



"FOR PETE'S SAKE"

St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Zurich, ON

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October 2026 Newsletter

Pastoral Ponderings

What does reformation actually mean?

The definitions that came up on Google are as follows:

- The act or process of improving something or someone by removing or correcting faults, problems, etc.
- The act of making an improvement, especially by changing a person's behaviour or the structure of something
- The act of changing to a better state or character, way of operating, lifestyle, etc.; the correction of abuses and bad habits or practices.
- Improvement (or an intended improvement) in the existing form or condition of institutions or practices et; intended to make a striking change for the better in social or political or religious affairs
- The reformation of something is the act or process of changing and improving it

You will undoubtedly note that reformation requires improvement and the dreaded word "change". One of the feeds I receive caught my attention when it said the following: *"A woman said to me that people in the Church don't like change. I told her that that was the craziest thing I had ever heard, which confused her. I said people love change because ever time they pray for healing or peace etc., they are seeking a blessing, and a blessing is always a change."* We come to church to be blessed by God, which helps us, our relationships with each other and God, to be transformed each day

The Reformation, at its heart, was a process of seeking a blessing, and therefore a change that would lead to a clearer understanding of the Gospel, our understanding of our relationship with God and therefore what it means to be a Christian. One of the most important aspects of being a Lutheran for me was the idea that we are on a continuous journey of seeking God's blessings, learning, facing our challenges and

brokenness and working to make improvements in ourselves and in our understanding of our relationship with God.

It has made me exceedingly sad, that, over the years, continuous learning and education has been far down on the list of what congregations did on a regular basis. I have felt, since Seminary, that one of the unique strengths of the Lutheran Church was the foundation set by Luther and the reformers-that foundation was:

- a clear and ongoing intention to keep learning,
- seeking to develop and intensify our relationship with God
- struggling with what God intends, what God hopes of us and where God is working in the here and now and,
- being open to questions, doubts and challenges to our current thinking about God and the nature of the church.

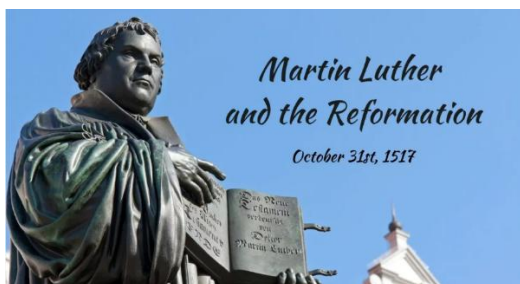
The question that Luther posed in the Small Catechism was “What does this mean” I would expand that question to the following: What does this mean about our understanding of God, ourselves, each other and what God is calling us to be and to do?

It is a question that is as relevant and as necessary now as it was at Luther’s time. The world that most of us grew up in has changed significantly. The ways we learned about doing church are often no longer relevant or helpful.

In reading Scripture, we see that our ideas about God continue to evolve and change. And, and that same time, the faithful continue to hold on tight to the ideas of the past. Such is the nature of our faith. We work to hold on to the tried-and-true understanding of God while recognizing that God does not stay static. The New Testament understanding of Jesus reflects that God continues to act in new and unexpected ways. The writings of Paul evolve over the letters he wrote and we see him continuing to learn and grow. Each writer in the New Testament offered a new piece of understanding God and ourselves.

I have to say that I have been impressed with your willingness to be curious and to be open to considering new ideas and new ways of doing things. As we journey through the scriptures towards Reformation Sunday, I invite you to think about this question as we worship together and seek to understand and act upon the mission God calls us to:

What does this mean? Amen. May it be so.



MEMBERS SUPPORTING MEMBERS

As you know I have invited Council and the congregation to consider how members can support each other in a more intentional way. It is more that what has been traditionally called visitation, which has been seen as the role of the Pastor and maybe a few members who would visit or connect with those who were shut in or in a care facility. The Pastoral role is still important and needed and, at the same time, having a process that helps members stay connected to each other is part of a healthy congregation.

Over the years I have found that while people may have been in a congregation for a long time, they may not know that many people. As well, as we get older our circle of friends can begin to diminish and I have met many seniors who feel alone and isolated. I have also found that people who are dealing with their own or a family members illness can be overwhelmed and isolated. I have also seen that new members are not always been well connected in getting to know others in the congregation.

This proposed process is a continuum of care/support/connection for all members in some way, shape or form.

The point of this process is to support and to let people know they are cared for and have “friends” and supports in the congregation. The process seeks to help people feel included and connected.

It is important to identify the specific needs in the congregation. It is also important that it is not a one size fits all process. Some people will welcome additional relationships, while others are more private and only want select relationships. It is not to impose this on people but rather given them an option to get to know others in a more specific way.

I have created a list of “possible” ways for this process to work. Over time, these ideas may make sense for St Peter’s and may or may not be needed here. There is no time frame for this to occur-rather two members of council and I are currently looking at what is a must have right now. We will then work to set those up and wait to see how this is working before moving forward with another idea.

Here is a starting list of opportunities for connecting members to other members.

- Talking to people you don’t know as well at coffee hour/congregational events
- Not sitting with the same people in worship in fellowship hall
- Buddy system for new members-get to know them assigned people to connect with them, invite them to events, introduce them to other members
- Phone calls to shut ins, someone who is recovering from an illness
- Ensuring older singles have a buddy or two that occasionally checks in, invites them to events, calls or a visit to simply say hi and how are you doing
- Connection when someone has not been seen in awhile to see if they are OK or need something
- Identifying where a need exists that the congregation may assist with without embarrassing the person - e.g.- food insecurity

- Visits to home or hospital as needed
- Visits/phone calls to shut ins-go with Pastor to visits with Holy Communion to create a bit more community feel
- Offer a ride to someone who is no longer driving or may not want to drive when it is dark
- Support someone is going grocery shopping etc. if they do not drive
- Consider small group connections-I was told that in one geographic area connected in some way during COVID to keep that connection-could this be something we could replicate in some way
- Who is moving towards the end of life and could use the support and companionship
- Support members who are going through life changes-e.g. grief, loss of job, marriage breakdown, empty nesters, parents/spouse who need to be placed in a care facility

I have placed a sign-up list in the hall if people are interested in developing additional skills in supporting each other as per the list above. I invite you to consider whether you are interested in learning more and sign up for the training. We will build on skills/experience you already have, share those with each other and look at specific challenges that may arise in supporting each other.

ELCIC NEWS:

SAVE THE DATE: NATIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE OCTOBER 25

Celebrate the 40th anniversary of the ELCIC by joining on online worship led by our National Bishop Larry Kochendorfer from Camp Kinasao at Christopher Lake, Saskatchewan. More details to follow about the time of the livestream.

Prayer for Anxious Times:

This has been a difficult week with violence, threats and acts of hate leaving many people feeling anxious and unsettled. Communities of faith and others who gather in places meant for worship, learning and community have been deeply troubled by the targeting of people because of who they are or how they worship and are carrying real concerns about safety.

In the midst of this uncertainty, we turn to prayer. We seek God's peace, holding one another in care and recommitting ourselves to communities where all people are welcomed and safe.

ELCIC National Bishop Larry Kochendorfer shares the following prayer:

God of grace, you have made all people in your image.

Our hearts are heavy with the reality of racism that persists in our world, our communities and our own hearts.

Forgive us for the times we have been blind to the pain of others, silent in the face of injustice or complicit in structures and systems that divide us.

Open our eyes to see the dignity and worth of every human being and to rejoice in the diversity among your children.

*Open our ears to hear the cries of those wounded by discrimination.
Open our minds to seek truth and transformation.
Open our lips to challenge discrimination and to proclaim your grace and unconditional love for all.
Open our hands to actively work for equity and peace until every child can live freely, and every voice is heard and honoured.
Give us courage to name what is and to work for what should be.
And give us hope that change is possible, for hope is what we do today.
Amen.*

Upcoming Worship Service Dates and Locations – OCTOBER

Sunday, October 4 - Tracy Lather - Sanctuary - Service of the Word

Sunday, October 11 - Pastor Stephen - Sanctuary - Communion - Thanksgiving & Baptism of Lilah Holmes

Sunday, October 18 - Pat O'Rourke - Parish Hall - Ukulele Klub of Exeter

Sunday, October 25 - Pastor Stephen - Sanctuary - Communion - Reformation

Sunday - Kids' Club (Leader: Shannon Keller-Laporte - Halloween party at Bad Apple after Children's message) - Potluck

Upcoming Events:

Tuesday, October 13 - Church Council Meeting

Sunday, October 18 - Special music by the Ukulele Klub of Exeter during the service

Sunday, October 25 - Potluck meal after church in the parish hall

Sunday, November 1 - All Saints Day

We wish to continue the practice of lighting memorial candles during the service on November 1. If you wish to have a candle lit in memory of a loved one(s) that Sunday, please let Laurie know. Send an email to forpeteschair@gmail.com or give her a piece of paper with the name(s) on it. It would be easy to miss someone if given names verbally during coffee hour, and we don't want to miss anyone.

Sunday, November 29 - First Sunday in Advent - Fall Noon Meal after the service



St. Peter's Buzz



Bruce Junker submitted the following:

Although Janice Junker sadly passed away in 2025, her passion for golf is alive and well. Bruce and family held a golf tournament at the Oakwood Golf Club recently with 18 players that participated in last year's church tournament. Two

granddaughters from Montreal also joined, making a total of 20 players. After golf on the 22nd of August, players returned to Bruce's summer resort for a BBQ and the foods that Jan loved to make. All agreed it was so much fun that it will happen again next year.



Ross Cordell submitted the following:
After moving into Grand Bend's Newport Landing subdivision in spring of 2018, Susan and I came up with an idea in 2019 to host a "Christmas In July" event to raise funds and collect non-perishable food for Blessings Community Store and Food Bank in Zurich. They have a track record of doing exceptional work to serve the communities in the area. I even donned a Santa suit with the beard, hat and bells. (the suit should have been air conditioned!!) We were blessed by an overwhelming response to our email solicitation. Through word of mouth, email and posters, this event has grown tremendously over the past number of years.
After Susan's passing in late 2022, I've continued with the food drive; naming it the Annual Memorial Food Drive in Memory of Susan. The positive response annually is heartwarming, knowing this well-supported event is making a difference in the lives of people in our neighbouring communities.

Contact Linda Bluhm for any submissions for St. Peter's Buzz at 519-504-1325 or email llbluhm@hotmail.com

Communication from Council - October 2026 Newsletter

A Call to our Disciples

We still need a few more disciples to help by leading Children's messages during the services when it's a Kids' Club Sunday. Please speak with Laurie if you are interested. We also need more members to join the Altar Guild to set up for Communion Sundays. Speak with Susan Deichert if you could help in this way.

The Zurich Santa Claus Parade will be held on Sunday, December 6. If you would be able to plan for and organize the decoration of a float for the church, please let a member of council know you are interested.

Thank you for saying “yes” when you are available and able to help with all of the different ministries and tasks at St. Peter’s. We could not do what we do without you!!

Welcome Back Sunday

It was great to gather together after summer vacation and welcome our children back on September 13 for the first Sunday of Kids’ Club. The service was well attended, and it was clear everyone was happy to be worshipping and visiting together after the service. Everyone enjoyed the barbecued hot dogs, salads etc. as well as ice cream sundaes. Thanks to all of the disciples who helped make the event a success - the barbecue chef, the ice cream sundae planner, the kitchen organizers and helpers, and everyone who brought food to be shared at the meal.

The Call Process

Our Congregational Mission Profile document has been sent to Pastor Christie Morrow-Wolfe at Synod office. She will be contacting the Church Council and the Call Committee to organize a joint meeting in October. After that, the call process will officially begin. Once those discussions start, the Call Committee will not be able to share information about who is being considered or anything about potential candidates. Please pray for the Call Committee as they begin this very important work for St. Peter’s.

Property Updates

Phase One of renovations at the parsonage is complete. Brad Holmes did a wonderful job for St. Peter’s! The carpets have all been removed, the house has been vacuumed after all the sanding was finished and is ready for painting to begin. Flooring and paint colours have been chosen. We now have the money for Phase Two, so Dave Heimrich will start the painting as soon as he has a few outside jobs done that need to be finished before the weather gets cold. We are done with the dumpster so it was removed from the property on September 24. We are trying to track what is being donated specifically for the parsonage project so please indicate that when you make your donations. If you are unsure, ask Rick.

Jordan Jeffrey has repaired the sagging ceiling outside the offices at the church, has adjusted the panels of the large office door that were coming apart making it difficult to open the door, and has done the repairs on the roof above the offices. Once he started work on the roof, he discovered the cause of the leaking issue. It was not nearly as involved or costly a repair as he had thought it would be, so we should,

hopefully, be able to replace windows in the large office in the spring using the money that was not needed this fall for the roof repair.

The Cemetery Committee is looking into a new sign for our main cemetery on Goshen Line, South. If you would like to make a contribution, please speak with Steve Haberer. Any donations toward this project need to be identified as a donation toward the new sign.

The Apple Tree

Council does a lot of planning these days as we think about where we've been and where we want to go as a congregation over the next number of years. At our last council meeting, Pastor Stephen asked us to revisit the apple tree with its apples and seeds from over three years ago when Pastor Jennifer Hoover led us in some visioning for the future.

The apples represented those things we could accomplish the most easily and within a short time frame, and the seeds represented ideas that would take more thought and effort to achieve or be "planted." I am happy to report that most of the apple ideas have already happened or are happening (potlucks, movie nights, Kids' Club 2x per month, children's/family nights, finance reports are included with newsletters, hosted a CPR/AED training night, recruited more disciples to participate in the Labours of Love etc.).

It was interesting to discover that most of the seeds had been ignored since they required much more thought and organization. However, since Pastor Stephen's arrival, he has been guiding us toward new ways of thinking about ministry, and to our surprise, a number of the things we are talking about as a council were on the seeds! Some of the significant seed ideas we had recorded on that day of congregational visioning were outreach with other churches to assist the marginalized, increase awareness of the church building being available for use by other groups, building community partnerships, finding purpose and building community within our congregation. So, while the reset we needed didn't happen immediately, it IS happening now. To be honest, I don't think we were ready to tackle some of the suggestions at the time, but I do believe that God is awakening something within us to follow a more challenging, inspiring and faith-led path. How exciting it is to be a member of St. Peter's at this time!

Blessings,

Laurie

Council Chairperson

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