in the midst of the worship of the gathered people of God, the church.

**Creed.** The response of the congregation to the proclamation and hearing of God's Word in Scripture and sermon is to affirm its faith in God and God's actions in Jesus Christ.

This creed is “A Declaration of Faith for the Church in South Africa” proclaimed by the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa in 1979. It does not seek to replace traditional ecumenical creeds or to summarize the whole of Christian faith, but “to express the response of that faith to an urgent, specific and contemporary problem in the Church (as many creeds and Confessions of Faith have done) and in our society. This problem is the ideological heresy that insists on the separate identity of racial groups as a supreme value and ideal for which we must strive, and therefore divides and segregates them geographically, socially, and politically.” (From Lucas Vischer, ed., *Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches* [1982]).

The text of the creed is modified as indicated.

**Hymn.** The congregation further praises God and responds to the Word of God through the singing of a hymn. This is the great hymn written by Martin Luther, based on Psalm 46, which has come to symbolize the Protestant Reformation in which the Reformed theological tradition developed.

**Concerns of the Church.** Announcements concerning the life of the church are shared with the congregation. God’s activities come to us through the human lives we lead. So these concerns are entirely appropriate. The worshipping community is also the caring community.

**The Prayers of the People.** The worship of the congregation turns to prayer which is of various kinds. Prayers of adoration, petition, intercession and praise are offered to God on behalf of the congregation and by the congregation.

**The Peace.** The congregation is reminded that the God to whom we pray is the God who has loved the world so greatly in Jesus Christ. The greeting of the Peace reminds us of God’s love and of our love for one another.

**Offering.** God has given all things to us freely. The congregation responds to God’s love in Jesus Christ by presenting an offering which in a greater sense represents the commitment of our whole lives to the God who created us and who loves us in Jesus Christ.

**Doxology.** We express our praise for God’s loving grace in Jesus Christ by singing.

The tune of this Doxology (PH 593) was composed by Richard K. Avery and Donald S. March for use by their congregation in Port Jervis, New York. It was published in 1967.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving.** We express our praise and thanks to God for all God’s goodness to us.

The Prayer is a Prayer of Thanksgiving for use on Reformation Sunday as found in *The Worshipbook* (p. 161).

**The Lord’s Prayer.** The prayer Jesus taught his disciples is used to further our commitment to praise God, serve God, and devote our lives to God’s purposes in this world and to live

out the purpose for which we are created: To glorify God and to enjoy God forever (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 1; *The Book of Confessions* 7.001).

**Hymn.** We praise God in a hymn to indicate our response to God’s Word and our desire to serve God and others in this world.

The hymn, “My Song Forever Shall Record” (PH 209) is based on Psalm 89. It is an expression of God’s faithfulness and mercies which will endure forever. The source of this metrical rendering of Psalm 89 is *The Psalter* (1912).

**The Charge.** Words of Scripture enjoin us to live our Christian faith in the world, loving and serving the Lord while we rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Benediction.** God’s blessing is given to us as we depart from the worship service to serve God in the world.

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Information on hymns is taken from LindaJo H. McKim, *The Presbyterian Hymnal Companion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993).

Other sources as worship resources are:

*The Book of Confessions*  
*Book of Common Worship* (1993)  
*The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990)  
*The Worshipbook* (1970)

# Remarks on Presbyterian Worship

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Presbyterians in the Reformed tradition have always been drawn to Paul's instruction to the Corinthian church: "all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). This has applied particularly to our understanding of Christian worship. A third term to describe Presbyterian worship can also be added: simplicity.

The Protestant Reformation was a sharp break with the Church of Rome. Martin Luther (1483-1546) sought to base the church's theology on his understanding of God's Word found in Holy Scripture. Luther maintained the basic structure of the Roman mass in his reform of worship. In general Luther and later Protestant Reformers "corrected theology, simplified forms, and restored proper congregational participation. But the basic movement of the Mass, from confessional rite to readings of Scripture to prayers of the faithful to Eucharistic celebration was preserved."<sup>1</sup>

Leaders of what became the "Reformed" theological tradition, including Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), Martin Bucer (1491-1551) and John Calvin (1509-1564) simplified worship structure further and sought to emphasize key elements. They wanted worship to be "reformed" in accordance with the Word of God. Calvin wrote that "no meeting of the church should take place without the Word, prayers, partaking of the Supper, and almsgiving."<sup>2</sup> In Geneva, where Calvin ministered, he was not able to institute the practice of celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at every worship service, though this was his constant aim.

Distinctive features of Calvin's understanding of "reformed" worship were a confession of corporate sinfulness, a declaration of pardon that boldly proclaimed God's love and mercy in Jesus Christ, a recognition that the Law of God was a guide for Christian believers, and a prayer of illumination that invoked the Holy Spirit to help those who hear to understand the Word of God written and proclaimed. Response to the Word of God preached was through the recitation of the Apostles' Creed and the collection of an offering which was used for the relief of human need.

The basic decency, order, and simplicity of Reformed services have been carried out in a variety of worship forms in the history of the Reformed tradition through the centuries. In America, different streams of the Reformed tradition have maintained distinctive emphases. In contemporary times in many places, Reformed worship has sought to maintain an ecumenical openness to recognize that the "Reformed" way of being Christian is one expression and that insights for liturgy and worship can also come through the ecumenical Christian church.

In general, Reformed and Presbyterian worship have seen worship as "the service of God's glory."<sup>3</sup> The service of worship is a rehearsal of "salvation history," of God's revelation and work in this world to which those whom God has called to be the "people of God" (church) have responded.

Worship begins with God's initiative—as does salvation itself. A call to worship summons the congregation to gather and celebrate creation and redemption in Jesus Christ. A hymn of praise to God follows in acknowledgement of this call.

In the presence of the God who is “beyond us,” the people recognize our human sinfulness and are called to confess our sins before God. This confession of sin is both corporate and personal in nature as we confess the sin in our own lives as well as the sins of humanity.

A bold Declaration of Pardon assures us of God's loving mercy in Jesus Christ who forgives sins, reconciles us with God and with one another, and gives us peace. These benefits come through the work of the Holy Spirit. In response, the congregation praises God, often through the singing of the “Gloria Patri.”

The people who have “gathered” and are forgiven are now addressed by God. They may now hear God's Word. A prayer for illumination seeks the Holy Spirit's help for the hearing and interpretation of the written Word and the Word of God proclaimed in preaching, through the sermon. Word and Spirit always go together in Reformed understanding. The Spirit “illuminates” the Word; the Word “interprets” what God's Spirit is saying to the church at this time. The sermon focuses on God's living word to the congregation, grounded in the Scriptures, and is the word which God has for the people of God assembled in worship. It proclaims the astonishing message of God's love for the world in Jesus Christ which bring us salvation. This is the climax of salvation history. This is the “Gospel”!

Response to God's Word is a confession of faith. Reformed Christians have always felt the need to give written and oral expression to their Christian faith. So our tradition features numerous “confessions of faith” as Reformed folks say what they believe, no matter where they are or what their circumstances may be. A creed or confession of faith may be a capsule summary of Christian belief or focus particularly on one aspect of faith or address a contemporary issue or problem for which the church needs to make a corporate witness. By confessing our faith through a creed, we are affirming our Christian belief and committing ourselves to Christian practice and action.

Further responses to the Word preached are through hymns, the concerns of the church, and the prayers of the people. These are ways by which “hearers” of the Word seek to become “doers” of the Word (James 1:22): by singing our faith, expressing concern for sisters and brothers, and petitioning God through prayer for the needs of others and for all human needs.

The God to whom singing, concerns, and prayers are offered is the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ and who has given us the gift of salvation by God's grace through faith. The church responds to this message by sharing God's “peace” with one another. Sometimes this “passing of the peace” is observed after the Declaration of Pardon, as a response to the good news of forgiveness and reconciliation declared in Christ.

The people of God also worship through the offering. Gifts of money are given to support the church's mission in the world. This is an appropriate response to the good news of God's coming in Jesus Christ. In a broader sense, the offering represents the giving of our whole selves in obedience to God and as followers or disciples of Jesus Christ. It is an expression of Paul's injunction that Christians offer ourselves as “a living sacrifice” to God (Rom. 12:1). A “doxology” of praise to God accompanies the presentation of the offering and a prayer of

thanksgiving expresses the gratitude of the people of God for God's grace in giving faith and the gift of salvation. This leads to a further expression of our union with God through Christ by the use of the Lord's Prayer, the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples and commanded his followers to use (see Matt. 6:9-13).

The grateful people of God, nourished by God's grace and having expressed our complete dedication to God in Jesus Christ now sing a final hymn. This hymn is an expression of faith and further conveys our human response to God's initiative of grace in Jesus Christ. It conveys our desire to be God's people in the world.

A Charge is given to the people as they prepare to depart and move from the "people gathered" to the "people scattered." The Charge reflects scriptural admonitions for living the Christian life in the world and are the words that continue to ring in the ears of those who have worshiped God and participated in this "service of God's glory." Through worship, God's glory has been expressed and now the people of God seek to live out this glory in the midst of the world.

A Benediction is the last word to be heard. It is an affirmation of God's presence and peace, and is a final word of grace.

The flow of the worship service in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition is from God's initiating grace, to the recognition of sin, to forgiveness, to the Word of God addressing us, to our grateful response and commitment of our lives to be lived to the "glory of God."

The rhythm of worship is the rhythm of the Christian life itself, in Reformed understanding—from grace to gratitude. This is the "heartbeat" of our faith. God's grace is given; we respond in gratitude. All this is the work of God's loving, electing grace, made known in Jesus Christ, and becoming a wondrous gift in our life through the gift of faith by the work of the Holy Spirit. Our worship is toward the one God in three persons who has loved us in Jesus Christ and called us as grateful disciples to serve God in this world, by giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Our worship is done "decently and in order" with simplicity and with the desire to carry out the apostle Paul's instruction: "...do everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:30 NRSV).

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<sup>1</sup> David G. Buttrick, "Liturgy, Reformed" in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 220.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles. Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960): 4.17.44.

<sup>3</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, "Worship" in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 410.

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## Further Resources

Karl Barth, *Prayer*. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition with Essays by I. John Hesselink, Daniel L. Migliore, and Donald K. McKim (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

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