

King of Glory Lutheran Church

Reformation and 42nd Birthday Celebration Weekend – October 27-28/2018

John 8:31-36

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

Time and talents have always reformed the Church with new ideas, new passion. The gift Christ gives us on our Birthday is freedom for life with HIM. This is what reforms our hearts and the church. We need reformation!

Martin out in the concourse and I want to say to you, Happy Reformation and Happy Birthday! Let's sing! (Happy Birthday) Now like any good Birthday Party, we need to take a picture of those in attendance. (Pastor turns around to take a selfie of the congregation.) Squeeze together now...squeeze.

At an individual's b'day party – we celebrate the **time**, the years that have passed and the years that will come whether 6, 26 or 62. Those years hold memories, laughter, tears, and ...we look forward to year 7 and 27 and 72. Birthdays mark a touchstone in the passing of time.

We also celebrate the person – who they are – their **talents** and passions. You look for weeks for the perfect card – one that fits their unique sense of humor. Maybe she is artistic so she gets a certificate to the art supply store. Perhaps he loves to golf, so it's another year's membership for the course. Our gifts are for who they are and what they need.

So on this Birthday party for King of Glory, let's remember our time and our talents! You've been through 42 years together! That's a long time. Let's walk down memory lane. In 1976...

The phrase 'junk food' enters the English language

The first commercial Concorde flight flies from London to New York in just under three hours

Steve Jobs establishes Apple Computers

A gallon of gas cost 59 cents and a men's sport jacket \$39

There was a presidential election in November of '76 between

Republican incumbent Gerald Ford and Democrat Jimmy Carter.

(<http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/1976.html>)

In 1976 here in Loveland when Zion decided to begin a mission congregation on the west side of town, they were dreaming with reformation imagination...dreaming of those God would bring to fill the seats and worship and pray! The two trailers purchased from a Denver hospital were the beginning of a

space. The tapestry was sewn by households and families representing the Body of Christ. Pastors Munter and Hanson led worship and officiated the Sacraments. Then came land, a new building, a playground, the Rainbow bus. More recently a columbarium now houses a few of our saints and we've built a new sign. These are just a few of our collective memories from years gone by.

As far as talents, listed on the back of your bulletin are the names of people who were here in 1976-77 and 78 who worked so diligently for this mission start. Tom Bosse shoveling snow off of the roof "Worked so hard and it was so fun and I'd never do it again!" Joyce Bosse on two committees. Indeed it takes so many people with so many talents to begin a church: who does finances, who teaches? We need greeters. People to do outreach, bulletins and take care of the property?

During the last two months as we shared our "42 and Forward" home conversations, you reported that our congregation is talented at being welcoming to all. That there is a good spirit here and people sense that. You mentioned that we are financially generous as we give to World Hunger, the Synod and support organizations in our community.

As you know and as Bishop Jim and I understand so acutely, the church has always depended first upon God. Secondly, the church continuously depends upon the people – we the Body of Christ to give of our time and talents for the sake of the Church and for the sake of the World. As we celebrated in September, church is constantly "God's Work, Our Hands!"

Time and talents...gifts given to us by God to share and to steward with wisdom and grace. We freely give what God has first given. But, on this Birthday and Reformation celebration, Jesus offers us a gift today! And frankly, this gift is better than any others that we mentioned before. Freedom.

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

In the Gospel lesson, a Jewish festival is taking place; the Festival of Booths. This is a harvest celebration that commemorates God's protection and accompaniment of the Jews on their wilderness sojourn from the bondage of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land (see Leviticus 23:39-43). Participants in this Jerusalem Temple-based festival would often construct booths, draw water from the pool of Siloam, and light candles to commemorate the odyssey of their ancestors. They were remembering!

So during this Festival, Jesus is teaching and He says to those gathered, instead of drawing waters, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me!" (7:37) Instead of lighting candles to remember the exodus, Jesus says, "I am the light..of the world!" (8:12) And instead of remembering the Exodus, Jesus says, "You will always be free if you dwell and remain in my Word." He is telling the people, that He is the embodiment of the festival. He will now shelter and keep them. They will always find their freedom in Christ.

We here in the United States are granted many freedoms. We move freely about, travelling where we wish. Coming to church is assumed; it's not an activity we must do in secret. Freedom gives us the possibilities to go and buy food, speak to whomever we wish and vote without fear of retribution.

But that's not the freedom Jesus is speaking about. This Word, the Living Word of God holds our freedom. "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." The gift Jesus offers is freedom to be in relationship with God. Free to worship God without fear. To free us from sin. He frees to forgive. Our life in Christ is a radical and life reforming relationship.

One day at the roller skating rink years ago, a young child got her arm stuck up in the middle of a vending machine with all the little toys. The opening wasn't very large, but then her arm wasn't either. All of those toys were bright and shiny – she wanted more than one! But try as she might, she couldn't pull her arm back out of the vending machine. The harder she pulled, the more it hurt. It was only when the firemen came and broke open the plastic container that she gained her freedom.

We adults can be like that little girl. We go through life and we wish for all that is shiny and beautiful. Health and happiness. The corner office, a loving spouse with 2.4 children and the picket fence. Once we obtain those things, we begin to trust in them.

But life's trials come to all of us. Relationships break down. Illness comes unexpectedly. The salary cannot keep up with cost of living increases. Often the more we try to fix things on our own, the harder we pull in the direction we think will help, the more it hurts.

Our only hope for new life comes when God turns us towards Godself and breaks open our false beliefs and desires with new beliefs and true freedom. Once we

taste it we long for it more and more. In his letter, "The Freedom of a Christian," Martin Luther writes this: "One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness and freedom. **That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ.** Where the (soul) has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory and of every incalculable blessing." (Timoth Lull, editor. "Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1989. pg 597)

Now that's a gift. It's a gift to Pastor Kimberly Knowle-Zeller whose three year old daughter cannot speak like other three year olds. As a result of brain damage, young joyful, spirited Charlotte cannot speak. Days are spent going to speech therapy where Charlotte retrains her brain and reforms letters and sounds over and over. Pr Kim prays for her daughter to find the sounds and eventually the words. Kim takes comfort in God's Word – the Word that was present from the beginning of all time – the Word made flesh who dwells in Charlotte's spirit even though God is not yet verbalized. Pastor Kim while worried, knows freedom of speech in a God whose Word, Jesus Christ brings her hope. (Looking for the Word. Kimberly Knowle-Zeller. In Magazine, "Living Lutheran." Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN. September 2018. Pg 36-37.)

Christian freedom is freedom *for* life in relationship with God and each other because we believe we have been created for just such relationships and cannot be either whole or free apart from them. That's freedom! We are freed in Christ!

On this Birthday and Reformation Sunday, we give God thanks for those who came before us. They knew the joy of living and dwelling in the Word as they began this mission congregation, King of Glory. Their time and talents built this church. And our time and talents have continue to reform the Church.

But the largest gift Jesus gives us is to continue to trust in a life of freedom with God. When we read the Word, God reforms our hearts to love broadly, forgive deeply, trust fully and be in genuine relationship with one another. When fear and trauma and division seem to hold the day, we have another way to live! God transforms our hearts so that we don't have to be divided from one another or God! What a gift – not only for today but for each and every day!

Reform us O God, reform us O God, open and change our hearts for you. Happy Birthday Church and Blessed Reformation! Amen!