



Ratio 2:16



Bishop's Post April May 2017

The Second Reformation

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." Acts 15, 7-10

In Acts 15:7-9 Peter summarises what the first Reformation was about, the one that I discussed in the previous Bishop's Post. Non-Jews can also become Christians, without first becoming Jews.

Now we find ourselves at the first Synod of the early Church, in the year 48.

Although the early Church did accept non-Jews after the first reformation, the expectation was that they would then follow the Jewish laws and traditions. In areas where the Jews were in the majority, this was accepted without questioning. But, as the gospel spread, new congregations were established that had no Jewish members. For these Christians, it did not make sense why they should adhere to Jewish custom. Their founder, Paul, also did not insist on it.

Soon mumblings started in the older congregations about these new Christians. They did not respect any of the God-given and God-demanded instructions that were supposed to be an integral part of their religion.

Thus, a Synod was called to discuss this issue and clarify it. All participants shared the desire to seek what was best for the Church, and to determine what was essential for being a Christian, for salvation. A hefty discussion took place, lasting for hours. Finally, Peter stood up.

Unlike Martin Luther, he does not post 95 Theses - he only has one: "We

believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” This sentence is the beginning of the second Reformation.

The first Reformation stated: “Non-Jews can be Christians too.” The second one can be summed up: “It is through the grace of Jesus that all of us are saved”.

1500 years later Martin Luther stated this same thought in the short phrase: Sola gratia, solus Christus - saved by grace alone, through Christ alone.

We are excited about the Reformation jubilee - but Acts 15 shows that reformation can be quite dreadful! Dedicated Christians come into conflict with each other. All of them are committed and want the best for the Church of Christ. We can only pray that at the right time the Holy Spirit will speak through a servant of his, so that the right words are spoken, words that open the way into the future.

The second Reformation was not a re-storation, a turning back to the origins, but a breakthrough of the gospel through ancient, God-given traditions that had been surpassed by Christ. It is by the grace of Jesus alone that we are saved!

Host Müller

News from the Church

Pastor Remo Köhne was inducted as pastor of the Church of Peace in Hillbrow on the 5th of March 2017. He also takes over as dean of the central circuit after the departure of Dean Edwin Dedekind. May the Lord strengthen him for his multiple tasks.

On 7 May 2017, the Song Festival of our Church takes place in Wartburg, KZN. This will also be our Church’s main Reformation Jubilee celebration. I hope that most congregations will be represented there!

A message to all **Comrades Marathon** runners:

“Hello, my name is Phillip Kgaphola and I belong to the Friedenskirche-Church of Peace. I will be running this year's Comrades marathon from Durban to Pietermaritzburg on 4 June 2017. I wish to challenge all who will be participating in this race (within ELCSA(N-T) and across the Lutheran family) to join me to dedicate this race to mark 500 years of Reformation. All of the best and God bless.”

A fabulous idea! Runners, please join him!

On 27 August 2017, all Lutherans in South Africa are invited to a big Reformation service in Gauteng. Details will follow. Please save the date!