

Each October, on last Sunday of the month, we celebrate Reformation Sunday. This celebration, known for the most part only among Lutherans, marks the day that, by tradition, Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses, or topics for discussion about indulgences, on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. That is generally considered the beginning of the Lutheran reformation. (Reformation Day is October 31st.)



By the end of the seventeenth century, many Lutheran churches celebrated a festival commemorating Martin Luther's posting of the Ninety-five Theses, a summary of abuses in the church of his time. At the heart of the reform movement was the gospel, the good news that it is by grace through faith that we are justified and set free.

Perhaps this is a good month to review what it is we as Lutherans believe. In my "Reformation" folder, I have an old "Christian Tract" from the Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church (no date or copyright listed.) It states: WHAT LUTHERANS BELIEVE There still seemed hope, even a dozen years after the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, of bringing the followers of Luther back into the Roman Catholic Church. Luther had not wished to start a new church, but only to correct false teachings and practices of the church in which he had been a priest.

In 1530 the Emperor asked the Lutherans to present a statement of their beliefs for comparison with Roman Catholic teachings. The statement was given to the emperor at the city of Augsburg, and is called the Augsburg Confession. The Roman Catholic Church refused to accept it, and the peacemaking efforts failed. But it is still treasured by Lutherans as the clearest and simplest statement of our principles, and is accepted by all the Lutheran churches of the world. Here is a brief summary of its 28 articles:

1. There is one God who is three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. All people are by nature sinful, and in need of new birth through Baptism.
3. Christ is truly divine and truly human.
4. No one can become righteous in God's sight by their own efforts but solely through faith.
5. God gives us faith through the Gospel and the Sacraments. (Baptism and the Lord's Supper.)
6. True faith brings forth the good deeds God expects of God's children.
7. The Church is the assembly of believers in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered.
8. Gospel and Sacraments in the Church are effectual even though received through unworthy ministers.
9. The grace of God is offered in Baptism, and therefore Baptism is necessary for salvation.
10. The Body and Blood of Christ are received, under the bread and wine, in the Lord's Supper.
11. Private confession and absolution of sins are approved, though a person's sins are greater than one can confess entirely.
12. Sinners may be absolved of sin upon honest repentance.
13. Sacraments are signs of God's will toward us, to stir up and confirm faith in those who receive them.
14. No one should teach publicly in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, unless they have been properly called.
15. Celebration of holy days and feasts is approved, but not held necessary.
16. Christians should support their government, and obey its laws, unless these are contrary to God's own laws.
17. Christ will return at the last day as the judge.
18. People have freedom of will to work for earthly righteousness, but cannot attain God's righteousness without God's help.
19. Sin is not caused by God, but by one's failure to obey God.
20. A person who has faith may be expected to live rightly, although it is not ones good works which earn them God's approval.
21. The saints may be kept in hallowed memory, but are not to be worshiped.
22. Both bread and wine are to be given to communicants in the Lord's Supper.
23. Priest are to be allowed to marry.
24. Communion is to be celebrated reverently, not as a new sacrifice for sin but for strengthening faith.
25. Confession is to be a proper means of preparation for receiving Communion.
26. Observance of holidays, fasts, and rites are not essential to Christianity and must not be compulsory.
27. God is not pleased by those who flee into monasteries and convents.
28. The Church is not to rule the state, or even to make laws governing one's consciences in religious practices unless these laws already exist in God's Word.

I am curious if any of these surprised you, or gave you pause. Let me know ... Blessings and Joy!! ! Pastor Karen