



Northland Reformed

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What In The World Is A Reformed Church?

“What church do you go to?” This is a question that you have probably been asked in the past and will likely be asked again in the future. When answering with, “I go to a Reformed church,” you may have received a perplexed look. I once had a conversation with a friend, and after mentioning that I attended a Reformed church, he asked, “What are you reformed from?” Others have mentioned



that, when having this discussion, those with whom they are talking wonder if this “Reformed” church is some sort of cult, like the Mormons or Jehovah’s witnesses. It is easy for those who have either grown up in a Reformed denomination, or have been part of a Reformed denomination for a period of time, to think that everyone knows exactly what a Reformed Church is. But this is sadly not the case. We live in a day when an understanding of history, especially church history, has fallen on hard times.

The purpose of this article is to help recover an understanding of the Reformed faith and show that it is not something new, but rather the “faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). In addition, the information in this article will seek to provide a clear summary of the Reformed church which you will be able to use when talking to your friends and neighbors in answering the question, “What in the world is a Reformed church?”

A wonderful resource for handling this topic is a book by Rev. Daniel H. Hyde entitled *Welcome to a Reformed Church: A Guide for Pilgrims*, published by Reformation Trust, 2010. Much of the structure of this article comes from this book.

The answer to the question, “What is a Reformed church” may be summarized in three points. First, Reformed churches are *Christian* churches. Second, Reformed churches are *Protestant* churches. Third, Reformed churches are, well, *Reformed* churches.

Reformed Churches are Christian Churches

Reformed churches are *Christian* churches because they believe in the Christian understanding of God—that there is only one God who exists eternally as a Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Reformed churches are *Christian* churches because they believe in the Christian understanding of revelation—that this one God has revealed Himself in the Bible, which is His Word, inspired and without error. Reformed churches are *Christian* churches because they believe in the Christian understanding of salvation, that is it through Jesus Christ our Savior, who is both God and man. These truths are expressed in the earliest Christian Creeds such as the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. Far from being a new religion or a cult (like Mormonism or Jehovah’s Witnesses), the Reformed faith is a *Christian* faith which is grounded in the historic teaching of the Bible.

Reformed Churches are Protestant Churches

The term “protestant” was first used at the Second Diet of Speyer in 1529 (a diet in this context is not what you eat, but an assembly of the church) to speak of the German princes who supported Martin Luther in his protest against the false teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The goal of these protestants was not to abolish the Roman Catholic Church, but to “reform” it from within. The false teachings of concern were: 1) the rejection of the Bible as the only authority, 2) the belief that the pope was the head of the church, and 3) that sinners were saved by their own good works, in cooperation with God’s grace. This movement has become known as the “Protestant Reformation” of the sixteenth century and may be summarized by the “Five Solas” (*sola* is a Latin word for alone).

Sola Scriptura – Ultimate authority for the church is *Scripture alone*.

Sola Gratia – Sinners are saved by God’s *grace alone*.

Sola Fide – Grace is received through *faith alone*.

Solus Christus – Faith is placed in *Christ alone*.

Soli Deo Gloria – Everything the church does is for the *glory of God alone*.

Reformed Churches are Reformed Churches

Those protestants who followed Luther's teachings were derided as "Lutherans" (a title Martin Luther would have rejected, preferring his followers call themselves "Christians") and those who followed leaders such as John Calvin were known as "Calvinists". However, the Calvinists preferred to call themselves "Reformed" because they were interested in reforming the church according to the Word of God, not the traditions of men.

Reformed churches are therefore Biblical churches. That is, everything that a Reformed church teaches or does is either expressly given in the Bible or is deduced from the Bible by good and necessary consequence. Simply put, Reformed churches are churches who have remained faithful to the Word of God as it was delivered to God's people.

Reformed churches are Covenantal churches. The Bible tells us that God works in history through covenants with his people and thus the Bible, rightly understood, is an unfolding drama of God's covenant with His people. A covenant is simply a relationship between two parties that includes blessings and curses. God made a covenant with Adam in the Garden of Eden, the agreement being that Adam would not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (this is known as the Covenant of Works). If he refrained, he was promised the blessing of eternal life. If he disobeyed, he was threatened with the curse of eternal death. Adam failed to keep this covenant, and so sin entered the world and corrupted all of his physical descendants. God therefore revealed another covenant, but this time with the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was not born from an earthly father (this is called the Covenant of Grace). He, unlike Adam, completely fulfilled all covenant obedience, so that those who are united to him by faith receive all the covenant blessings. Those who are not in Christ are still in Adam, and thus will receive all the covenant curses culminating in eternal separation from God in hell.

Reformed churches are God-centered churches. Reformed churches are God-centered in their doctrine of salvation. God is sovereign over all that happens, including and especially over salvation. God takes the initiative in salvation, not man. Scripture tells us that no one is able or willing to come to Jesus for salvation unless one is first drawn by the Father (John 6:44) and regenerated by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5). Salvation is a work done exclusively by the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Reformed churches are God-centered in their worship. God created men and women to be worshipping creatures. Thus, God has called the church to be a worshipping community. This is the main purpose of salvation, to bring glory to God through worship, and God alone knows how He wants to be worshipped.

Therefore, in Reformed worship, we do not do what pleases us, but what pleases God. Going to church is not about what brings us the most enjoyment, but about what brings God the most glory. The modern church has turned this on its head. Trendy music, a relaxed atmosphere, and programs for children and adults of every age, all based upon human preferences, have replaced the God-given means of building His church. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with enjoying church, indeed we should love being at church more than being anywhere else in the world! However, if a person is selecting or attending a church primarily because he or she likes the way it makes them feel or it has the activities that they enjoy, they are being more self-focused and less God-focused. God did not give us programs but gave us the promise that the preaching of the Gospel will convict of sin, convert in salvation and conform to the image of the Savior. It is therefore only by the faithful preaching that people will grow in Christlikeness, and that is what we desire to see happen in the church, because it is His kingdom, not ours.

To return to our initial question, “What in the world is a Reformed church?” We might answer that question with this summary:

A Reformed church is a faithful Christian church, grounded in the truth of God’s unchanging Word, that seeks to glorify the true God—one God in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We do that by proclaiming the gospel, as recovered by the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, which is the promise of free and full salvation to all who will trust in Jesus Christ alone as the only Savior. We then encourage one another to seek to glorify God in all we do, as an expression of our thankfulness for such a great salvation.

By Rev. Christopher Campbell

Congregational News



Baptism of Brian and Liam Leary

Brian Michael Leary and his son, Liam Ronan Leary (born Feb. 18, 2018) were both baptized on March 25, 2018. Pictured from left to right are Brian, Liam, Shane and Cassie Leary with Rev. Campbell.

Welcome John-Tiberius Emmanuel Adame

Cesar and Rebecca Adame, daughter and son-in-law of Gwen Saunders, welcomed John-Tiberius Emmanuel Adame into their family on March 25, 2018. Mommy and baby are doing well, his sister and brothers think he's the greatest. John is named after Gwen's late husband.



April Schedule

REGULAR MEETINGS

- Sunday Worship | Apr 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 | 9:30AM & 5:00PM | We will continue our sermon series on the book of Galatians in the morning, and the book of Hosea in the evening.
- Sunday School | Apr 8, 15, 22, 29 | 11:15AM
- Men's Study Group | Apr 7, 21 | 7:00AM | The Men's Study Group, led by Gary Duffey, will continue to study the book *Devoted to God* by Sinclair Ferguson.
- Catechism Class | Apr 4, 11, 18, 25 | 4:30PM
- Friday Night Fellowship | Apr 6, 13, 20, 27 | Join us for a meal and lesson as we continue to work through John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- Easter Brunch | Apr 1 | After the morning service we will join with one another and share a meal. All are welcome and encouraged to bring a dish to share!
- Prayer Meeting | Apr 18 | 7:00PM | Join us for a time of prayer.
- Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) | Apr 3, 10, 17, 24 | 6:30PM | Bible Study Fellowship meets at the church, with groups for both men and women. The current study is on the book of Romans.



Scripture Memorization

April 8	Psalm 96:6-8
April 15	Psalm 96:9-10
April 22	Isaiah 43:25
April 29	Romans 12:9-10