**Reformation Sunday 2017**

**Slide 1**

These are a personal list there are so many possible events, persons that could have been noted.

Quickly – 31/10/1517 started the Reformation;

Diet of Worms was the final breach between Luther and Pope no reconciliation was possible;

Luther hid in Wartburg Fortress for his safety. It was a productive 12 months;

Tyndale’s NT was first printed NT available in English. Before then all were handwritten. Imagine if it did not exist;

Act of Supremacy is an unusual event. First time since 1054 that the Church had split. First time a split over a non-theological issue (Henry VIII wanted a new wife). For 1100 years the Church had not had to consider who was the overseer of men’s souls. Henry knocked a hole in the wall of Church & State that Luther had cracked;

Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* became the theologically bedrock of Protestantism;

Armada was the attempt by Spain to throttle Protestantism by conquering the place where the money, people came from;

Elizabeth 1 ensured that Protestantism would be the faith of England and its forthcoming empire.

**Slide 2**

KJV shaped English language and culture like no other except for Shakespeare;

Mayflower took Protestantism to the New World.

30 years’ war was last attempt by Catholicism to destroy Protestantism;

**Slide 3**

***Sola Scriptura***

This statement tackles the question of which is leads the other – the church or scripture? Did God give scripture to the church and the church determines the application of scripture or does scripture determine the church? The Jews usually put scripture before the temple and later the synagogue. By Luther’s time the Pope/church was considered the only source of understanding scripture. The Reformers rebelled against this usurpation. Jesus the Messiah was the Word of God – John 1:1-5. The church’s role is to preserve, pass on, keep and revere scripture. It has a role in interpreting scripture and maintaining conformity and unity but not at the expense of taking God’s word from the people who desire it.

***Sola Fide***

This statement tackles the question of ”What is the basis of salvation”? There are really only 3 possibilities. Are we saved by religion, good works, other means or a combination of 2 or 3 of these? We so often feel guilty and wish to relieve that guilt. Religion is man’s attempt to relieve the guilt. The religions can be quite involved – Jews had 619 rules to follow, the Muslims have their 5 pillars, Hinduism is unbelievably complex. Yet all claim salvation through our own works. Only Christianity and to a lesser degree Judaism say we cannot save ourselves. God still today gives people cause to wonder and to desire salvation from sin. It is still an important issue today? Do you wonder whether you are saved? How can you be saved?

Luther grappled with this for many years before the truth of justification by faith was finally realised by him.

Luther charged that the Church had taken on the Sola Fide/Gratia for itself i.e. it was the Church who determined who was to be saved and how they would be saved instead of God. (*Ephesians 2:8-9)*

***Sola Gratia***

What is grace? A good answer is that grace is an underserved kindness.

If *Sola Fide* tackles how is salvation is realised then *Sola Gratia* tackles the why – why do we deserve/need salvation? The Biblical answer is that we don’t. We are rebels against a holy God who would be fully justified in leaving us to our fate. Yet God has not abandoned us. He has given us opportunity to be reconciled to him though not all of us by the same way or means. The acknowledgment of guilt is God speaking to us. After acknowledgment comes despair “How can we be saved”? Then the realisation that only God can and has provided the way and means of salvation to us and for us. For those who do not know of Christ it is a trusting in God. Knowing Christ means putting our trust in him.)

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A sacrament is a rite recognised as of particular importance and significance. These is nothing wrong in principle with sacraments unless they become part of works and become a substitute for faith in Christ instead of a pointer to Christ. By the time of Luther the sacraments were horribly and totally compromised and needed reformation. The sacraments had a spiritual hierarchy that was totally foreign to their original intent.

For example Holy orders (involving celibacy) were considered to be the highest sacrament possible with baptism, Confirmation, Communion being next. Anointing of the Sick was barely practised.

We become Christians upon confession of faith in Christ. These sacraments do not change that. The sacraments are a part of the believers corporate lives (all 3 Protestant ones have a public aspect). The sacraments can be a part of the Christian’s life (i.e. marriage is not for everyone) but Baptism and Communion are the most important corporately in Baptist circles. Having the sacraments does not make you into a better or worse Christian.

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1. The Anglican Church had begun to licence preachers, which churches could or could not open. John Bunyan (Pilgrim's Progress) spent 12 years in jail because he refused to allow the Anglican Church to licence his fitness to preach.

2. Infant baptism was considered to be unbiblical.

3. Baptist have always and should remain people who will tell others of God’s love yet also his judgement. This will at times be controversial or unpopular. The Great Commission (*Matt 28:18-20*) has never been rescinded. We are on God’s duty from conversion until death or Christ’s 2nd coming.

4. The Anglican Church put out rules about who could preach, where, when they could preach and what they could say. The Toleration Act of 1689 allowed non-conformists to practice more freely. Amended in 1779 to allow belief in scripture to be in place of Anglican doctrine. With the passage of the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829 religious freedom as we now understand it was allowed in the British Empire. Baptist are normally strong supporters of separation of church & state.

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5. In Letter *XVI* of the *’Screwtape Letters*‘ C. S. Lewis describes the local church as it should be and also the larger church organisation. Baptist would do well to look anew at how the church should attend to its members.

6. Baptists are not to ignore the world outside themselves. We are to pay attention to what is going on around us. The changes is Australian society that are going are a direct result of the failure of the Church (not just Baptists) to be engaged and active. We should join local community groups, school groups, be interested in politics, join the services, police etc. and so be light and salt to the world. It can be hard and tedious but our Lord expects us to be involved.

7. God’s word will never mislead us but sometimes we ignore it or miss its importance. During the history of the church it has been forced to change emphasis on certain topics and acknowledge that opinions, times change. God is at work and often the church has been wrong in what it has been doing or treating people. Slavery is one such topic. Our treatment of Aborigines is another where change was necessary. Other times we must stay firm and true to God despite the world’s turning way. This may mean standing the way of people’s wishes and saying No. Abortion comes to mind with euthanasia on the near horizon.

**Slide 7**

1. WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM Article 1 - What is the chief end of man? To enjoy God and worship him forever. We give God his due by offering him praise and worship regularly (usually Sunday). We gather to pray, praise God with our voices and listen to God’s Word. A most important part is the communion or Lord’s Supper (*1 Cor 11:23-26*). The Lord’s Supper is our link to our past, our anchor in the present and a bridge to our future.
2. The church and its members should be keen to acquaint its neighbourhood of the Good news of Christ. This will be largely based upon our own exertions but also organised activities for various groups. This is why we are always keen on a Sunday school, youth group etc. to both keep and grow our own children in the faith but also reach out to the community around us.
3. Christ exhorts us to go about doing good. We can use our resources physical or spiritual, for ourselves and others. This also involves us being involved in the community.

**Slide 8**

1. Baptists acknowledge both testaments are being given by God to people (*2 Tim 3:16*). We take them as written unless the context or imagery suggests metaphor, simile, dreams etc. The old creeds i.e. Apostles, Nicene etc. are considered still valid today. We wish to take the Bible seriously as God’s word to us.
2. Baptism is for those who can make a considered, mature decision on what acknowledged Christ as Lord and Saviour means. This is not necessarily age dependent. Full immersion associates us with Christ’s death and resurrection (*Col 2:12*). Baptism cannot be done by us for another. Baptism does not save us – it is a public declaration of our desire to be known as a follower of Christ (*Acts 8:36-39*).
3. The church is more than the building in which we meet. We meet to worship God, celebrate our salvation, pray with and for each other, read the scriptures and encourage each other. We learn from God and teach each other. Despite being local we are a part of a larger community, seen and unseen, transcending time and space as aptly described by C. S. Lewis in Letter *II* his ‘*The Screwtape Letters*’. In Letter *XVI* Lewis describes the local church as it should be and also the larger organisation. We are responsible for our own discipline and growth.
4. Membership is not automatic in a Baptist church. Mere attendance is not sufficient. Only those who have done adult baptism will be considered (not necessarily in a Baptist church). Once a member you are publically associated with God.
5. All of us have been given spiritual gifts and not necessarily the ones that have public acclaim (*1 Cor 12*). We are expected to use those gifts for God’s glory and to help others, then ourselves. If unsure what your gift is others in the church will have observed you in such that way that they should be able to help you see your gift. God will not thank you not using the gift(s) he gave you.
6. Every member should be taking part in the church. God does not expect us to be passengers and all should being have a role. We can use the gifts God has giving us inside and outside the church. We can all help. Not all can be deacons or elders but many are roles/jobs that need filling. Baptist usually only have few full time professionals doing God’s work.’ We all do God's work and can take part.
7. Baptist churches traditionally are self-funded. Whatever funds Altona needs then Altona must provide. This causes the church to focus carefully, act with stewardship and rely upon God. We also provide for the wider church body through associations we may have and support missionaries etc.
8. As noted earlier the local Baptist Church is self-contained and largely autonomous. But we recognise that there is strength in numbers. Fraternal societies have been an historical part of Baptist life from the beginning. Whether is getting a new minister, buying insurance, supporting missionaries or working together then Baptists will work with each other.