



THE CHIMES

IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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“Reflections”

October 2017

How many of you know that this is the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation? If it weren't for our old friend, Martin Luther and his trusty quill pen, I wouldn't be writing this article today. You wouldn't exist, at least, not as a church! Martin Luther was a revolutionary guy who didn't really understand what he had started! If you've never really checked out this window of humankind's history, you should. So much of who we are today began with a scared, profoundly depressed monk who discovered the “still speaking” God of the scriptures for himself.

How can one person change the whole future of European culture and society? The Reformation itself was dependent on technology. The invention of the printing press changed the landscape of the future forever and enabled the first mass productions of books, including the Bible that Luther translated out of Latin into the language of everyday people. For the first time, the peasant class began to read and the powers of Rome lost their minds and all of the regulatory power of an oppressive, abusive, and corrupt Church finally began to slip away.

The folks who live and breathe church history tell us that the universal church experiences a massive overhaul and reinvents itself every 500 years. Luther created the first wave. We're experiencing the next new cycle of life now, and it's called the “Emerging Church.” We already know it's true. We have at least two generations missing from our pews across the Mainline Protestant map.

Even the mega-churches have hit the ceiling and have begun to feel the stresses of maintaining massive structures when their memberships aren't as enthusiastic and flexible as they used to be. Even small groups eventually become routine and intrusive! So, y'all, here's part of the next revolution. A part of the emerging church has already found life as web-based communities who express their faiths and commitments online...No, I'm not kidding! We welcomed one of them into the UCC as a “new church start” this summer at General Synod!

I believe that we, the gathered and somewhat scattered, members and friends of Immanuel UCC are experiencing a reformation of our own! We have new members who are continually inviting their friends and are bringing a new burst of joy and creative fellowship with them! Who says a small church can't be relevant or make a difference in the world? Week after week, new people are finding us on the web, driving by or, hopefully (hint!), by personal invitation. Whether they come and go or come and stay, something new is being born within us and around us! We're really a part of the emerging church and we are far from being dead and gone! Cool! Thanks, God!

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By the way, the actual birthday of the Reformation takes place on October 31st. So, as we recognize, celebrate, and commemorate all of the saints who have made our spiritual journeys possible, send a big eternal-size thank you to Martin Luther. Lego has even created a Martin Luther figure that you can find on Amazon! I'm holding out for a bobble-head!

Please check out the latest UCC news on disaster relief efforts in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Texas and Florida. Our global ministries partners with the Disciples of Christ across the Caribbean Islands and Mexico. Our churches have been totally destroyed and the immense suffering of our missionaries and the people they serve continues to mount. We've also experienced severe damage to our churches in the Houston area and Florida.

I'm including this poem "Fireflies" from one of our missionaries, Elena Huegel, who specializes in trauma care and ministries that take place after natural disasters. I met her during her last sabbatical when she was in the Indiana-Kentucky Conference. Take a look at this writing from Donxia Shi, from China, and then you'll understand why immediate prayer support is vital for any and all who are trapped by crisis.

Fireflies

By Donxia Shi

"In the dawn

You walk toward me

When I am confused

You shower me in Love

In sickness

You are by my side

When I am suffering

You offer me the Cure

In the darkness

You bestow light

When I am hesitant

You show me Your Words

In conflicts

You increase my strength

When I am in pain

You grace me with Peace

In my days

You grant a mission

When I am weak

You lend me Your Power

In all my life

You leave your footprints

When I am empty

You give me Your All"

Light, life, grace, and peace can be found wherever God's children may be. *For God still loves the world and God is still speaking...and we're in the flow of history wherever it leads. So, let's keep going, doing, being, sharing in ways and places where we've never been before! Discipleship is always a road trip!*

Peace...

Rev Bev

In today's times, 500 years after the Reformation, what thoughts does it inspire and in which direction does it point the Church?

BY [GLOBAL MINISTRIES](#) ON JULY 25, 2017

Keynote address to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Dinner of the 31st General Synod, on 30 June 2017 in Baltimore, Maryland, by Bishop Ilse Junkermann, Magdeburg, Germany

Ladies and gentlemen, dear sisters and brothers,

It is a great honour for me to join you on this occasion and to be invited to address you. It is a pleasure to be here.

My address today is also given in memory of the Central Conference Minister Rev. Dr. John Deckenback. I have fond memories of his visit to our Evangelical Church in Central Germany in January 2016. In the evening, sitting together at dinner, he described very precisely, and in a lively manner, how he believed my talk should be given, "You must bring photos or a film that shows you nailing the theses for your address to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church."

True to his words I have brought you some photos. My first photo shows the doors of the Castle Church on which, 500 years ago, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on repentance and indulgence - or commissioned the University's janitor to nail them there. In those days, it was normal to use the church doors as a form of notice board to post important announcements. And here, in the next photo you see me leaving through these doors following our Synod's church service.

That evening, as a farewell present, I presented John with a Playmobil figure of Martin Luther as a reminder of the evening and in anticipation of our next meeting. Now I am here and he cannot hear me - at least in this world.

Yes, I miss him too. He was a dependable and dedicated partner and friend and he fostered the partnership between our churches with love, commitment and strength. I believe that his study visit, his sabbatical, in the Cranach House in Wittenberg had reinforced his intention to invite the General Synod to *his* Conference in 2017. I have no doubt that he also wanted, in addition to all other important matters, to remind us of the roots and origins of the United Church of Christ as a Protestant church, a tree in the garden of the Reformation.

What significance does the anniversary of the Reformation have for our Church, indeed for the whole of the Church worldwide? That is the theme of my keynote address. It is a theme for a complete book, for a whole series of talks! But have no fear. My talk will be about baptism, and I want to highlight – and share with you - two aspects that are important not only for us as Christian individuals, but also for our testimony as Church in the twenty-first century.

To start with: on baptism and God's gift that it encompasses.

And then: our duty as baptized Christians in the world - and more specifically in *our* world today.

First. Baptism and God's gift to us

With baptism God gives us life - eternal life. Therefore we are freed from death, as death will not hold any lasting power over us. As the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 6, we are baptized in Christ's death, "that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life" – eternal life in happiness, peace and justice.

In baptism God says to each and every one of us, "You *are* my creation, unique and unmistakable; you *remain* my creation, unique and unmistakable." This is brought about by pure grace.

For Martin Luther, this was the redeeming perception. Theologically speaking, the justification of the person by grace alone ('sola gratia'). In simple words, my standing with God cannot be earned and certainly not bought. No single good work can raise my esteem in his eyes. And, even better, my misdeeds, failings, or guilt do not make my standing with him any worse.

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What counts is the belief and the trust that God himself gives me through his spirit. I put my trust in God, in that he shoulders, through his son Jesus Christ, all that separates me from him as a result of my failings and my sins, of my wish to be like God. That sets me free! That is the best of all! Belief in God sets me free against everything and everyone.

Disbelief, the opposite of belief, is epitomized by the belief that I can depend on myself alone and all that I am capable of. At the time of the Reformation, the Church said to the people, 'You must do good works to earn your salvation and standing with God. You can also purchase it, and ensure that you spend less time in purgatory for your sins.' The people at that time were plagued with great fear of the purgatorial fire.

Today we no longer live in fear of purgatory, but we live in great fear of other things. And we too seek ways to redeem ourselves. We live in a culture of self-redemption. Our modern-day rules are:

- You are what you achieve. Your life is based mostly on achievement.
- You are what you can achieve. If you can achieve more you can live a better life. The more you consume, the better your life. If you achieve a great deal then you clearly live a good life.
- You are what you make of yourself. You *must* make something out of yourself, assert yourself and design your life. You must create an optimal life – and optimal death – for yourself.

In this way the individual sets himself in God's place - he or she shapes, no, creates their own life. The flip side is, everything that makes life difficult must be blocked out, it remains a fragment, that it is overshadowed from failure, suffering, death, helplessness and impotence.

In 1530, Martin Luther summarized in one single sentence what he regards as 'Summa', "We should be humans and not God." That means we cannot redeem ourselves. We are not almighty.

Instead, God sets us free to be human, free for humanity and brother- and sisterhood. In Jesus, who became human, he shows what it means to be human, to be a part of the human race and of human brother- and sisterhood.

In the twenty-first century, the culture of self-redemption and the competitive society lead us to the fringe of destruction and self-destruction. In today's culture, self-centeredness is even encouraged politically, indeed on a national level! This attitude is flourishing once again; not just in the USA, but, when I think of Brexit or Poland or other movements, in Europe as well. Egoism is now encouraged in all areas of life.

At the time of the Reformation, it was all about having a good life, about salvation *after* death. Today it is about the good life AND salvation in *this* world - here and now.

"Be human and not God," that means, "be free but be tied - tied to God's love and his commandments."

Baptism makes very clear what Christian freedom is. In 1520, in his manuscript "On the freedom of a Christian," Martin Luther expressed this very impressively. "A Christian is free above all things and subordinate to no one. A Christian is a ministering servant of all things and subservient to all others."

These two sentences, which at first appear contradictory, unfold to describe the complete field of tension of Christian freedom. To be a free person - and at the same time a ministering servant - both belong to Christian freedom and are inextricably connected. Freedom, in Christian terms, can only be freedom in binding. Baptism sets the basis for the bond to Christ - that can never be destroyed by human deed or misdeed.

And exactly that is what makes a Christian free.

A Christian is free because he or she is not defined by what they do or what they neglect to do. God differentiates between my person and my deeds, even when they include pious and good works of faith. That makes me free. A Christian is a free person, because he or she lives from the relationship with God and gains his or her identity through this relationship. And he or she is also insofar a free person because this access to God is direct and immediate.

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A priest is not needed as go-between. We all crawl out of baptism as priests.

It is for this reason that, from November 1517, Luther was relieved to be able to sign his letters in a more Greek-like form, no longer with 'Luder' – as his family name was written – but rather with 'eleutherius', and ultimately Luther. That is an echo of the Greek 'eleutherios', meaning "worthy of freedom," "one who has been freed." The bond with God – that is the permanent source of Christian freedom. In the Holy Communion, God gives us over and over again freedom from our deeds and misdeeds.

At the end of the manuscript referred to, we read how Martin Luther describes this living relationship from which the free Christian lives, "Through faith he goes upwards to God, from God he goes down again through love, and remains however always in God and God's love."

In the words of Eberhard Jüngel, a great German theologian in our days, "The Christian faith stands and falls in that it risks, despite the indisputable relationship between word and deed, seeing more in the person as just a perpetrator, but rather a human 'I'-self – that lives from the recognition by God." This bond to God, which exists and lives in and from the power of love, makes the Christian free. And accordingly Luther's maxim applies, "See, so must God's goodness flow from one into the other and become a whole, so that everyone treats his neighbor as he would himself. It flows from God into us...and from us it must flow into those that need it."

Because a Christian is "a free man above all things," he or she is therefore free to help others.

This brings me to the second aspect:

Second. The duty of the baptized in the world - and more specifically in our world today.

During the opening service of worship today, we remembered our baptism and prayed, "to make glad the city of God." "Make glad," this is the motto of Psalm 46 for your General Synod. Yes, that is our task. Not to create God's kingdom - God does that alone. It has already dawned in our world in Jesus' death and resurrection. We live in the tension of both pleas from the 'Our Father', "Thy kingdom come" and "Thine is the Kingdom."

Our task is to be witnesses for God's kingdom. To show that we, through baptism, are already citizens of *this* kingdom – and not of other kingdoms and powers. It signifies that we are convinced that our history, the history of our world, will end well because God has made it good and will make all good. That is why we can commit ourselves for good. We can therefore show our backbone where other persons and authorities belittle things, where they are destructive and attempt to destroy the world that God created.

We therefore take responsibility for God's kingdom, that in our witness will come to the world. The commandments for this kingdom are the promises, the pledges of the beatitudes of Jesus.

Martin Luther's reformatory discovery of the justification of the sinner and his freedom is often still imprisoned in a purely inner piety. Now, in the twenty-first century, we must ultimately question, much more often, the *political* and *economic* significance of the tenet that, through the grace of God, all people deserve to be accorded equal rights and equal dignity!

Reformation means genuinely that we must get to the bottom of the developments in society and Church. We must question, from the roots up – the *radix* – how far we have distanced ourselves from God's justice for all of his creatures and the whole creation.

This is exactly what Martin Luther asked his Church in those days. Where they had separated from their roots and become a 'child of their time,' modern, and adapted to the present.

Yes, he had protested against a Church that, for its time, had acted very rationally and downright *modern*.

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The indulgence-selling Church had allegedly recognized the signs of the times. With the volatile expansion of the monetary economy from the fifteenth Century onward, more and more commodities were traded arbitrarily. The Church recognized this trend, why should she not make money as well from granting indulgences from sin and purgatorial fire?

The Reformation can therefore also be seen as a protest against the monetarisation of everything, also the monetarisation of salvation and faith!

In his study of the scriptures, Luther had recognized that justice is not a question of performance and reward between human and God. Biblically understood, justice is rather, God is true to his word, and to us his partners in alliance, in that he gives us in abundance all goods of creation as well as eternal life.

Nothing is artificially hidden in order to subjugate and exploit us. Everything flows from the Creator in his creation, rich and in abundance without avarice from the donor or greed from the recipient. Every recipient is at the same time a donor to his fellow human beings and fellow creatures.

Freed from personal fear, we can be fair to our fellow human beings and treat them with humanity. That is the political and economic part of Luther's treatise on freedom. It is about the freeing of the individual – through love – for the benefit of his fellow humans.

When we look at our world today, we recognise how important this message of freedom is – given to us by grace – free and in abundance.

"We should be humans and not God!" In the twenty-first century, this message, from people who have their bond with, and therefore their boundary in God, means, finally taking leave of the ideology of unbounded opportunities and the right of humans over other fellow creatures, from fantasies of omnipotence, the ideology of the venality of human beings and all things and means required for life. To ultimately recognize and accuse how the Earth, God's wonderful creation, is threatened by the ideology – yes the religion – of boundlessness and fantasies of supremacy. Catch-word climate change. And already today millions of people suffer from hunger, injustice and exploitation, war, terror, and forced migration.

Finally, to strengthen the message as the Lutheran World Federation is doing for the anniversary of the Reformation; Liberated by God's Grace! Therefore: Human beings – not for sale! Creation – not for sale! Salvation – not for sale!

Let me now summarize.

Taking the Reformation seriously means, in this days and age, finding the true measure of humanity and taking seriously the twofold law of love. Let God alone be God. That means accepting the boundaries of humanity and (economic) growth and being merciful to one's neighbor – near or far – as a fellow human being, as oneself.

At present we live above our means – as if our earthly goods and treasures are endlessly exploitable. In this way we are devastating creation and are on the way to destroying its foundations. The ideology of unhindered economic growth also puts the individual under pressure to achieve a high degree of perfection and strive for continual improvement. Here again the extent of human capability is exceeded. That makes us merciless to ourselves and to others, the pressure to do well makes us all losers. Those that can keep up with the pace give their all, and eventually end up exhausted and burnt out. Those who fail along the way are considered parasites.

Reformation in the twenty-first century means transformation; a change of our lifestyle, a turn-around from the prevailing obsession with perfection and constant improvement, with its exploitative and destructive downside, back to a human scale. That means yes, yes and not no!, yes – back to boundaries, to mistakes, to modesty with what we have. Yes with joy to what God gives us in abundance and what we can not buy: love, friendship, empathy, solidarity. Yes to God, who freed me from self-idolatry! Yes to the right of my fellow human beings to a comfortable life! Yes to the shining light of mercy and love in our world! Yes to Christ and his justice! Yes to our baptism!

UCC's Response in Puerto Rico

September 28, 2017

Written by **Carol Fouke-Mpoyo**

Hurricane Maria caused an estimated \$20 billion in damage. It wiped out 80 percent of crop values, a blow to the island's economy that also left its 3.4 million U.S. citizen residents food insecure.

Maria knocked out all electricity on the entire island, disrupted water supply, crippled communications systems, damaged roads and littered the island with debris. The storm killed 10 people in this U.S. Commonwealth.

"We stand ready to support our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico and call on all our churches to continue to pray and give financially for what will be a long road ahead," said Zach Wolgemuth, UCC Disaster Ministries Executive.

The Disaster by the numbers:

- 11,400 people in shelters in Puerto Rico.
- Puerto Rico's power grid is completely down. There is no electricity on the island and officials estimate 6 months to completely restore the grid.
- At least 43,000 roofs are estimated damaged in Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands.

Direct Support to Puerto Rico:

- \$10,000 to Iglesia Cristiana (Discipulos de Cristo) en Puerto Rico (ICDCPR) to provide first aid kits, electric generators, drinking water, water filters, non-perishable food, and battery-powered radios. It is estimated that ICDCPR will help 20 communities and over 5,000 persons.

DISASTER MINISTRIES HELPING PEOPLE

[Resources provided by FEMA](#) for people in Puerto Rico

Disaster Ministries Empowers Global Ministries' Partners

[Global Ministries' Update on the Caribbean](#)

GIVE generously to support hurricane relief and recovery efforts by clicking on the link to make a secure online donation. Gifts may also be made at your local UCC congregation marked for "Hurricane Relief Puerto Rico" with the request they be sent through your Conference office or to the UCC national office. Donations may be sent directly to United Church of Christ, [700 Prospect Avenue](#), Financial Services, 6th Floor, Cleveland, OH 44115, clearly marked for Hurricane Relief, or designated for Puerto Rico.

[Get Involved](#) Follow this link to "Stand with Puerto Rico".

Donating Goods

It is important to remember unsolicited donated goods (e.g., clothing, miscellaneous household items, and mixed or perishable foodstuffs) require voluntary agencies to redirect valuable resources away from providing services to sort, package, transport, warehouse, and distribute items that may not meet the needs of disaster survivors. [Home](#) / [UCC Disaster Ministries](#) / [Disaster Updates](#)

Disarm Domestic Violence

— From www.ucc.org

The deadly mass shooting at a Las Vegas music festival on October 1st is yet another tragic reminder of the terrible toll taken by gun violence in the United States. Far less likely to make the headlines are the injuries and deaths that arise from the use of guns in acts of domestic violence.

October marks Domestic Violence Awareness month. Will you join us in calling for common-sense measures to protect survivors of domestic violence from the likelihood of gun violence?

Earlier this year, in a bipartisan effort to address gun violence, the [Zero Tolerance for Domestic Abusers Act](#) and the [Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act](#) act were reintroduced in the House and Senate respectively.

The legislation closes two existing loopholes in federal law:

- **The dating violence loophole:** Current law prohibits individuals accused of domestic violence offenses against a current or former spouse, parent, or a similarly situated person from accessing firearms, but does not include perpetrators who abused current or former dating partners.
- **The stalking loophole:** Under existing law, individuals convicted of felony stalking offenses are prohibited from accessing guns. But individuals convicted of misdemeanor stalking offenses are not

Why does this matter?

- Abused women are [five times](#) more likely to be killed by their abuser if that individual has access to a firearm.
- [Two out of three](#) female stalking victims were stalked by a current or former intimate partner.
- One [study](#) of female murder victims in 10 cities found that 76 percent of women murdered and 85 percent who survived a murder attempt by a current or former intimate partner experienced stalking in the year preceding the murder.

As people of faith, we are called to affirm the image of God in all of people by standing against violence. We know that death and injury from gun violence can be reduced and doing so is a moral imperative. Contact Congress and urge them to resist the greed, complacency and partisanship that keep us from enacting reasonable gun violence prevention measures that will make our communities safer. **Urge them to support bipartisan legislation to close the loopholes in existing laws that allow perpetrators of domestic violence to access guns.**

October Birthdays

01 – Debra Paton

02 – Dee Luco

03 – Tim Schatz

05 – Alex Garner

11 – Kenneth Briers

13 – Libby Walter

16 – Kristin Thomas

19 – Lavina Pfefferkorn

23 – Hayley Schreiner



Upcoming Events

Clean out of the kitchenette – Saturday, October 21, 10:00am, please help

Budget Forum – Sunday, October 29

Reformation Sunday – Sunday, October 29 – please wear red to celebrate!

Charity Yard Sale Set-Up – Wednesday, November 1 at 7pm and Thursday, November 2 at 9am

Charity Yard Sale – Saturday, November 4, 9am to 3pm – please sign up to volunteer. Sign up sheet is on the hallway table.

Annual Report Information Due – Tuesday, November 7th

Consistory – Sunday, November 12

CAC 53rd Annual Meeting – Thursday, November 16, 2017 to Saturday, November 18, 2017, Embassy Suites, Inner Harbor, Baltimore, MD

Annual Congregational Meeting – Sunday, November 19



IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1905 Edmondson Avenue
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Lectionary Readings

(Day-Date; First Reading; Psalm; Second Reading; Gospel)

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost – October 1, 2017

Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16; Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost – October 8, 2017

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20; Psalm 19; Philippians 3:4b-14; Matthew 21:33-46

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost – October 15, 2017

Exodus 32:1-14; Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23; Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew 22:1-14

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost – October 22, 2017

Exodus 33:12-23; Psalm 99; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost – October 29, 2017

Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Matthew 22:34-46

Prayer Concerns

PLEASE REMEMBER OUR HOME-BOUND MEMBERS:

PRAYER CONCERNS IN THE CHURCH FAMILY:

Libby Walter's extended family.

PRAYER CONCERNS IN THE EXTENDED CHURCH FAMILY:

Sue and Steve DiPaula's extended family; Dee Luco's sister Madeline, broken pelvis; Central Atlantic Conference; residents and staff of Earl's Place; South Central Conference of the UCC.

PRAYER CONCERNS IN OUR REGION:

Dreamers facing uncertain futures and all undocumented residents; Baltimore gun violence; refugee families in Baltimore County; scientists; safety of law enforcement and first responders.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL PRAYER CONCERNS:

California wildfires; California/Nevada Northern and Southern Conferences; Las Vegas shooting victims and their families; Mexico, Puerto Rico and the rest of the Caribbean, Florida, and Southeast Texas; Red Cross volunteers; prayers for our country; people and military personnel of North and South Korea; Senators John McCain and Mazie Hirono, fighting cancers; terrorism; Syrian families and all refugees across the world; Russian aggression; families fearful of deportation; all U.S. military deployed and stateside.