

October 25, 2020

Proverbs 6:23a,7:2,9:9,13:14

This is Reformation Sunday at Amicable Church. The actual Reformation Day is October 31st. That is when Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses or Statements about our faith that challenged the beliefs of his time. He sought to reform the Roman Catholic Church. He was successful for a variety of reasons. One of the most important reasons was his translating the Bible from Latin into the vernacular, into the language people speak. For Martin Luther that was German.

His translation was widely circulated because the printing press was in operation and multiple copies of a book were easier to make, than when they were handwritten. Being able to own books led to people learning to read. This was a big boost to the education of the masses. This education led to people being able to communicate ideas, which led to seeing the discrepancies in what the church said and what Jesus had said, which, in turn, led to reforms and revolution. The Bible does have that affect.

When I read, on my UCC Desk Calendar, that this Sunday was Higher Education Sunday, I realized it was a perfect fit for a Reformation Sunday theme. You see, Martin Luther wasn't the first person seeking to reform the church. Individuals in Britain and in Prague, 200 and 100 years earlier, respectively, had tried, as had many others. However, most people had not known about these attempts and the church was able to burn them at the stake before their ideas could be widely circulated.

Education is key.

Amicable Church has known this for a long time. When I came 32 years ago, Amicable already had established the Garey Scholarship Fund. The Garey Fund gives small

scholarships to those individuals studying to earn a higher education degree, either college, master's program, or tech training, such as a nursing degree.

The importance of education isn't limited to "higher degrees". I am recording this part of the sermon in Donna Hibbert's Sunday School classroom, because this is where our church's formal education begins. It is here that children learn, first hand, about the love of God, the stories of our faith, and how much our children are valued as human beings.

This pandemic has deepened my understanding of the importance of Sunday School and church relationships to the healthy growth and development of children and youth. The welcome, support, and discipline they learn, through experiencing it in our church, is more important than we will ever really know.

What the children and youth learn, when they are here and interacting with our community, is an education. Most of it is not formal. It is experiential. In other words, we are mentoring them. We do this not only with our words, but with our deeds. A great quote I found about this said: "Children close their ears to advice, but open their eyes to example."

I have always been impressed by how Amicable's members and friends have welcomed, supported, encouraged, and loved the children and youth who walk through our doors. Over the years our confirmands have told you as much in their statements about why they chose to become members of Amicable Church.

With this in mind and knowing this is Higher Education Sunday, I reached out to our college students and asked

them to send me a selfie, a video, saying what Amicable means to them. Unfortunately, my email was sent after the new semester's beginning. They are busy. However, I did receive two videos I want to share with you now. One from Cris Medeiros, a freshman at U-Mass Dartmouth, and the other from Sophia Piffard, a senior at UVM in Burlington, Vermont.

Here is what they had to say.

On this Reformation/Higher Education Sunday I pray you will remember Cris and Sophie's words every time you wonder, "What good have I done?" or, "What can I do to make a difference?"

Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." You, the members and friends of Amicable Church, have been great mentoring beacon lights of God's love. Your sharing of God's love has been one of the most important educational experiences in our children and youths' lives.

You have created a community where children and youth can grow into all God intended them to be. Your support, encouragement, and love have given them the confidence to spread their wings and soar like eagles.

Friends, may God continue to bless you and Amicable's educational ministries of love. Amen.