



One creme horn to go!

Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church

So What Does Reformed Mean to Us?

Rev. C. Muether

When Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church, a mission work of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church in Des Moines, opened its doors in Pella, many questions were asked. Why start another church in a town (and its broader vicinity) that has more than sixty religious fellowships? Why another “Reformed Church”?

A prominent businessman in town even wondered about our desire to use the word “Reformed” in an area where the meaning has a fair bit of “baggage.” Why start a new work and resort to such a stodgy word in our church name? In fact one of the historic RCA (Reformed Church in America) fellowships has worked to minimize the word “Reformed” in its name.

I suspect that “baggage” comes from traditionalism and formalism from generations of Dutch Calvinists, and “doing” church today must supposedly be revamped in order to be inviting and relevant. I do not agree with that, but I am trying to get a handle on that “baggage.”

At Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church, we are unabashedly Reformed, but we do not define ourselves as Reformed in the strict ethnic sense; that is, our Reformed understanding of the faith is not absolutely marked by any one ethnic group—the Dutch, Germans, nor even the Scots, though our heritage traces back to the English and Scottish Reformation.

We see the word “Reformed” as more than a name of a church or a group of fellowships. We employ the word in a broader sense to stand for the system of doctrine believed by the distinctively Reformed family of churches, and for us one offshoot of that would be particularly “Reformed Presbyterianism.”

The words “Hope Reformed” in our name mean hope that is reformed, in other words hope that is understood in light of the Scriptures and not in the councils of the church or in the dictates of man, where often hope was deformed to mean that assurance which comes from man. At this point I could further explain through surveying the Reformation Period of the Church, how we came to the word “Reformed.” However, the purpose here is to lay out briefly the distinctive features of our use of the word.

To us Reformed means the pure preaching of God’s Word, the right administration of the Sacraments, and the proper exercise of discipline. Furthermore, what distinguishes us from the churches in town is that our worship service is purposely simple. We have no praise teams, no special music, and no worship committees. This noticeable absence would seem to some that we are a boring bunch. However, we believe worship service is not about the fascinations of man and his creative programming; it is about the glory of God. When one seriously studies Acts 2 and the admonitions Paul gave to the Corinthian Church, one discovers that it is the simplicity of worship that the Lord desires. It is not the private tongue speaking or prophesying or even the singled out special musical numbers we do; it is about the direct preaching and receiving of God’s Word, the offering of praise from everyone, and the breaking of bread that represents our communion with Him. Do we then think that churches with high liturgy or spectacular productions are worshiping in sin? No, it is not our place to judge the hearts of our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church place a premium on revering God and coming into His presence with awe and humility. To that end, we do not complicate our liturgy; we come simply to meet Him through His Word and to praise Him with simple and sincere song.