

CONNECT EUROPE - REFORMATION PAPER

Prague, August 2005

I - What is reformation?

With reformation we basically mean a refoundation/recentering of the church on Christ and the message of his Kingdom. A rediscovery of how Jesus intended his body to function and of God's purposes in this world and the world to come.

II - Key issues for reformation in the church

We believe that today's church, especially in Europe, is in a serious spiritual crisis and needs a reformation of theology and practice in at least the following areas:

1. From idolatry to acknowledging Jesus Christ as the true head of his church. Idolatry is basically anything that robs Jesus of his legitimate place, like:

- a. church programs that limit the flow of the Holy Spirit,
- b. the clergy-laity divide, which is creating and maintaining a mediation structure between 'ordinary' people and Christ, and
- c. denominationalism, dividing and disempowering the body based on human notions.

2. From religious church systems that keep people in a place of passivity, unfruitfulness and bondage to organic, life-giving, disciple-making movements based on the ministry of Jesus and the New Testament foundational values of church. This means the restoration of a 'priesthood of all believers' and a return to grassroots community, worship, mission and justice, bringing Jesus into people's sphere of life.

3. From a church mainly focused on herself to embracing a holistic Kingdom counter-culture that will again impact our cities and regions. Jesus is Lord of all creation, therefore we bring His presence and the values of his Kingdom into every sphere of life, including government, economy, media, education, sports, arts, science, technology and the environment.

4. From unbiblical tithing schemes and investing in maintenance Christianity (pastors, buildings, church programs) to aligning our finances and possessions with God's heart and purposes: the poor and oppressed, reaching the unreached, mobile apostolic teams, and serving our communities.

5. From unhealthy one-pastor and one-man leadership structures to multiple-ministry teams that hear from God together and maintain covenant-type relationships of mutual encouragement and accountability. These teams are prophetic-apostolic in nature, in the sense that they hear from God and act with a focus to see His Kingdom come. They can include men and women in all ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4.

A reformation in the church will also prepare us for shaking and hard times (like terror, persecution and economic trouble) by developing a deeper dependency on God and persecution-proof (organic) church structures.

III - Living out different values

Connect Europe is a network of friends that want to pursue this much-needed reformation together, by being:

1. *Passionate*. We are passionate followers of Jesus and seek to develop an intimate relationship with Him. We are wholeheartedly committed to the advance of His Kingdom and always prepared to take risks.

2. *Obedient to the Holy Spirit*. Like Jesus, we only seek to do what we see the Father doing. We acknowledge the Holy Spirit's right to break our rules and offend our sensibilities. We realize we are part of something much bigger than ourselves, of which only the Holy Spirit is in control.

3. *Relational*. We are an international community of friends with shared vision and values, not a program or an organisation. We work with anyone sharing our vision and values regardless of culture, race, age, gender or church background. We build unity and enjoy diversity.

4. *Mission-minded*. We believe prayer and missions cannot be separated. We seek to 'hear prophetically' and 'act apostolically', to develop a lifestyle of mission-minded prayer and effective outreach and church planting.

5. *Creative*. We embrace God-inspired creativity and innovation.

6. *Team-based*. We encourage and value servant leadership, teamwork and mutual accountability.

7. *Reformational*. We believe the church in Europe needs a new reformation. While appreciating our historic inheritance, we freely launch out in new things. We want to be change agents of the Kingdom in our culture. We want to be a place where God-given vision can be shared and come to life.

IV - Three core elements of reformation

Reformation is not about pushing a political agenda, but about an intentional, Spirit-led, reformational lifestyle. In other words: we live out what we believe, and actively model a new way forward. If we want to see a lasting impact, there are three reformational core elements that cannot be separated:

1. *a revival of the heart* - a true passion for Jesus and seeking his Kingdom in the first place,

2. *a renewal of the mind* - a theological paradigm shift based on Godly revelation of his purposes with the church, and

3. *a reformation of structures* - new shapes of church and society that optimally express and facilitate God's purposes.

V - About this paper

This paper maintains a certain degree of fluidity, because we are on a journey together and insights may be reshaped as God's Spirit reveals us more of who Christ is and what He asks of us in this season.

source: Marc van der Woude, Connect Europe, 2005