

All Saints Sunday

Every year when we do this, I am taken aback at the number of candles, at the list of names, and at the level of grief. How badly we miss so many of these people. And every year, someone says to me “thank you for remembering this person.” Because we do remember. The preparations for All Saints Sunday start with going through a year’s worth of prayer lists, and getting every name from the “in mourning” section. Member or not, Christian or not, known to most of us or not. You grieved, we prayed – and we remember.

I am coming to think that All Saints Sunday offer two great gifts. One is the remembering, in an amnesiac society that would prefer we all “just get over it” or “experience closure”. We remember that these people were with us, and now they’re not. Which leads to the other great gift: learning to stay with the grief and the grieving. Taking the time to read all those names. Sitting quietly as the Pie Jesu is prayed/sung. Taking the time to instruct the children in what’s happening (and review and instruct the adults!). Somehow speaking the promises of Easter in a way that doesn’t try to platitudinize away the pain. Learning together that yes, we can do this, and yes, we can get through this together, because Jesus is already here, with us weeping and rejoicing and singing.

Pastor Elizabeth Larsen



Honored Saints

Al Janis
Bill Larsen
Jean Thompson
Martin Goplen
Wayne Evensen
Ed Zilk
Dorothy Larsen
Hank Ginnings
Glenn Chase's mother
Fern Luke
Lucille Starika

Gloria Bowen
Dorothy Seiffert
Charlie Hamann
Duane Brende
Bob Larsen
Sam Reeley
Pauline McNeff
Rev. Joe Smith
Roger Burke
Judi Roberts
Joyce Nance



Reformation Sunday

Our Reformation celebration began when St. Mark's worshipped at 10am with Heavenly Peace. Jon Cheskin played one of Bach's unaccompanied suites for cello (Bach is another great Lutheran theologian); a pop-up choir did an anthem; after worship we had a birthday cake for the Reformation and sushi and other wonderful snacks to go with our showing of Rick Steves' special on Luther and the Reformation.



It was October 31, 1517 when Martin Luther disseminated his 95 theses, calling for conversation and change in the Church. As Lutherans here in Oregon, we are heirs of this history. Christ alone! Faith alone! The Word alone! It is not through our own efforts, power or purity that we are claimed 'Children of God'. No, this is a gift, a grace, a treasure!

A mere seven years after the Reformation, 1524-1525, some 100,000 German peasants were killed in the Peasant War. The Reformation was also part of the social milieu which led to this devastation. Let us not forget the cost of change.

As many as 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust during WWII. Seemingly anti-Semitic sentiments of Martin Luther were used as justification for this massacre. Let us not forget how our words can be received in other contexts.

It was not until Vatican II, in the 1960s, that the Roman Catholic Church officially recognized that maybe, theologically, Luther had a point. That was 450 years in the coming, but the last 50 years have seen significant healing between Catholics and Lutherans for which we give thanks. We see that change is real and possible. We observe that renewal can benefit many. And we remember, once again, that change takes time.

On this 500th Anniversary of the Reformation I reflect in this way because there are pressures, powers, frustrations and confusion in our own lives that are not unlike those of Luther's time. We are right to honor and celebrate the courage, clarity and hope that the Reformation ushered in. However, we would be wrong if we celebrated without also acknowledging the cost that radical change requires.

Today I ask what it means to be the Church of the Reformation. For me it means the following:

- First of all, that we live with deep gratitude for the gift of life won for us in Jesus Christ, and lavished upon all humanity through the Grace of God.
- Secondly, that we claim freedom from fear in Jesus, and live with joy and confidence in God's love for all Creation.
- Thirdly, that we adopt a radical honesty as the proper lens through which to evaluate our own lives, the world around us, and our choices about how we will live this day.
- And fourthly, that we stand by the cross in all situations and stations. For it is not through power, pride, principle or prognostication that Christ is made known. Rather, we remember that it is through humility, love, servitude and sincerity that we have been given faith.

The cost has been high. It always is. The gift is ultimate, for it is of God. Our journey has been painful and playful, powerful, and convoluted. This seems to be the way of life. Yet, as we celebrate the Reformation this week we can claim all of this. For in Christ all things are brought together. And in Christ, and Christ alone, all things feed a future of glory and Grace in the love of God.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Bp. Dave Brauer-Rieke Oregon Synod - ELCA