



NINETY-FIVE MORE THESES

PART ONE

On 31 October 1517, Martin Luther nailed to the Wittenberg Church door his 95 Theses – 95 one-sentence statements about what he believed was wrong in the practice and teaching of the Church in his day. To mark the 500th anniversary, *Reform* is publishing 95 new theses, one sentence each by opinion formers and opinion holders.

How should the Church change?

The new 95 will continue until the October issue of *Reform*, so let us have your own theses and we'll include the best of them here. Nail your one-sentence thesis to *Reform* Magazine, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT or e-nail it to reform@urc.org.uk

Tim Farron, Liberal Democrat leader



The Reformation was about understanding that the Gospel is simple, that salvation is based solely on grace through faith, and that additions to and subtractions from the Gospel are and always will be wrong. In every generation it seems that the Church needs to some extent to repent of this and to reform. This generation is no different.

Brian Harley, chair of Gear

Re-form centred around our primary calling to be Spirit-empowered witnesses to Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord.

Tina Beattie, University of Roehampton

Oh for a modest and humble community of disciples with a beatitudinal ethos, a joy nurtured by the wonder and mystery of the primordial sacrament of creation, and a sacramental priesthood open to all the baptised who are called.

Carla A Grosch-Miller, theologian

May the Church be freed from the heavy hand of patriarchy to meet God in new metaphors that lift the spirit and enable the flourishing of all life.

John Proctor, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church



I want us to see the Church as a window – to Jesus, to the world, to what we might become – not as a refuge.

Peniel Jefus-Rajkumar, World Council of Churches

The Christian Church, reformed and continuously reforming, cannot but anchor its theology in deep solidarity with the margins as a means of rediscovering its identity as the body of Christ crucified outside the city walls – rerouting its mission as ‘with-ness’ which entails both ‘withstanding’ the powers that be and ‘standing with’ those who resist the powers that be through prophetic resistance, in courageous and creative fidelity to the Gospel of Christ.

Philip Yancey, writer

May the Church turn from its distraction with politics and regain its original vision of creating pioneer settlements of a counter-cultural kingdom of God, a vision that can be realised in any political environment.

Ruth Hunt CEO of Stonewall



To keep LGBT Christians from Christ exposes the fundamental failures of the Church and constitutes a significant dereliction of duty.

Kate Bottley, minister

If the Church passionately believes in resurrection it should never be afraid of its own death.

Andrew Copson, CEO of the British Humanist Association

Give up all attempts to control the behaviour of non-adherents (obviously most applicable to state churches, like that of England).

Savi Hensman, writer



The Church should repent of its part in shoring up privilege and injustice and be more attentive to the experiences and views of the poor, marginalised and vulnerable, including when interpreting the Bible and re-examining tradition.

Yak Hwee-tan, Westminster College

Crucifixion to self, insitution and constitution; resurrection for a changing world.

Rebecca Gudgeon, iChurch

When we say we are ‘Christians’, it means that we are people who try to follow Jesus – it has nothing to do with how we spend our Sunday mornings, or what type of music we like, or even ‘being good’; but it has everything to do with committing to live compassionately.

Giles Fraser, minister

‘On behalf of the Dean and Chapter ...’ (Opening words of the 2017 Easter Day service at Norwich Cathedral.)

Susan Durber, minister

The Church is not best reformed by human effort, but only by the grace of God, a grace such that, welcoming and embracing it, we are set free from the need to strive and struggle for a future that belongs, ultimately, only to God.

Peter Stanford, writer

That Martin Luther’s clear commitment, as expressed so powerfully in his 1520 *Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German People*, to ‘the priesthood of all baptised believers’, be lived out across all denominations, including my own Catholic Church, so that each and every one of us bears an equal responsibility for making our world a more just, less divided place.

Adrian Plass, writer

Perhaps a determination to embrace the fact that God is as bewilderingly independent, non-religious and sometimes shockingly bespoke in his encounters with human beings, Christian or otherwise, as he always was and always will be, might inspire us to follow Jesus instead of continually trying to lead him.

Commitment-Phobe, Reform columnist

Christians need to be taught that we are not the middle managers of God's judgement business; he specifically asks us to love, not to judge, on his behalf.

Diarmaid MacCulloch, historian



Christian Churches must become more grown up on the subject of sexuality and gender, for all human beings to enjoy dignity and fulfilment in their loving relationships without distortions inherited from the past.

Nigel Uden, URC Moderator-Elect

Re-instate the definite article when talking about this organism to which we belong, because we are not 'church' – an abstract noun, a vague entity in a sea of other vague entities – but, in fellowship with its other embodiments, we are The Church, the Body of Christ; that's our identity, our purpose and our hope.

Stewart Henderson, poet

Unless the Church become like a child, it will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Unless the Church become like a playground, it will never enter the glee of heaven. Unless the Church become like its Founder, it will never find the kingdom of heaven.

Karen Georgia A Thompson, Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, United Church of Christ, USA



I would like to see the Church reflective of the true diversity that is present among us culturally and spiritually, providing a true picture of the image of God (*imago Dei*) revealed in the lives, experiences and traditions of ALL God's people everywhere.

Janina Ramirez, broadcaster



The Church should be a force for good, offering peace, moral guidance, and encouraging people to see to their spiritual wellbeing in a world obsessed with consumerism and immediacy.

Wayne Hawkins, Council for World Mission

To be part of a community of God's people where the spiritual perspectives of five years and 95 years (and everyone in between) are valued and appreciated, so we can learn and grow together.

Kate Coleman, founder of Next Leadership

If today's Church is to proactively engage in the godly transformation of society, we must raise faithful and effective leaders for every sphere and sector, as well as the Church, and disciples who are committed to both the broad mission of human flourishing and the narrow mission of evangelism.

Peter Tatchell, activist

Accept loving, faithful same-sex relationships as equal to heterosexual ones, including the right of same-sex couples to marry in church.

Inderjit Bhogal, minister

Priesthood of all believers, pastors and prophets, without ordained, paid clergy.

Ann Widdecombe MP

The Church should allow its priests to marry in the tradition of St Peter.

John Sentamu, Archbishop of York



Reformation is what happens when a Christian, or a gathering of Christians, is moved by the Holy Spirit to become more and more like Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Theo Hobson, theologian

The Church – which I prefer to call 'Christian culture' – must learn to be more outgoing, more creative, more festive – partly through large public rituals and art works; it must learn to say: 'Let's have some fun with this!'

Grace Pengelly, URC Secretary for Church and Society

Practice living fully in the world that our mother created for us to enjoy and take care of.



i How should the Church be reformed today? We want to hear from you.

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