

Reformation was made for Lutherans!

Lutherans Love Reformation. This day and celebration on this last Sunday of October. Reveling in the glory of Luther – taking a stand against the Roman Catholic Church. And singing Mighty Fortress. Trinity could really teach St. Paul's and Mary of Magdala a few things.

Lutherans Love Reformation. The concept, the theology. Sinner to Saint. Grace. Freedom. God making us new creations.

Either that, or Lutherans just love wearing red.

But, why? Reformation really is just history.
What we really Love, is Re-formation.

The prefix Re defines a backward movement -

Revert

Retreat

Reverse

Realign

Return

Resign

Regroup

Relent

But Re also means 'again and again' like repetition...

Or re-petition?

Re-act

Reinforce

Re-press

Re-invigorate

Re-read

Re-present

Re-main

Re-flex

Re-pay

Re-distribute

Re-assure

Re-teach

Re-do

Re-fresh

Receive

Re-cycle, Reduce, Reuse

And, some Re words require looking to the past, to repeat into the future.

Refurbish

Redeem

Re-cover

Reflect

Re-union

Redeem

Re-lease

Reconcile

Receive

Repent

Re-create

Re-form

This isn't just a fun word study. Loving Reformation, is loving more than an event from 1517, and living into the gift called re-formation. Loving re-formation is admitting the division that was created, and the challenge reuniting as church. Loving re-formation is loving God, and neighbor believing how we treat our neighbor reshapes our relationship with God.

Loving re-formation, means returning to love – in love and because of love, Jesus himself – the commandments are fulfilled, and we are changed, renewed, redeemed, resurrected, re-membered – put back together.

Because re-formation begins with acknowledging our brokenness, because we failed to love God, love neighbor, and love self.

Look at the scribes, who have a lot of questions for Jesus – resurrection, taxes, commandments, how do we get into God's kingdom – and Jesus brings to love, re-frames and re-forms the law into love. Jesus reunites the first and second tablets of the Law, the old ways of thought – and redraws our relationship with God.

Following only the “love God” command, misses half the message. But only loving our Lutheran neighbors, or “Episcopalian” Or “Ecumenical Catholic”, neighbors, or only other “Christians” also isn’t loving God.

To love God fully, we must love neighbor, even the neighbors with whom we disagree. Even the neighbors living closest to us.

Having five clergy, three office admins, 2 communication directors, financial manager, musicians, countless volunteers, and needy congregation members! – all on the same side of the building – is a beautiful gift. And frustrating. And necessary. And complicated.

A reformation Lutheran would say Here I Stand, I ain't moving or changing anything. Deal with it.

But would that be loving my neighbor?

Staff are literally bumping into one another. You can probably hear us disputing in the hallway – and not deep theological concerns, no, we argue about the line for the microwave, which shelf the paper should be stored on, and why someone left the toilet seat up.

As a good Lutheran – I should celebrate reformation and nail my grievances to the church door, or the work room bulletin board – ie 95 Theses – and let the public hash it out.

But is that loving my neighbor?

In this shared space, shared ministry, shared expenses, shared staff – we can find a lot of ways to disagree, to play the blame game, to differentiate “us versus them.”

But is that loving our neighbor?

Jesus reshapes the rhetorical sparring match between him and the religious authorities, and redefines the us/them, win/lose dynamic, into both/and, we/us...love/love. in the midst of our conflicts and our us-groups and them-groups; We might ask how Love, how Jesus shows up.

Loving God with one's mind, reforms into loving God with what one's mind does. Love works. Love Acts. Love Builds up. Love is what re-forms the people, and the church.

If re-formation is going to happen, we need to be in love, with God with each other.

What is fundamental to our faith, our relationship to God, and our relationship to others? Of all the ministry we do – what is most important? You guessed it. Love.

Love God. Love Neighbor. This is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

More important than shared checkbooks.

Or shared employees. Or sharing desks.

Or joint Ecological Team. Or Joint Property Team.

Or Cooperation Team.

Or carpeting. Or the library. Or internet. Or thermostat. Or air purifiers. Or desk arrangements.

Or communion practice. Or theology. Or worship times. Or worship – period.

More than what we do, when and where we do, or how we do...is WHY we do anything. Because of Love. The Love of God. Love itself. Jesus himself. Love is how God brings us close to God's kingdom.

As individuals, as unique congregations with specific identities, as 301 Faith Partners community, we start, continue, and end in love, love of God, and love of neighbor. No matter what challenges, struggles, questions, or disagreements we may have with one another.

Loving doesn't mean we stop questioning one another, or addressing conflicts. It doesn't mean we placate and acquiesce to one another.

Loving means that we learn and teach from a position of love. Love defines the relationship in, with and under our partnership together. Love means we trust the relationship to be honest with one another.

Love means admitting when we are wrong, and where are edges are for growth. That is why Love is the heart of re-formation.

So, allow me to make amends...nail my these to the door...Luther isn't the great reformer. There were many others before and after. And he didn't say The church is always reforming, though he gets credit, it was actually John Calvin.

Reformation is history. And can stay that way.
Re-formation is our present. Is our future.

Reformation wasn't made for Lutherans after all....
But surely as God's people we, each and every one of us, were made for re-formation.