



Always Being Reformed

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This past Sunday was Reformation Sunday, when we celebrate our Reformed heritage, starting with Luther’s nailing of his 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. Though the phrase “*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda, secundum verbum Dei*” (“the church reformed, always being reformed, according to the word of God”) doesn’t originate in the Reformation, we regularly use it to claim how God calls us to be transformed by the Word and Spirit.

This year, we also mark the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Confession of Belhar by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) in South Africa – after just its first reading. The Presbyterian Church (USA) also adopted the Confession of Belhar – admittedly after many readings – at the 222nd General Assembly in 2018. Born from the roots of apartheid, the Confession speaks to the sin of racial separation and urges the Church to seek unity, reconciliation, and justice.

Many of our congregations used aspects of the Belhar Confession in their Sunday worship, tied to our need for ongoing reformation in how we overcome racism and divisions. That felt very powerful for me, as I dug through dusty stacks of lithographs from the 1930’s to 1960’s. Stored in cabinets of a dissolved congregation, these lithographs depicted biblical characters in a way that brought them to life. The same lithograph series portrayed the church in the modern time frame. One such lithograph spoke loudly to me.



It features a typical white (probably Presbyterian) church building set on the knoll, and a well-dressed family walking along the path, headed to church. Nothing too remarkable about the lithograph...until I noticed the title. Labeled “A Church for Everyone,” it made me squint. It definitely felt like A Church for Some People, but I’m not convinced that many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) would see themselves in the portrait.

I get that it’s challenging in a simple lithograph to depict every variation in God’s human creation. The artist picked one. It was probably one to whom the company sold a lot of lithographs and one that wouldn’t create a stir. But, maybe I’d misjudged them, so I looked at the rest of the stack: white children doing crafts, white children looking at birds and raindrops. I my delight when I found this poster, titled “The Church For reflect the fullness of God’s beloved Church!

I believe that we do value A Church for Everyone and The it’s worth examining from time to time how we reflect that simple ways in which we portray our congregation or lot about how we practice and value inclusivity. To truly be being reformed, we offer our lives for examination and examination, we can draw closer to the life God intends and gift, not a punishment. Happy Reformation!



praying, white children kept digging. Imagine All” and beginning to

Church For All, and so in practice. Even the ministry can reveal a reformed and always adjustment. In that Jesus embodied. It’s a