Reformation Party

Fun Party Ideas to Celebrate and Teach the Reformation to Young People

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What is this about?

Multiple church youth groups (or one group divided into smaller teams) compete in silly fun games that teach about the events or theological concepts of the Reformation in order to win a Martin Luther bobblehead trophy!

Who participates in this event?

You can gear it for your middle school and high school youth, but younger elementary children enjoy it too. When pairing teams to compete against one another, consider the age range of the groups so that it can be fair and fun for all.

How does it work?

Each church group rotates to each station, marking their score card based on whether they were first, second, or third in the game. There will be 2-3 groups competing at the same time at each station (dependent on the number of churches participating). Each station leader keeps score for each round.

Adult leaders determine how rotations work once everyone is present. Points are scored at the end to see which church group wins! The winning church is announced and given the Martin Luther bobblehead trophy to take home.

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Sample Schedule

3:30 pm- Church groups arrive to the location and sign-in. Kids have some free time to play indoor games (whatever the host church has available- basketball, dodgeball, 9 square, etc), put on temporary Reformation style tattoos (https://oldlutheran.com/collections/tattoos), and take pictures at the Reformation photo booth. You can develop your own photo booth props by printing Reformation style pictures from the Internet and attaching to a dowel.

3:45 pm- Welcome and purpose of the event. Have one of your leaders welcome each church and explain what the Reformation Party is all about. "My name is _____and I'm the leader of . We are so glad each of our churches are here. Give a shout when I call your church's name: (name churches).
We are here today to have fun together playing some crazy games, get to know oneanother, learn about the Reformation- the events started in the church by Martin Luther in 1517 when he nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany- and to see who will win the Martin Luther bobblehead trophy? Who's excited? But first, let's play some introduction games."

3:50 pm- Designate a leader to lead 1-2 games that get kids from separate churches interacting with one another.

4:05 pm- Singing and devotion. Designate a leader to lead some hymns or worship songs familiar to most, and a pastor or youth leader to lead a short devotion with prayer. Many times this may focus on the Reformation Sunday scripture, or another of the Reformation theological concepts.

*Another leader should make sure that church groups are assigned to their starting stations, and pair up church groups that will compete against one another and rotate to stations together.

4:20- 5:20 pm- Rotate to stations in 10 minute increments (or less). Choose 5 or 6 games from this list to play:

- Pin the thesis
- Bible smuggling
- Diet of Worms
- Guard Luther
- A mighty fortress
- Throw Indulgences Away
- Reformation Trivia
- Smuggle the Nuns
- Here We Stand

5:20 pm- Tie-breaker game: Find Luther. Have one leader dress up as Luther and hide somewhere in the church. Connect this game to the time Luther had to dress up as Knight George and hide from those who wanted to kill him. Be sure kids know what is off limits, and then allow them to search for Luther. The first person to find Luther wins an extra point for their church, if it is needed to break a tie. *During this time, an adult leader should tally all the points to see which church wins!

5:30 pm- Blessing and Dinner.

5:45 pm (or as soon as most people are finished eating)- Announce winner and take pictures of the winning church with the Martin Luther bobblehead trophy! Thank everyone for coming and dismiss everyone to go home.

Sample Games

Pin the Thesis on the Red Door

Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, on Oct. 31, 1517. He was a Catholic priest and professor of the local University and had become increasingly convinced of some things that needed changing in the Catholic Church. Most of this centered on the practice of selling indulgences, or the selling of a simple piece of paper that they said could get someone into heaven. Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door because it would have been seen by all the other professors, priests, and scholars the next day on Nov. 1, All Saints Day, to open up discussion. What do you think?

Was Martin Luther right?

1) All teammates must participate in this game, but all teams should be even. Each team should line up. Each person on each team should get a piece of paper representing one of Luther's theses.
2) When I say go, the first person on each team will take the bat and in "dizzy bat" style, head on the bat, turn around three times. Then they will run their thesis to the red door and put it on one of the nails (or tape it to the door) and return back to their team.
3) This continues until all teammates have pinned their thesis to the red door. The first team to finish wins!
4) Remember, there are points for first, second, and third place, so continue to play until all teams have finished.

Materials needed: 3 baseball bats, "red door"- a non-moving door that can be used for the game (closet door covered in red plastic tablecloth or part of a wall that can be covered in red material), strips of paper with theses on them (someone can print from the Internet)

Bible Smuggling Relay

It is thought that John Wycliffe translated the Bible into middle-English in the 1300s. Once the printing press was invented in the 1500s, though, it was much easier to print Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German. Before these translations, people couldn't read the Bible in their own language. Once people had a Bible, they could have been considered heretics and would have had to smuggle Bibles where they were going.

1) Choose three teammates to run the relay. The other teammates will help these teammates and cheer them on.
2) When I say go, one person from each team puts on the big pants and smuggles as many Bibles as possible into them, then walks/ runs to the designated safe location to drop off the Bibles. Then this first person returns with the pants to their team. Then the second and third persons must do the same. Other teammates can help by stuffing Bibles into the pants and helping to carry/ support the teammate in the pants. Each team must smuggle all their Bibles to their designated safe location. If Bibles fall out of the pants, you must stop and put the Bibles back into the pants to continue.

3) The first team to smuggle all their pants to the safe location wins! There are points for first, second, and third place, so continue to play until all teams have finished.

Materials needed: 3-4 big pants, Bibles or hymnals or books

Diet of Worms

Martin Luther had to escape to the Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, Germany, after the Diet of Worms in April 1521. A diet was an assembly or gathering. It was at this Diet that Luther decided he would not recant his writings that went against the teachings of the Catholic Church. In other words, he could not agree with the church on certain things, like the sell of indulgences or the ability of a Holy Relic like the bones of a saint to give him access into heaven, instead of faith in Jesus Christ. Luther decided he would not go against the teaching of scripture.

1) Have each team divide into pairs. At least three pairs are needed, but the same number of pairs on each team. If one person needs to go twice to complete three pairs, that is fine. Each pair will tie the cloth material around their legs to create "three legs" for this "three-legged" race. (Another option is to do a piggy back race.)

2) When I say go, the first pair on each team will run to the designated location and one member of the pair eats the "Diet of Worms" that is on their plate in its entirety before they can return to their team. The other member helps their partner.

3) Then the second and third pairs will take a turn doing the same.

4) The first team to return all three pairs wins! But keep playing because you win points for first, second, and third place.

Materials needed: strips of cloth to make "three legs" for three legged race, paper plates, several packs of gummy worms and pudding (3 small servings for each team)

Guard Luther

Luther's protector Prince Frederick arranged for him to be captured and taken safely to Wartburg after the Diet of Worms so that no one else could capture him and put him in jail, since he was deemed an outlaw. Martin Luther worked on his translation of the Bible into German while he was in hiding at the Wartburg Castle.

In this game you will play dodge ball. Be sure you have enough space. Each team should designate one team member to be "Luther." Your goal is to guard your "Luther" while trying to get out all the members of the other team, including their "Luther." The first team to get "Luther" out while still having their own "Luther" in, wins.

Materials needed: dodgeballs, net/ dividing line, special hat or way to identify "Luther"

A Mighty Fortress

Martin Luther was also a hymn writer! One of the most famous hymns he wrote is "A Mighty Fortress" based on Psalm 46. (Play a recording of A Mighty Fortress, or read the words. Then read Psalm 46.). What do you think this hymn is all about?

"A mighty fortress is our God. A sword and shield victorious. He breaks the cruel oppressor's rod. And wins salvation glorious.

The old satanic foe, has sworn to work us woe! With craft and dreadful might, he arms himself to fight. On earth he has no equal." Play musical chairs using the song "A Mighty Fortress" or any other songs you like.

1) Whoever is the last person standing wins the point for their church team.

OR

1) Gather as much cardboard and cardboard boxes as possible.

2) Give each team the same amount of cardboard and tape and have them build "a mighty fortress" that each team member can get inside. Once inside, the team must sing the hymn "A Mighty Fortress" or designate another song like "Jesus loves me."

3) Whichever team completes this first wins.

OR

1) Using plastic cups OR playing cards OR toothpicks and marshmallows (whatever material you desire to use), have each team build "a mighty fortress" using their materials.

2) Set a time limit, and then use a fan to see if their fortress falls over.

3) You may determine a winning team by height of the fortress/ looks of the fortress/ whether it fell or not! The team leader should clarify how it will be judged!

<u>Throw Indulgences Away</u>

Throw your indulgences away! Martin Luther was disgusted by the fact that people like Johann Tetzel by order of the Pope, the head of the Catholic church, were selling pieces of paper called indulgences claiming that it could get someone into heaven.

Indulgences cannot get us into heaven…no pieces of paper, not anything we do or don't

do, nothing but the love of Jesus grants us salvation! Ephesians 2:8 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

1) Any number of people on the team may play.

2) Put a trashcan in the center of the play area. Mark off with chalk or tape a circle around the trashcan that would be a decent challenge for your kids to toss paper into it. Crumple up the same number of papers in 3 different colors.

3) The goal is to get as many of your team's indulgences into the trashcan by tossing them basketball style into the trashcan. Each team has a specific color of paper that represents your indulgences. You may not pick up or move any other team's indulgences. Anyone tossing paper into the trashcan must be outside the marked area. If your papers fall in the in-between area, they cannot be retrieved.

4) After a set time (1 minute), we will count the number of indulgences each team has in the trashcan. There will be points for first place, second, and third.

Materials needed: trashcan, tape or chalk to mark off a boundary around the trashcan, 2-3 sets of different colored sheets of paper-crumpled up

Smuggle the Nuns

Katharina von Bora, a nun, and several other nuns became inspired by the Reformation and desired to leave the convent. So they contacted Luther and he arranged to have Leonhard Köppe smuggle the nuns out of the convent in his wagon of herring barrels! The nuns arrived safely in Wittenberg in April of 1523 and many married men from the town. Katharina, or Katie, married Martin Luther on June 13, 1525. They had 6 children, though only 4 lived past childhood.

1) Designate three team members to smuggle in the barrel. Mark a starting line and a finish line.

2) When I say go, the first team member to be smuggled gets in the barrel and the team pulls the “wagon” to the finish line and back. Repeat with the second and third team members.

3) The first team to smuggle all three team members across the finish line and back is the winner!

Materials needed: we created a rather extensive “wagon and barrel,” but using an extra large, clean trash can on wheels would work too.

Reformation Trivia

Each church plays together to answer the Reformation trivia questions. Whichever team wins the most points at the end of the time, wins the round!

Here We Stand

At the Diet of Worms, according to tradition, Luther is said to have declared "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise,” before concluding his speech with "God help me. Amen.” This “Here I stand” phrase is used today to declare what we hold most dear in the faith, the things on which we cannot compromise. What are the essentials to our Christian faith?

1) Using exercise equipment similar to Balance Pods, have each person on the team stand on a balance pod. Whoever is the last one standing, wins the round for their team.

2) You can do many variations for this game. Have kids stand on one leg. Have kids sing a song while standing. Have kids do motions with their hands while standing. Have kids recite the creed or Lord’s prayer.

   Materials needed: Balance Pods or something similar

Sample Church Team Score Card

Church Team: _____

Game Name	Game Name	Game Name	Game Name	Game Name

*Write down points scored. First place = 3 points. Second place = 2 points. Third place = 1 point.

Sample Game Leader Score Card

Game: _____

(Please write name of church and city in the correct box.)

	Rotation 1	Rotation 2	Rotation 3	Rotation 4
1st place				
2nd place				
3rd place				

We encourage you to use your imagination and creativity to adapt it in a way that will be interesting and engaging for your group. If you have any questions about the game we encourage you to contact Melanie Corn (Youth and Family Specialist for the NALC) at families@thenalc.org.