

Dear Friends in Christ,

I'm writing this in the middle of September - I woke up this morning and it was 40 degrees outside and our house was 66 degrees because we haven't turned the heat on yet. I love it. I'd keep it at 60 if I could. But, I turned the heat on in consideration of Penelope.

Fall can be confusing. When do I turn the heat on? There are some days when you need the heat and the A/C on. When should I plan my trip up to Itasca to look at the fall colors? If I go too early, it's not pretty enough. If I go too late, everything looks like Cleveland's football team (brown).

In the church year, October ends with Reformation Red. It can be confusing for some why we celebrate the Reformation every year. Some have said it's the one holiday we celebrate that has no biblical precedent. That's simply not true. Reformation happens over and over again in the Bible, and it's necessary because we always forget things. Josiah started a Reformation when he discovered the Bible one day when cleaning the Temple. Elijah started a Reformation when he made fun of Baal for falling asleep on the toilet (I'm paraphrasing, but it's a true story). Jesus started a Reformation when He told people what the Old Testament was really about (Him).

Reformation isn't starting something that's entirely new. God loves making things new, but He does so by using and reforming the old, and thanks be to God that He does that! It means He takes you, an old washed up sinful creature, and makes you new through the blood of Jesus Christ in your baptism. Reformation is about having a new start with how God commanded things to be in the first place. It would be great if we never needed to reform, but since the church is full of sinners, we can expect reformation to always be necessary.

Since you're dealing with enough confusion with Autumn, I want to make one thing clear - you should love being a Lutheran. Why? Not because we're not Catholic. (By the way, when I tabled at St. Cloud State for Lutheran Student Fellowship last month, the Catholics (the Newman Center) were on my right hand. 4 tables down on my left was the Drag Queen Club. Insert your own punchline here. I loved being next to the Catholics. Yes, from time to time I yelled at the students talking to them, "HEY! HAVE YOU TRIED LUTHERANISM!" And yes, I told the priest, "You make the students spin a wheel to have candy? Notice how I'm just handing it out for free. If that doesn't illustrate our views on justification, then I don't know what does.")

You should love being Lutheran because we have clarity. We're willing to dive into the weeds because sometimes that's necessary (see the Parable of the Weeds in Matthew 13), but what our world needs right now is clarity. How do we know what's right and wrong? God tells us in the Bible. What is the Bible? It is the Word of God. How can we trust the Bible? Jesus Christ was crucified and came back from the dead 3 days later. If we can't trust what that man who defeated

death says, then we can't trust anyone. How are we saved? By grace through faith in Jesus Christ. He paid our debt with His blood. This doesn't mean we get to be lazy. But it does mean that we don't contribute to our salvation (through works or money). Everything we do is a thankful response to what God has done. What is Baptism? Water with God's Word that actually saves. What is the Lord's Supper? It is really Christ's body and blood.

We're called Lutherans because Luther's enemies called the Reformers that as an insult. Luther wouldn't have picked to name the church after himself, but insults stick. No, we don't worship Luther contrary to what your favorite Counter-Reformation blog says. We worship Jesus Christ. But we shouldn't mind having Luther's name attached to us. He was quite the guy, and is the most quotable guy in the world outside of the Bible. I won't quote the most colorful of his comments because I know you read your children this newsletter before bed, but we'll end with a Luther quote we can all enjoy - "I am of a different mind ten times in the course of a day. But I resist the devil, and often it is with a fart that I chase him away. When he tempts me with silly sins I say, 'Devil, yesterday I broke wind too. Have you written it down on your list?'"

Pastor