

# *A DEVOUT AND SERIOUS CALL TO ECO-REFORMATION*<sup>1</sup>

## CELEBRATING THE REFORMATION?

Protestant faith communities plan to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 2017. But to commemorate the Reformation merely through historical reminiscence and worship events falls far short of honoring the Reformation's life-giving dynamism that shook the foundations of Christendom and planted the seeds of the modern world. Only a dynamic upsurge of thinking and doing to change the Church for the sake of the world will now honor the Reformers' passion. Only a new Reformation that drives the Church to renew the face of the Earth can rightly serve Jesus Christ and honor Christ's holy claim to sovereignty over this living planet, filled with God's splendor and dedicated to the praise of God's glory.

*Therefore we issue this devout and serious Call to Eco-Reformation.*

## SIN, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL

The Reformers framed their work as a struggle against Sin, Death, and the Devil. This is the struggle of all Christians throughout the ages. But the Reformers complained that their Church capitulated to sin, colluded with the Devil, and abetted a culture of death rather than nurturing the abundant life promised through Jesus Christ. The Reformers carried out their struggle in ways appropriate to their sixteenth century European context. They re-imagined theology and biblical interpretation, overhauled Church governance, transformed worship practices, renewed Christian education, and thus undermined the Church authorities' ongoing exploitation of God's people. So doing, the Reformers catalyzed a historic process remaking every aspect of society: religion, economics, politics, social relations, art, science, literature and more.

*Now we issue this devout and serious Call to Eco-Reformation as the way to carry out our Church's struggle against Sin, Death, and the Devil in the twenty-first century.*

## ECO-REFORMATION REDEFINES OUR STRUGGLE AGAINST SIN, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL

Sin is the alienation that isolates us from God, others, and all creation. Our struggle against sin brings us out of isolation into life-giving, responsible relationship with God and God's living Earth community that is our home, our womb, and without which we have no life at all.

Death is buying into the seductive story that Earth is merely a warehouse of objects to use as we will for pleasure, profit, and security, regardless of the ruin and misery imposed on all creation through our heedless misuse. Our struggle against this culture of death means we dwell in a different story: that the Earth and its fullness belong to God, that we are servants of God's age-old plan to bring all things on Earth to fulfillment in Jesus Christ, so each creature individually and all creatures together can flourish abundantly and do what God created them to do, praising God with unique voices and ways of life.

The Devil is a demonic power that enslaves individuals and societies; a soul-sucking parasite that turns people into spiritual zombies who do evil instead of good; that isolates individuals and pits them against one another; that seduces them to believe deadly stories of security through pleasure and profit instead of the story of life, freedom, and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Our struggle against the Devil is carried out in relational networks of spiritual recovery by which we come out of isolation and find a welcome into Earth community; confess our fears for the future of the Earth that is the only home for our families, our society, our Church; hear the good news that Jesus Christ comes not to condemn the world but to save it; embrace hopeful stories of ecological renewal already at work in Church and world; and empower one another to take action that will remake every aspect of society so

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<sup>1</sup> Written by the Rev. Brian Brandt, Ph.D., at the request of an Eco-Reformation planning team connected with EcoFaith Recovery. EcoFaith Recovery seeks to engage faith communities of the Pacific Northwest in the larger international Eco-Reformation movement.

that all people of good will can nurture wholesome diversity, resilience, integrity, and beauty within God's commonwealth of creation.

#### ECO-REFORMATION IS A CALL TO ACTION

Luther and the Reformers acted boldly, strategically, and persistently to renew the church. Now we issue a call to action equally audacious, bold, and visionary: Eco-Reformation. We must put into action our biggest aspirations, best thinking, and most skilful efforts as we dare to transform the Church for the sake of the world, renew the face of the Earth, create a society where justice and compassion extend to all creatures, and sustain a beautiful, vital, resilient commonwealth of creation that praises God for all ages to come.

#### ECO-REFORMATION AGENDA

The call to Eco-Reformation is a call to undertake projects like these, among many others:

- Make church grounds and physical plants into the Garden of Eden with principles of green building design, permaculture and other sustainable horticultural practices.
- Incorporate a "Season of Creation" into congregational worship; then start weaving creation-friendly themes into worship throughout the liturgical year.
- Preaching that lifts up God as Creator, and places the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in its proper context of serving creation's fulfillment according to God's age-old plan.
- Christian education that explores Care for Creation in theology, biblical interpretation, ethics, stewardship, prayer, and practices of daily living. Likewise, opportunities for education to bring Christian Care for Creation into conversation with practitioners from fields of sustainable horticulture-agriculture and food systems, water conservation, public transportation, renewable energy, urban design, green architecture, emergency disaster preparedness, and business enterprises (e.g., social benefit corporations, cooperatives) that contribute to an ecological renewal of our society and our world.
- Churches, as Gardens of Eden, partnering with civic groups, voluntary associations, religious congregations, and local government agencies to plan and implement projects that will turn every town and city into the City of God – sowing seeds that sprout into urban areas like abundant gardens and food forests watered with springs of the water of life – and transform rural areas across the land into the bountiful paradise of God.
- Churches working with coalitions of community organizing groups to achieve local and regional goals that create a social ecology of just and sustainable communities consistent with this Eco-Reformation vision of urban and rural renewal.
- Churches partnering with advocacy groups to promote legislation and public policy that move society toward nurturing a sustainable, resilient commonwealth of life, including reform of land-use policy in a manner that recognizes the rights of non-human creatures to life, habitat, and reproduction so they can fulfill their God-given role in creation.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE NEXT 500 YEARS

**We issue this devout and serious Call to Eco-Reformation** convinced that the next five hundred years are crucial for determining the fate of the Church and the world. It is not enough to recall what our spiritual ancestors did long ago. We must ask what our descendants five hundred years hence will say of us, of our faithfulness, our courage, our vision, our commitment to Jesus Christ and to the world Christ loves. Indeed, we must wonder if we will have descendants who live to hold the conversation. As God once spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, so God questions us now about our wisdom and righteousness in reckoning God's purposes on this living Earth. This **Call to Eco-Reformation** is God calling us to bear fruit worthy of repentance. How will we declare our answer?

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<sup>2</sup> See Peter G. Brown and Geoffrey Garver, *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009), discussing "right relationship" as restoring and enhancing the integrity, resilience, and beauty of life's commonwealth.