



REFORMED
INSTITUTE *of*
METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON

Resources for Celebrating Reformation Sunday 2008

October 3, 2008

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. This is the fourth year we have done so and encourage you to make use of the information provided in past years, which can be found on our web site under the archives button.

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 rationale for celebrating Reformation Sunday which may be reproduced in your bulletin or elsewhere.
- 2) 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.).
- 3) An outline of a Service for the Lord's Day with notes explaining the service.
- 4) A brief list of recommended readings on the Reformation.
- 5) The Belhar Confession, which we commend for your congregation's study.
- 6) Suggested web sites with more resources about Reformed worship and celebrating Reformation Sunday.

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. Look for "Reformation Sunday" on the sidebar.

The preparation of this packet has been a collaborative effort. I want to thank in particular Dr. James Kay, Professor of Homiletics and Liturgics at Princeton Theological Seminary as well as the editor for *Theology Today*.

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.

WHY CELEBRATE REFORMATION SUNDAY?

It was on October 31st in 1517 that Martin Luther posted his famous theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg—an act that led to his excommunication and set in motion the Protestant Reformation. It is now common for Lutheran and Reformed churches throughout the world to celebrate the anniversary of that event each year on the last Sunday of October. But not all congregations do so, which raises the question of why any should. What is the point of celebrating “Reformation Sunday?”

The simplest answer is this: to give thanks to God for the precious gifts we owe to the Reformation—gifts that include the very existence of the churches of which we are a part. And those gifts also include, of course, the availability of the Bible in translations that make it accessible to the ordinary person. That fact alone is sufficient reason, surely, to pause annually and remind ourselves of what we owe to the efforts of those who have gone before us.

Reformation Sunday also provides an opportunity to educate the members of our churches about broader themes that help to explain why we practice our faith as we do. To be a Protestant is to follow Jesus Christ in a particular way, but that way is not always well understood, even by people who exemplify it. Most Protestants take for granted that our churches are fallible and always in need of the reforming work of the Holy Spirit, for example. Or that it is right for lay people to participate in the governance of our churches, even on doctrinal matters. Or that it is legitimate for our clergy to be married and have children of their own. But even when we embrace such practices, we often lack a good understanding of why they exist, much less why they are not shared by the members of other churches. This is not something that can be overcome in a single day, to be sure, but an annual celebration of the Reformation is an excellent way to begin the conversation.

Living as we do in an ecumenical age, people of faith tend to be sensitive to the need to understand—and treat with respect—the beliefs and practices of those who hold faiths that are different from their own. And that is all to the good: all our faith communities have valuable lessons to learn from the others, and the willingness to treat religious differences respectfully is surely one of the great gains of our day. But the promise this development holds is likely to be realized only if we are prepared to treat our own traditions with a comparable respect. If inter-religious dialogue is pursued at all seriously, moreover, it leads naturally in that direction: the better acquainted people are with the beliefs of others, the more aware they tend to be of the distinctiveness of their own beliefs—and the more reason they have to want to understand the grounds for those beliefs. For that reason as well, the celebration of Reformation Sunday can serve as a valuable resource for those who are serious about bringing their faith to bear on the challenges presented by the contemporary world.

R. Bruce Douglass
Director
Reformed Institute of Metropolitan Washington



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 16th 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



SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY
REFORMATION SUNDAY
2008

*Call to Worship

Our help is in the name of the Lord,

Who made heaven and earth.

(Ps 124:8)

Let us worship God!

*Invocation

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Eternal, Almighty, and Most Gracious God! Heaven is your throne, and earth is your footstool; holy and reverend is your name. You are praised by the heavenly hosts, and in the congregation of your saints on earth, and are glorified by all who draw near to you. We are sinful and unworthy dust; but, invited by you, we are bold, through our blessed Mediator, to present ourselves and our supplications before you. Receive us in your grace; renew us by your Spirit; recall us to your word, and grant that we may receive it with attentive, reverent, and obedient minds. Make it to us the savor of life unto life. Cause us to be fervent in prayer, joyful in your praise, and diligent in your service. May we find that a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, and that it is good for us to draw near to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*Hymn of Praise

“I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art”

Toulon

Confession of Sin

Seek the Lord while he may be found,
Call upon him while he is near;

**Let the wicked forsake their way,
And the unrighteous their thoughts;**

Let them return to the Lord, that
He may have mercy on them,

And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

(Isa 55:6-7)

Let us confess our sin to God:

Almighty God, rich in mercy to all who call upon you, hear us as we come to you humbly confessing our sins and transgressions, and imploring your mercy and forgiveness. We have broken your holy laws by our deeds and words, and by the sinful affections of our hearts. We confess before you our disobedience and ingratitude, our pride and willfulness, and all our failures and shortcomings toward you and our neighbors. Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, and of your great goodness grant in the power of your Holy Spirit that we may serve and please you in newness of life; through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Savior..

Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Hear the Gospel of Christ:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. (Rom. 5:5)

Thanks be to God!

*Acclamation (Psalm 136)

Monkland

**Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord who is so kind:
For God's mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.**

Prayer for Illumination

Blessed Lord,
who caused the Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
Grant us so to hear them,
read, mark, and inwardly digest them,
that we may embrace and ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

A Reading from the Old Testament

Anthem, Responsorial Psalm, or Hymn

A Reading from the New Testament

Sermon

*Affirmation of Faith

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Concerns of the Church

The Prayers of the People or the Pastoral Prayer of Intercession

*The Exchange of Peace

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

(John 14:27)

Dear Friends: The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Offering

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

(Eph 5:2)

* Doxology

"All People That on Earth Do Dwell"

Old Hundredth

*The Lord's Supper

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up you hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty Father, Creator and Sustainer of life,
your majesty and power, your continued blessings,
and your great goodness fill us with wonder.
We are unworthy of the pardon you have in mercy given.
We can only bring our thanks,
putting our trust in your Son, who alone saves us from evil.

Therefore in joy,
with prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints of every time and place,
we join in giving you praise:

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest!**

[The congregation may be seated.]

God of glory,
In thanks we remember that the Lord Jesus invites us to his table,
imprinting on our hearts his sacrifice on the cross.
In humility we bow before the Righteous One,
who was wounded for our transgressions,
who, for our sake, became sin,
suffering the hellish pangs of death.

God of glory,
in gratitude we recall your victory over evil,
raising the Lord Jesus from the dead,
and raising us to eternal life
as we await his appearing.

Almighty God,
Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and these gifts,
that as we receive bread and wine
we may be assured that our Savior's promise
given in these signs will be fulfilled.

Remember, Lord, your church,
and all who minister in it.

Remember, Lord, the world of nations.
May your peace and justice prevail.

Remember, Lord, all of our companions on the Way,
who are persecuted for righteousness sake,
and who are suffering, or dying, or grieving.
Hold us all in your outstretched arms.

Eternal Father,
Lift our hearts and minds on high
where, with Christ your only Son,
and with the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours,
now and forevermore.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

The Words of Institution

The Communion

Let us pray:

O God,
You have so greatly loved us,
long sought us,
and mercifully redeemed us.
Give us grace
that in everything we may yield ourselves,
our wills and our works,
a continual thank-offering to you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

***Hymn**

“Now Thank We All our God”

Nun Danket Alle Gott

***The Charge to the People**

Here the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your

neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.” (Mt 22:37-40; cf. Deut 6:5, Lev. 19:18)

***The Blessing:**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. (Num 6:24-26)

***Amen.**

* = Congregation standing

Bold Text = Congregation speaking or singing

Notes to the Service

Prepared by James F. Kay
Princeton Theological Seminary

The **ordering** (“**ordo**”) of this service is based largely on the Service for the Lord’s Day of *The Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

The **Invocation** is adapted from the Savoy Liturgy (1660) of Richard Baxter (1615-1691), composed for non-conforming Christians following the restoration of the British monarchy after the demise of the Puritan Commonwealth. See Bard Thompson, ed. *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961), 386.

“**I Greet Thee Who My Sure Redeemer Art**”: The traditional attribution of this hymn to John Calvin (1509-1564) received support in the 1990s by the research of Lennart Pearson then of Presbyterian College (S.C.). A comparison of early texts indicate that the original words, offering praise to the Virgin Mary and authored by a 15th-century monk, were subsequently adapted by Calvin to offer praise to Jesus Christ who alone is our Redeemer, Mediator, and Savior. The 1868 English translation from the Strassburg Psalter (1545) is by an American, Elizabeth Lee Smith (1817-1898).

The **Prayer of Confession** and the **Declaration of Pardon** are based on Hughes Oliphant Old, *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 126-137. The Prayer of Confession is adapted from that of the American hymnologist Louis F. Benson (1855-1930).

The **Acclamation** paraphrasing Psalm 136 is adapted from that of John Milton (1608-1674). See *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1993) No. 244.

The **Prayer for Illumination** is adapted from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer of 1549 that was heavily influenced by the Zurich Reformation. See *The Service for the Lord’s Day: The Worship of God*, Supplemental Liturgical Resource 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 61.

The **Responsorial Psalm** may be sung in hymn paraphrase. Suggested for use here are Ps 46 in Martin Luther’s (1483-1546) “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” (Ein’ Feste Burg), or Ps 90 in Isaac Watts’ (1674-1748), “Our God Our Help in Ages Past” (St. Anne).

The **Apostles’ Creed**, while not authored by the twelve Apostles, does enshrine in summary form the apostolic faith of the church reaffirmed by the Reformers. The origins of the creed can be traced to the ancient baptismal rite of the church at Rome. The present wording of the creed jelled during the 8th century. Calvin placed great emphasis on the sometimes disputed clause “*descendit ad inferna*,” “he descended into hell,” as referring to the anguish that Jesus

Christ willingly experienced in our stead on the cross. No human experience, however hellish or godforsaken, is finally beyond the redeeming embrace of our Savior. (See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.16.5-12.) The Reformers affirmed the “catholic,” that is, the universal or ecumenical, character of the church. The Reformation can be understood as a movement seeking to make the Western Church of its time more—not less--“catholic” by a renewed laying hold of the Holy Scriptures and of the apostolic faith to which they witness.

Whether the **Intercessions** are led by an elder, deacon, or layperson on behalf of the people, are offered by the people together, or are offered on behalf of the people by their pastor, it is customary in churches informed by the Reformation that these intercessions include prayers for “the Church, then for the ministry, for all people, for the civil authority, and finally for those in the congregation with any special need or suffering any particular trial or adversity.” See Hughes Oliphant Old, *Leading in Prayer*, 175-183.

The Lord’s Supper: John Calvin appealing to Scripture, notably Acts 2:42 and 1 Cor 11:20, (see his *Institutes* 4.17.44) urged the recovery of frequent communion as part of his program of reform. If the Lord’s Supper is not celebrated on Reformation Sunday, the service may conclude after the offering with a Prayer of Thanksgiving and the Lord’s Prayer followed by a closing hymn, a charge, and a blessing.

The text used here for **The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving** is based on the Communion Exhortation of John Calvin and is adapted from *The Service for the Lord’s Day*, Supplemental Resource 1, 116-117. Since **intercessions** have already been offered in the service, they are *briefly* resumed here.

The Words of Institution (“the verba”), often drawn from 1 Cor 11:23-26, in ancient rites are usually part of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving. Calvin placed them at the outset of the service where they functioned as a warrant for the action to follow; Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), the reformer of Zurich, placed them here at the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine thereby reenacting the institution of the Lord’s Supper at the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples.

The **Postcommunion Prayer**, adapted here, was used at the Westminster Assembly in 1647.

The Charge to the People, employs the Great Commandment as a summary of the Law of God. It appears here at the end of the service to remind the worshipers of the pattern of the Christian life as they leave the assembly to take up their baptismal calling to be Christ’s witnesses in the world.



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.

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 RESOURCES

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has an office for theology and worship. Visit their web site at <http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/worship/reformationsunday.htm> for wonderful ways to celebrate Reformation Sunday, including sermon suggestions, a look at the French Confession of 1559, litanies and hymn suggestions.

Additional prayers for Reformed worship may be found at The Institute for Reformed Worship at Erskine Seminary: <http://www.reformedworship.com/index.htm>

Reformation Sunday resource packets from 2007 and 2006 contain extensive ideas for sharing our heritage with children and youth as well as more web resources. Those packets may be obtained from the web site, www.reformedinstitute.org, under “Archives.”