

St. John's, Lindow

INTOUCH

Summer/Autumn 2017

500 Years of Reformation

*For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed —
a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is
written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

Romans 1:17

SIMON'S SCRAWL

Simon Gales

Happy news!

Five hundred years ago, on 31 October 1517, Martin Luther, a German monk, posted ninety five theses for debate on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg. It was the start of a discovery that was to change the world, unleashing happiness wherever it went.

The secret was this: failing, broken people 'are not loved because they are attractive' said Luther, 'they are attractive because they are loved (by God)'. That is still as counter-cultural as ever. It's deep in our DNA today that the more attractive we make ourselves the more loved and happy we will be. But to his delight Luther discovered that with God it is the other way round. God does not love people because they have sorted themselves out. He loves failures. And that love makes them flourish.

People sometimes think that the Reformation was just a clean-up job on the Roman Catholic church of the day. Certainly things had got a bit grubby, but if that's what it had been about Luther would have been forgotten within a decade. Five hundred years on we remember because it was not just another call to 'do better'. It was the recovery of a message that had got buried. Luther saw that God is not asking us to earn his love and acceptance in any

way. Acceptance before God, forgiveness and peace with him, is a gift received by simple faith or trust. All his anxieties could be replaced by happy confidence and peace!



This autumn, here at St John's, we're celebrating that happy news. Our Sunday services will look at the 5 great 'alones' of the rediscovered message. In our home groups we will look at the part of the Bible when Luther made his happy discovery, and in mid-October we host 'A Monk's Tale: Relics, Revolt and Reformation', a comedy celebrating the 500th anniversary of a discovery which was to bring such joy to so many.

Yours happily

Simon

'What's wrong with the church noticeboard?'



Ben Hollinshead

Gareth: OK Kate, tell us about yourself.

Kate: I was born in the USA, but my family came back to the UK when I was a few months old. I went to the Methodist pre-school with Liz Kelly as my leader. I went to Lacey Green primary and have just finished at Wilmslow High School, where I took Chemistry, Biology and Maths A Level's. If I get the grades I hope to do Bio-medical science at Nottingham Trent Uni.

G: Why that subject?

K: Well I enjoy biology but more human biology than plant. I did work experience with Hazel Brooks at AZ and think that I might like to work in an NHS lab or if maybe teach science in a school.

G: You've just finished exams, how did they go?

K: I don't know how well I've done, but it was quite stressful. I found it hard but some of the people I know were even more stressed.

G: How did that manifest itself?

K: Well, some worked too hard, working really late. But also people comfort eating and getting bad skin.

G: So it had a significant impact on some people?

K: Yeah and then at the same time, lots of us are going on post-exam beach holidays and girls are then under pressure to look good and so you've got these two opposite pressures piling on top of each other and combining to make it really unhealthy.

G: Where does that pressure come from? Schools?

K: They don't explicitly pressurise you, but the message is that you need to achieve and succeed and that means getting good grades to get to uni and there is not much by way of discussion about what happens if you don't get the right grades.

G: Or about the purpose of study and work? I mean as a Christian do you have a different perspective?

K: Yeah, so I know that God has a plan, that life goes on and it's not the end of the world on results day. I was reading Matthew chapter 6 about not worrying about tomorrow because our heavenly father knows what we need and loves us, which I found



found really comforting; I shared that with others at St. John's doing exams, like Niamh, Alice and Vicki. If I wasn't a Christian I think the whole thing would be a lot more stressful.

G: OK, thanks for that. Tell us about what you like about St. John's Church family.

K: I really love it when we sing together, I find that really encouraging and uplifting. I like the trips we've had to the Oakes where we get to meet other Christians and get lots of opportunities to ask questions about faith. I also really enjoyed the strategic review groups. I met people I had never talked to before and heard lots of stories about life and faith that were really encouraging and the older people made me feel appreciated and valued. I think it would be really good to have some mixed groups of people at church so that people of different ages could learn from each other; the people I talked to shared so much knowledge and wisdom.

G: Well that's music to my ears Kate, I think an intergenerational culture like you're describing would be brilliant. Lastly, our magazine is about church history, Luther and the Reformation. What do you think about church history?

K: If I'm really honest, I'd have to say that I don't really know what it is.

G: OK, well it's a good job that we're about to think about it a bit! You'll have to listen online to the sermons in the autumn term! Thanks so much for the chat today Kate.

GET READING!

A selection of shorter books on the bookstall to celebrate the Reformation



Freedom Movement: 500 years of Reformation

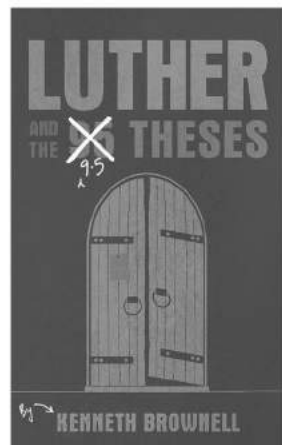
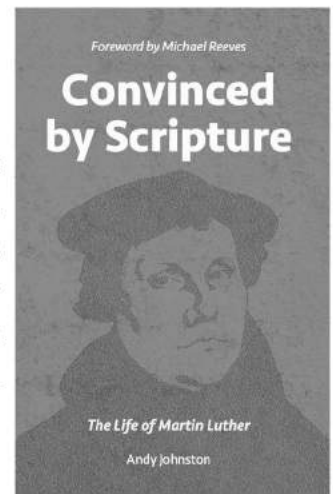
by Michael Reeves (£1 on the bookstall)

As Martin Luther sat on the edge of total despair in a German monastery he found light and joy that has since lit and empowered the way for millions of others. This easily accessible book, suitable for older teens and above, gets to the heart of that great discovery. Buy copies to give away to celebrate the anniversary!

Convinced by Scripture: The Life of Martin Luther

by Andy Johnston (£4.50 on the bookstall)

In this biography, specially written for the anniversary, the author paints a picture of a young and pious Luther growing up in a dark and spiritually desolate Europe. He describes the turn of events that led up to Luther's dramatic decision to challenge the authority of the Pope and helps us to see how God uses a very ordinary man to change the course of history. This book will stir your interest in one of history's greatest characters but, more than that, it will stir your faith and gratitude for the good news he proclaimed.



Luther and the 9.5 theses

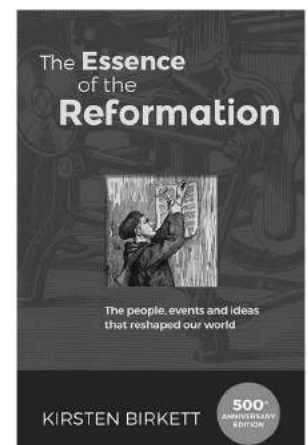
by Kenneth Brownell (£4 on the bookstall)

The author explains why Luther's nailing of 95 theses to a church door in Wittenberg 500 years ago was such a turning point. He draws out 9 (and a half!) key points from the theses that are crucial for us to uphold today if we want to be faithful to Christ and his gospel in our generation. As well as looking back, this book looks ahead to see how we can stand for that truth today.

The Essence of the Reformation

by Kirsten Birkett (£5.50 on the bookstall)

In this short book Kirsten Birkett brings us the essence of the Reformation - the social and religious soil in which it grew, the events and people that shaped it and the ideas and doctrines for which many of them died. In readable prose she gets across what the Reformation was about. A great read for any thinking Christian who wants to be informed of the heritage of the gospel that has come down to us.



WHY SHOULD WE TEACH CHURCH HISTORY TO CHILDREN

Robin Barfield

Do you know your Luther from your Luther King? Your Cromwell from your Cranmer? What about the children in our church and schools? Have they ever heard of some of these great names who did great things? Do they know of how God acted in history to provide men and women to rediscover the treasures of the gospel of grace which had been hidden for centuries? Do they know how God worked such that this gospel would spread and be heard across nations and generations?

Over recent years there has been an encouraging increase in the seriousness with which the big Bible storyline has been taught to children. This is to be commended as it grounds our children when our culture is rootless and uses the champion of postmodernism, namely story, with which to do it. Nevertheless, there has not been so much attention to teaching church history and this has left a gap in the Christian story of 2000 years in the minds of many of our young people. This often leaves a natural curiosity in the child untapped – ‘What happened in between?’, ‘How did we get from there to here?’

Teaching church history to children, firstly therefore, has explanatory power to show them why we do what we do, where we are and who we are. Most churches meet in old buildings which reflect, for good or ill, our forebears aims and belief in Christ; most churches say the ancient creeds which developed over time as key doctrines were worked out. Church history not only explains our gatherings but also our country – the buildings, the memorials, the laws and the culture. It makes sense of denominations and parliament, statues and memorials, even names and places. A grasp of church history gives a child confidence that, while they may be alone as a believer in school, they are part of a wider family, both globally and through time; who they are is not new or unusual.

Secondly church history is the truth of God lived out. It shows why the doctrine of Scripture is so precious and should be to the ploughman as well as

to the King; it shows why we no longer pray to saints, or pay for our relatives’ place in heaven; it shows why the Church of England is so doctrinally divided yet should be doctrinally united. Church history shows a child that the precious doctrines of grace are worth living for as well as dying for in a culture that demands indifference. Knowing church history warns of errors made and the impact that had on God’s church – a child then sees the privilege of having a Bible they can read, freedom from the guilt of indulgences, and part of a national denomination built on gospel principles. These are privileges that others bled and died for.

Finally, Church history sets our children examples of the Christian life – heroes of faith who were unafraid of abuse, mockery, and even being put to death for the gospel of Jesus. These characters were not perfect and made many mistakes, just as we do, yet the best of them set us an example of life and doctrine, of putting the Kingdom first, of standing firm when they may have buckled, of persisting when the world was against them; men and women of whom ‘the world was not worthy’. These are people who should inspire our children to greater service, greater thankfulness and greater faith in their Saviour.

The 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s opening salvo is a great opportunity to explain the key issues of the Reformation to our children and young people, to set before them the precious treasures won for them. There are plenty of good books from Christian Focus on these Reformation greats. Get hold of a few and get the whole family familiar!

Robin Barfield is the Associate Minister with responsibility for Children & Families at Christ Church Wharton, Chair of North West Youthworks and is studying for a PhD in Children's Ministry.



A Monk's Mystery Tale

Relics, Revolt & Reformation

A new play by James Cary with original music and lyrics by James Sherwood is coming to St John's on Saturday 14th October.

Who knew the Reformation could be so much fun?

Written to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, *A Monk's Tale* is about Martin Luther. And it's for people who aren't quite sure which Luther we're talking about. With a feeling of *Horrible Histories* and *Monty Python*, *A Monk's Tale* helps the audience understand the unfamiliar medieval mindset, and exactly what Luther was trying to do with his 95 Theses, which sparked one of the most significant movements in history: the Reformation.

The show is light, accessible and funny, using sketches, and songs to explain the specifics of the story: the indulgences, purgatory, sacraments and the theological disputes of the period. As the play unfolds, the audience will be informed and challenged as well as amused. The fast-paced hour-long show also covers the Wycliffe and the Lollards, popes, princes and the seismic changes brought on by the internet of its time, the Printing Press.

Witty and entertaining, with plenty of laugh out loud moments, this is Reformation history as you have never seen it before – suitable for all ages from 8 to 108, for those of any faith or none at all.

ABOUT THE WRITERS: James Cary is an award-winning comedy writer for TV and radio, whose work includes *Miranda*, *My Family*, *Bluestone 42*, *Another Case of Milton Jones*, *My Hero*, *Hut 33* and Edinburgh Fringe hit *The God Particle* (2013). James Sherwood is a musical stand-up comedian and comedy writer; his work for Radio 4 includes *The Now Show* and *The News Quiz*.

ABOUT THE CAST: *A Monk's Tale* stars a young lively cast with a wealth of experience - Anna Nicholson, Cameron Potts and Anna Newcome.

Tickets are available now from www.saint-johns.org.uk. Adult tickets are £8 in advance (£10 on the door), u18s and students £5.

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS



Big Church Day Out 2017

in the beautiful setting of

Capesthorpe Hall



Alec, Leah, Oscar and Charlie



at Alec's ordination at Chester

Cathedral on 2nd June 2017



Fun at Who Let The Dads Out



Luther at the Diet of Worms.



(apparently the Germans may not find the name as silly
as we do)

BOOK REVIEW

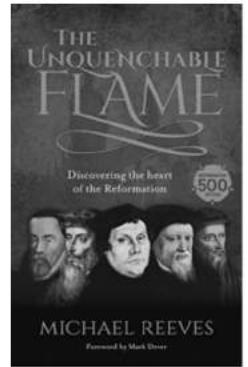
The Unquenchable Flame - Michael Reeves

Andrew Gales

"Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out" were the final words of Hugh Latimer, as he burnt for his biblical principles. This flame has warmed and enlightened the world ever since.

With wit, style, and eloquence, Michael Reeves retells the story of the Reformation. He begins with the state of the medieval church, introducing the pre-Reformers, Wycliffe and Hus. He then focuses on three central characters: Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, but it is far from unthinking praise - he elaborates on strengths and weaknesses, providing a colourful depiction, with anecdotes abounding. He also relates the endeavours of the Scottish and English Reformers and the Puritans. The book ends by asking 'Is the Reformation over?' to which Reeves concludes that, as the doctrinal divide at the heart of the Reformation persists, there can be no reconciliation. In fact, what we need is more reformation, not less:

'The state of things today testifies to the need for reformation. The doctrine of justification is routinely shied away from...A culture of positive thinking and self-esteem has wiped away all perceived need for the sinner to be justified...Luther's problem of being tortured by guilt before the divine Judge is dismissed as a sixteenth-century problem, and his solution of justification therefore unnecessary today.'



The Reformation was one of the most significant movements in the last millennia. This is a great way to understand the Reformers motives, and draw applications to current times. One church leader declares this book "quite simply, the best brief introduction to the Reformation I have read." With its decidedly non-academic tone, liveliness and humour, 'The Unquenchable Flame' is a book you'll want to add to your collection.

DVD REVIEW

The Martin Luther Story

Michelle Hesselgrave

I must admit that I don't know much about church history. When Gareth mentioned reviewing a DVD on Martin Luther my mind added King to the end and thought "I have a dream..." but that isn't who this DVD is about.

The "Martin Luther Story" DVD in The Torchlighters, Heroes of the faith series contains a 30 minute cartoon and a 90 minute documentary that explores Martin Luther's life and how he sparked the Reformation of the church.

We watched the cartoon as a family and enjoyed it. It gave a clear picture of who Martin Luther was and why the Reformation began. It also allowed us to discuss the points that Martin Luther was making and why he was challenging the church leaders. Jacob (5) wanted to say, "It was good and

and brilliant and other children should watch it." Isaac (8) wanted to say that it was "OK".

The documentary dealt with Martin Luther's whole life and gave more detail about him as a man. It added details to the story that the cartoon didn't have the ability or time to show and was easy to understand.

Through watching the DVD I was struck by how much courage it must have taken to do what he did and how God surrounded him with friends that intervened to keep him alive and allow him to achieve what he did. It is a very good DVD and I would recommend it to anyone vaguely interested in church history.



A KEYSTONE OF THE REFORMATION: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE – WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....”
(Romans 5.1)*

This doctrine is concerned with how sinful human beings enter into the favour of God Almighty. Is it by the exercise of praiseworthy human actions or by a prior divine transformation taking place within the human heart? The Church of England, historically established as a Protestant church, rejected the former and endorsed the latter assumption. For example, Article 11 of the Anglican 39 Articles states, “we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings”.

We need to make a mental adjustment in order to understand this teaching. In seeking to advance in human affairs, we have to provide evidence of our abilities, with qualifications attained, competences fulfilled etc. We need to demonstrate that “I” am the right person for the job and (implicitly) somebody else isn’t! Not so with entry into the Kingdom of God! The gospels describe a covenant of salvation (a unilateral divine decree) and not a contract: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit...” (John 15.16a)

Martin Luther taught that real faith is something more than intellectual agreement with Christian beliefs but rather involves putting our trust in God: “Everything depends upon faith. The person who does not have faith is like someone who has to cross

the sea, but is so frightened that he does not trust the ship. And so he stays where he is, and is never saved, because he will not get on board and cross over”.

Does “Justification by Faith” mean: “I am saved by my decision for Christ”? Are we simply being asked to “put our faith in faith”? This isn’t where the emphasis should lie, which simply throws the burden of responsibility back upon the shoulders of the troubled enquirer. Rather, Luther argued, that faith is only as strong as the one in whom we trust and believe. The efficacy of faith does not rest upon the intensity with which we believe, but in the reliability of the object of our faith. It is not the greatness of our faith but the greatness of God which counts.

The phrase, “Justification by grace through faith” brings out the meaning of this doctrine more clearly: the justification of the sinner is based upon the grace of God and, is received by faith. We need to put out our hand to receive the grace but it is an empty hand which, crucially, results in the believer becoming united with Christ – he belongs to me and I belong to him!

Justification by Faith Alone is a vital Christian doctrine because it brings us back to the biblical account of how guilty sinners can be brought back into fellowship with a Holy God.

AUTUMN/WINTER PROGRAMME

Sundays

10am

Lord's Supper on third Sunday

6.30pm

Lord's Supper on first Sunday

Homegroups

Sep 10	Reformation Truths: By Scripture Alone Tim 3:14-17	Reformation Truths: By Scripture Alone Tim 3:14-17
Sep 17	In Christ Alone John 2:1-2	In Christ Alone John 2:1-2
Sep 24	By Grace Alone Ephesians 2:1-10	By Grace Alone Ephesians 2:1-10
Oct 1	Through Faith Alone Romans 3:21-26	Through Faith Alone Romans 3:21-26
Oct 8	Harvest Parade	Glory to God Alone Romans 11:33 - 12:2
Oct 15	Glory to God Alone Romans 11:33 - 12:2	Two Kinds of Unity
Oct 22	Living in the Kingdom Kingdoms in Conflict Luke 6:1-11	Guidance and the voice of God
Oct 29	Kingdom Character Luke 6:12-26	Beyond Greed
Nov 5	Kingdom Love Luke 6:27-36	Hosea: Hearts Apart Hosea 1-3
Nov 12	Remembrance Parade	Silence in Court! Hosea 4
Nov 19	Kingdom Attitude Luke 6:37-42	Learning the Hard Way Hosea 5
Nov 26	Kingdom Truth Luke 6:43-49	Heart Failure Hosea 6-7
Dec 3	Advent: Hope is Coming Revelation 4:1-11	Trouble Ahead Hosea 8
Dec 10	Advent: Hope is Coming Revelation 5:1-14	Lessons in Love Hosea 11
Dec 17	Nativity Presentation	Nine Lessons and Carols
Dec 24	Advent: Hope is Coming Revelation 7:9-11a	Kids Carols (4pm) Midnight Communion (11pm)

Meeting in various homes, on Thursday & Fridays, afternoons and evenings, to study God's Word and encourage one another.

ROMANS: FUEL OF THE REFORMATION!

Sept 7th
The gospel of God
Romans 1:1-17

Sept 21st
What in the world are we doing?
Romans 1:18-32

Oct 5th
What can religion do?
Romans 2:1-29

Oct 19th
What do we deserve?
Romans 3:1-20

Nov 2nd
God's Gift
Romans 3:21-26

Nov 16th
By Faith
Romans 3:27-4:25

Nov 30th
Right with God
Romans 5:1-11

Dec 14th
Victory over Death
Romans 5:12-21

MONTHLY PRAYER BREAKFASTS

Sept 9, Oct 7, Nov 4, Dec 2

Saturday mornings 8.30-9.45am
Church Rooms

Special Events

Sep 10	Bring & Share Lunch with Grace Lambert Church Rooms	Nov 4	'Making Sense of God, Creation & Science' Scientists in Congregations Conference, 10am-4pm, St John's Hartford
Sep 23	Who Let The Dads Out? 10-11.30am, Church Rooms	Nov 5	Visit of International Students
Oct 7	Men's Breakfast Alderley Edge Golf Club, 8.15am	Nov 9	Christian Institute Roadshow St John's
Oct 14	Northern Women's Convention 10am-4pm, Bradford	Nov 25	Who Let The Dads Out? 10-11.30am, Church Rooms
Oct 14	A Monk's Tale - Reformation Play 8pm, St John's <i>Tickets available at saint-johns.org.uk</i>	Dec 16	Nativity from Scratch rehearsal
		Dec 17	Nativity from Scratch presentation