

Pastoral Letter

Dear All,

31st October 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. On this day in 1517 Martin Luther changed the history of the church forever with his 95 one sentence statements nailed to the door of the Wittenberg church. His theses were a bold protest against what he believed was wrong in the practice and teaching of the Catholic Church. His main premise was that the Pope selling indulgences was wrong as it gave the buyers a false sense of security, endangering their salvation. Salvation, according to him, can only be found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ: *he who doesn't have Jesus is lost*. Luther's protest was the beginning of the restoration and renewal of the core values of the Christian faith that was continued by John Calvin and other reformers.

A question for us all to think about is: if we are to write just a one sentence statement about church life today, what would it be? Celebrating the 500th anniversary of the reformation is not just about recalling a handed down tradition, nor is it about an attachment to a rigid system of belief and customs. Reformation is about identity and mission – we believe and accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and have a personal relationship with him. Our identity transforms into our mission as we use our skills and talents to help further God's work transforming the church, community and the world for his glory! However our mission and the tools we use must be relevant to context - we are witnesses for Christ today, not five centuries ago. We belong to the URC, a denomination that is reformed and reforming (*Semper Reformanda*) - reforming should bring about radical change for the better, even as we deal with the demands of our faith. Whatever our creative response in the changing face of faith in today's context, one constant remains: ***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Amen! Hebrews 13:8***

Every blessing!

Irene John