

THE 500th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION-- A TIME FOR REFLECTION AND RENEWAL

On October 31, 1517, All Soul's Day, Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk who taught Biblical studies at the University of Wittenberg, posted a set of 95 "theses" on the north door of the castle church of that city. That act, which was meant as a call for debate on the need for reforms in the church of his day, is now commonly recognized as the event which set in motion the Protestant Reformation.

2017 is thus the 500th anniversary of the start of the Reformation.

The Reformed Institute of Metropolitan Washington, which exists to promote understanding and appreciation of one of the more important Christian traditions that developed out of the Reformation, intends to commemorate this anniversary in an extended series of events that will unfold throughout 2017, and we invite all Presbyterians (and other Reformed Christians) in the Washington area to join us in using this occasion as a time for reflecting together on the challenges that now confront us in the light of the heritage we share with other Protestants.

Why are we doing this? And why do we commend it to others?

1) As Protestants, we owe much of what we are today to the influence of the people who made the Reformation possible. If we are all appreciative of the foundation those people laid, it is only fitting that we should **honor what our spiritual forebears accomplished** in that era.

2) By reminding ourselves of what happened in the Reformation (and the long train of events it set in motion) we should be able to acquire **a better understanding of our own identity** as Christians of a particular sort.

3) The Reformation began as a renewal movement, and it provides many examples of courageous actions taken in pursuit of that end. To anyone who is sympathetic to what the people in that movement were seeking to accomplish (often at considerable personal risk or cost) the example they set can scarcely help but be inspiring; and the better acquainted we are with their stories, the more likely it is that we will be able to **derive inspiration** from them.

4) The results of the Reformation were often not what the people who set it in motion expected (or wanted). As we think about the challenges of church renewal in our own time, there are surely **lessons to be learned** from that experience.

5) Much has happened in the years since the Reformation to change both the Roman Catholic Church and the churches that arose out of the Reformation. So Protestants and Catholics alike find themselves in a very different position today from the one their forebears faced in the 16th century. They also have different views of what happened in the era of the Reformation. By reflecting on where things stand today in the light of that history, we should be able to acquire a **better understanding of the divisions that still exist in the Christian world**.