



A Big Birthday

by

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WRF members know why this is a special year: It's the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 Theses to the Wittenberg church door. This milestone offers Reformed congregations around the world a chance to shine a spotlight on the grace of God and the value of reading the Bible.

Let's take the opportunity to let the world know why we are honoring this birthday. Here are some ideas on how to celebrate in a way that reaches out to people in 2017—

-- Attend and promote the WRF Reformation Conference in Wittenberg in October. Details are available here - <http://www.wrf500wittenberg.org/>

-- Stage a modern-day "trial" of Martin Luther and let the audience be the jury.

-- Have young people in your church create a mime that acts out the gracious forgiveness of God or of the importance of sincerity over outward "good works." Perform it at a service, or on the street if permissible.

-- Pastors or other able individuals can give interviews to the press in areas where that might be beneficial, telling the public how the Reformation has benefitted women, civil rights, and culture as well as theology. Suggest that the press interviews a series of Reformed churches if there are multiple ones in your area.

-- Feature a "Reformation minute" each Sunday this fall leading up to the October 31 "birthday"—highlight a different Reformer each week such as Tyndale, Huss, Zwingli, or Calvin.

-- If candles aren't too costly, consider lighting 500 candles around your church-- or 66 of them to commemorate each book of the Bible that we can now read in almost any of the world's languages. Or do a 66-balloon or lantern display.

-- Invite the community to an evening of Protestant hymns and instrumental works beloved in your local area, or written by Martin Luther, Henry Purcell, John Wesley, or modern composers such as Keith Getty, Trudy Poirier, Indelible Grace, pianist Roger Price, or John Rutter. Consider using an outdoor or other venue and co-hosting with other Protestant groups.

-- If you are a teacher or preacher, plan a sermon series on the "Five Sola's" of the Reformation.

-- Set out a big jar or bowl in your church containing slips of paper with Bible verses about faith and grace for everyone to take, promising to share with someone else that week.

-- Organize members to give out 500 pieces of candy at an appropriate place, with a friendly explanation of why you are doing it.

-- Partner with a local college to host a panel discussion or lecture on the significance of the Reformation.

Of course, we must remember that the original Reformation caused upheaval, and division. In celebrating now, guard against any negativity or condescension about Catholic and Orthodox believers. Keep the emphasis upon the grace of God and the delights of reading and hearing the Word in our own languages—that's a lot to celebrate!