

*For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. -Romans 10:10 (NRSV)*

Reformation Sunday this year is October 25. At Zion for many years Affirmation of Baptism has been part of Reformation Sunday. Setting Confirmation in this context means that we affirm a calling from God and purpose for life when we confirm our faith in Jesus Christ.

Three other festivals surround Confirmation. The Commemoration of St. Ignatius of Antioch is now on October 17. He was martyred around 115 A.D. at the Coliseum in Rome. On the way he stopped at several churches and wrote letters to seven others. Its amazing how joyful, confident, and calm he was! His basic message was simple and clear: hold firmly to the true faith, stay connected to the true church, seek true leaders you can trust, pray for them, and love one another as the Lord Jesus loves us. *“Deaf as stones [to lies about Christ] you were, yes, stones of the Father’s temple, stones trimmed ready for God to build with, hoisted up by the derrick of Jesus Christ (the Cross) with the Holy Spirit for a cable; your faith being the winch that draws you to God, up the ramp of love.”* (Letter to the Ephesians, 9). The true teaching about Christ always focuses on the Cross: *“As for me, my spirit is now all humble devotion to the Cross: the Cross which so greatly offends unbelievers, but is salvation and eternal life to us.”* (Ephesians, 18). He knew how much gossip and betrayal could hurt: *“Be on your guard against their bites, because they are by no means easy to heal. There is only one Physician—Very Flesh, yet Spirit too; Uncreated, and yet born; God-and-Man in One agreed/ Very-Life-in-Death indeed/Fruit of God and Mary’s seed; At once impassible and torn/By pain and suffering here below: Jesus Christ, whom our Lord we know”*(Ephesians, 7).

Ignatius’ reference to healing segues into the next commemoration that shapes Confirmation: The Commemoration of St. Luke. The Church thinks of St. Luke as a physician because he pays attention to the details of how Jesus healed people. On St. Luke’s day, this Sunday, we plan to incorporate prayers for healing with our new LuMinHoS Chaplain, Pastor Richard Engel, offering prayers for people who come forward for communion. Practicing the health and healing ministry of Jesus the Sunday before Confirmation reminds us that our vocation as Christians is to bring healing in the world by sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All Saints is the third major festival that surrounds Confirmation/Affirmation of Baptism for Zion. Thinking about people we have loved who have died believing in Jesus Christ, recording their names in the Book of Remembrance, hearing them spoken from the Altar, lighting a candle as a sign of gratitude for their example and love—these liturgies of All Saints reinforce the goal of our own life of faith, already given to us in baptism, and confirmed by our own confession.

Please pray for Olivia, Mariska, and Davis as they complete their preparations for Confirmation Sunday: Thank you Lord for these sisters and brothers whom you made your own in baptism. Uphold and confirm them in the promises and gifts of baptism and unite them with all who bear the name of Christ. In Jesus’ name, Amen