

NORTH BALWYN UNITING CHURCH
REFORMATION SUNDAY
SUNDAY 30 OCTOBER 2011
Rev. Anneke Oppewal

Reflections on 'Reformation' - "Snail Trails"

Reformation Sunday, Luther, Calvin and others.

The history of the Church has been a history of constant reformation as reflected in the Uniting Church's Basis of Union.

As a child I loved the story of Luther's transformation, ink pot, reading the letter to the Romans. His transformation was based on another transformation: Paul's. He also saw "the light" and changed course, taking the tradition he had been raised with and transforming it into something different. Paul's transformation in turn was based on the transforming life of Jesus, who, in turn, took his tradition and transformed it into something new. Building on people of faith who had gone before him. The history of people with God is constant reformation, building and rebuilding, defining and redefining, discovering and rediscovering the truth about God, about ourselves and about the role the divine plays in our lives.

We will be playing around with these concepts in today's service in several different ways. The format of the service will be a bit different from the usual. Just to test our flexibility, but also to try and get closer to what "Reformation" in a religious sense means and has meant to us in our lives.

We will trace the "snail trails" of God's presence in our lives..

SHARING OUR STORIES

The congregation moves into two's and three's. You have ten minutes to talk to each other about the people, events, books, other things that have transformed your religious life. Who have been your "guides"? Where have you found inspiration? Not only of the past, but also in the here and now. What inspires you now, what has offered you new insights and direction now?

MY STORY

Here is some of my history of "reformation":

My Grandmother, the magic of bible stories, the minister who was at our Church when I was a teenager was Professor of Dogmatics in Groningen (Rob Hensen) -Paul Tillich, Carmelite nuns in Nijmegen - Professor Bas van Iersel, New Testament scholarship, linguistic studies, Allan Culpepper and the gospel of John, Charismatic movement (Jan Pennekamp), Studies of Early Christianity and the role of the Holy Spirit, the writings of Paul, UK, back to Church, Australia: Art and Spirituality, Multifaith, Fred Morgan, Imam, JCMA conferences.

READING 1: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Covenant/God never lets us go/forever inventing new ways of getting to us/God is forever in a process of transforming God's ways of relating and being with us.

READING 2: Romans 3:19-24

One of the most important and most influential texts of Church, discovered and re-discovered over and over again by the giants of Church history. Paul, Augustine, Luther, Karl Barth, others. "By grace alone". God's love, God's work, God's commitment to the world is unconditional and free of cost. We don't have to work for it, we just need to be prepared to receive it. And that is probably the most difficult thing we've ever been asked to do.

READING 3: Matthew 23:1-4, 11, 28-30

We are forever inclined to put burdens on ourselves and others. Not only the scribes and Pharisees of the first century. Jesus tells us that if we follow him, the burdens will be lightened. Gauge for our faith. If it feels heavy something is wrong. And it is time for reformation/rethinking.