

# 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the **Protestant Reformation**

On October 31, 2017, we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The date comes from Martin Luther's act of tacking on the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral a document containing 95 theological propositions and criticisms of the church of his day.

While Luther's act was unquestionably important, and his critique led to the formation of what we now know as the Lutheran Church, he was not the only church reformer of the 1500s. Some of those reformers remained within what would subsequently become known as the Roman Catholic Church. Others found their initiatives led to a split from the established church and the formation of a new denomination.

Ulrich Zwingli, a contemporary of Martin Luther, was one such reformer. Zwingli's reforms in the city of Zurich, where he was a parish priest, led to what is called the Reformed tradition. The Reformed tradition includes various Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Christian Reformed denominations, as well as uniting denominations such as The United Church of Canada whose roots include these denominations. A generation later John Calvin, based in Geneva, would become a key figure in shaping the Reformed tradition further. Both Zwingli and Calvin were more radical in their reforms than Luther had been.



**Reformation | Réforme**

Some of Zwingli's emphases continue to have influence in the United Church. Zwingli stressed the importance of scripture as a primary authority for theology, and of preaching as an interpretation of scripture in the current context. He also emphasized the role of lay people in the life of the church. For example, he began the practice of having members sit around a table in the middle of the sanctuary and receive the communion elements of bread and wine from their neighbours at the table as these elements were passed around, rather than each person going to the front of the church to receive communion from the priest. The custom in many Reformed churches of receiving communion while seated in the pews has its roots in Zwingli's practice.

As we commemorate efforts at reforming the Church 500 years ago, let us remember that we are part of a tradition that has understood itself to always be in need of reform, always needing to avoid the twin perils of continuing past practices merely because they are traditions and of being captivated by the new simply because it is new.

# 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the **Protestant Reformation**

On October 31, 2017, we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The date comes from Martin Luther's act of tacking on the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral a document containing 95 theological propositions and criticisms of the church of his day.

While Luther's act was unquestionably important, and his critique led to the formation of what we now know as the Lutheran Church, he was not the only church reformer of the 1500s. Some of those reformers remained within what would subsequently become known as the Roman Catholic Church. Others found their initiatives led to a split from the established church and the formation of a new denomination.

Ulrich Zwingli, a contemporary of Martin Luther, was one such reformer. Zwingli's reforms in the city of Zurich, where he was a parish priest, led to what is called the Reformed tradition. The Reformed tradition includes various Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Christian Reformed denominations, as well as uniting denominations such as The United Church of Canada whose roots include these denominations. A generation later John Calvin, based in Geneva, would become a key figure in shaping the Reformed tradition further. Both Zwingli and Calvin were more radical in their reforms than Luther had been.



**Reformation | Réforme**

Some of Zwingli's emphases continue to have influence in the United Church. Zwingli stressed the importance of scripture as a primary authority for theology, and of preaching as an interpretation of scripture in the current context. He also emphasized the role of lay people in the life of the church. For example, he began the practice of having members sit around a table in the middle of the sanctuary and receive the communion elements of bread and wine from their neighbours at the table as these elements were passed around, rather than each person going to the front of the church to receive communion from the priest. The custom in many Reformed churches of receiving communion while seated in the pews has its roots in Zwingli's practice.

As we commemorate efforts at reforming the Church 500 years ago, let us remember that we are part of a tradition that has understood itself to always be in need of reform, always needing to avoid the twin perils of continuing past practices merely because they are traditions and of being captivated by the new simply because it is new.

Reformation.

This year is the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant



How would you **Reform** the church today?

Reformation.

This year is the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant



How would you **Reform** the church today?