

- REFORMATION DAY

## Making Our Own Confession: A Service for Reformation or All Saints' Day

By [Michael W. Goheen](#)

- RW 77

A vibrant and living church is also a confessing church—a church that hears the good news, experiences the gospel power, and uses its own language to say what it believes. Already in the Old Testament, Israel confessed their faith in their own context: “Yahweh, One God, Yahweh, Our God” (Deut. 6:4). This confession protected true religion from the polytheism of the Canaanite idolatry. The early church confessed that “Jesus is Lord” (Rom. 10:9) to protect the gospel from the public doctrine that bound together the Roman empire—“Caesar is Lord.” The great Reformer Martin Luther once said: “If you preach the gospel in all aspects with the exception of the issues which deal specifically with your time, you are not preaching the gospel at all.”

When we celebrate the sixteenth-century Reformation, we recognize that the Reformers sought to bring the gospel to bear on their time while protecting the Word from the idolatrous currents that were at work then. Different cultural idols threaten the gospel today. If we are to be true to the spirit of the Reformation, we must not simply repeat their confession—though we rejoice in it and continue to hold fast their insights into the gospel—but also declare the faith in our context, to our generation. Several denominations have prepared contemporary statements; the statement used in this service is the Contemporary Testimony (CT) Our World Belongs to God (available online at [www.crcna.org/whoweare/beliefs/ourworldbelongs.asp](http://www.crcna.org/whoweare/beliefs/ourworldbelongs.asp)).

This evening service, hosted by First Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton and attended by several area congregations, was planned for Reformation Day last year. Songs and readings were projected on PowerPoint; there was no printed bulletin. Musical leadership was provided by an organist, an ensemble of strings, woodwinds, and brass, and a small praise team with piano and hand percussion.

## **Prelude**

## **Welcome**

As followers of Jesus Christ,  
living in this world—  
which some seek to control,  
but which others view with despair—

**We declare with joy and trust:**

**Our world belongs to God!**

From the beginning, through all the crises of our times, until his kingdom fully comes, God keeps covenant forever.

**Our world belongs to him!**

**God is King! Let the earth be glad!**

**Christ is Victor; his rule has begun. Hallelujah!**

**The Spirit is at work, renewing the creation. Praise the Lord!**

—st. 1-2

*Hymn of Praise:* “For All the Saints” PsH 505, PH 526, RL 397, SFL 195, TH 358, TWC 751

## **Prayer of Invocation**

## **Greeting**

**The Old Testament Saints Confess Their Faith: One God**

In the midst of cultures that believed in multiple gods, the Old Testament saints proclaimed the radical-sounding truth:

The Lord our God is one. The Lord our God is the only God!

*Scripture Reading:* Deuteronomy 6:1-9

*Hymn of Praise:* "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty" PsH 249, PH 138, RL 611, TH 100, TWC 2

### **The Early Church Confesses Their Faith: Jesus Is Lord**

In the midst of a multi-ethnic Roman Empire where one could believe anything as long as Caesar was acknowledged as Lord, the early church proclaimed the subversive truth:

Jesus is Lord!

*Scripture Reading:* Romans 10:9-13

*Hymn of Praise:* "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" PsH 471, PH 142, RL 595, TH 296, TWC 95

### **The Post-Apostolic Church Confesses Their Faith: Jesus Is God**

In the midst of the Greco-Roman culture that tempted the church to make Jesus less than God, the post-apostolic church proclaimed the truth:

Jesus is God!

*Scripture Reading:* Colossians 1:15-20

### **Apostles' Creed**

*Song:* "Meekness and Majesty" SNC 109

### **The Reformation Church Confesses Its Faith: Christ Alone Through Faith**

In the midst of a church that obscured the gospel through traditionalism and institutionalism, the church proclaimed the truth:

Salvation is in Christ alone through faith!

*Scripture Reading:* Romans 1:16-17

*Song:* "In Christ Alone," Stuart Townend

(see RW 71, p. 33)

**We Confess Our Faith Today:**

**Our World Belongs to God**

**Prayer for the Spirit's Work**

*Sermon:* "Confessing Our Faith Today"

**Responding to the Good News**

**Prayer of Response**

*Hymn of Response:* "Our World Belongs to God" PsH 459

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Response**

**Offering**

**Sent with Good News**

*Doxology:* "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" PsH 469, PH 259, RL 179, TH 92, TWC 43

**Charge to the Congregation**

We rejoice in the goodness of God,  
renounce the works of darkness,  
and dedicate ourselves to holy living.

**As covenant partners,  
called to faithful obedience,  
and set free for joyful praise,  
we offer our hearts and lives  
to do God's work in his world.**

With tempered impatience,  
eager to see injustice ended,  
we expect the Day of the Lord.

**And we are confident  
that the light which shines in the present darkness  
will fill the earth when Christ appears.  
Come, Lord Jesus!  
Our world belongs to you.**

—st. 6

### **Benediction**

### **Threefold Amen**

### **Postlude**

### **Excerpt**

The responsibility of the church is to declare to each generation what is the faith. . . . This is always a fresh task in every generation. . . . No verbal statement can be produced which relieves the Church of the responsibility continually to re-think and re-state its message. No appeal to creeds and confessions can alter the fact that the Church has to state in every new generation how it interprets the historic faith, and how it relates it to the new thought and experience of its time. . . . Nothing can remove from the Church the responsibility for stating now what is the faith. It belongs to the essence of a living church that it should be able and willing to do so.

—Lesslie Newbigin, *The Reunion of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1948), pp.137-138. Leslie Newbigin (1909-1998) served for thirty-five years as a missionary in India; his theological writings are greatly respected around the w