

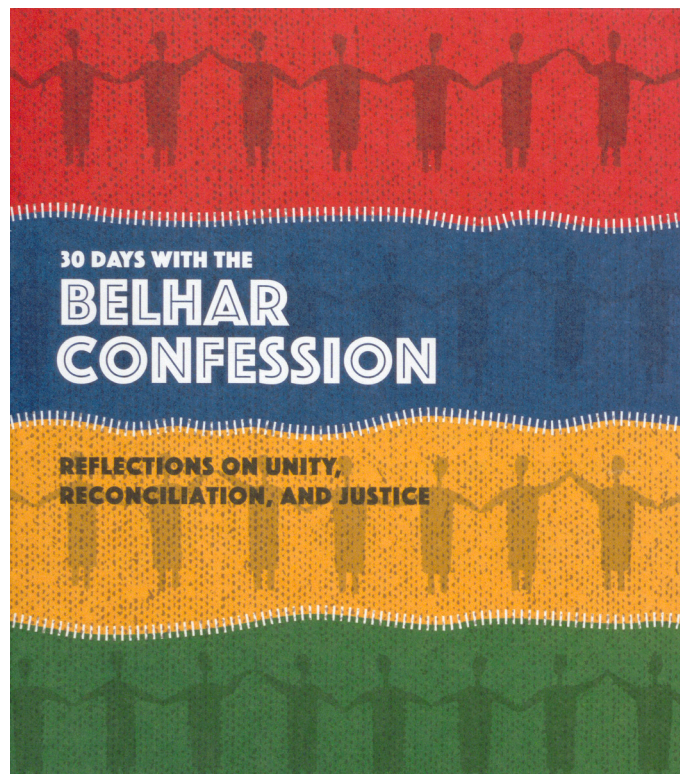
Reformation Sunday: October 30

40 YEARS of BELHAR

Forty years ago, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) in South Africa adopted Belydenis van Belhar—the Confession of Belhar—in its first reading. Belhar was an outgrowth of the DRMC’s effort to grapple with the church’s participation in and defense of apartheid and touches prominently on themes of unity, reconciliation, and justice. The DRMC adopted Belhar in its final form in 1986.

Although the Confession of Belhar is inextricably connected to its South African context, its message extends far beyond. The PC(USA) describes Belhar as a powerful statement of belief for the Christian faith that, in part, bears witness to the gift of unity and the church’s obligation to it. Interest in Belhar grew internationally around 2006, including among reformed traditions in the United States, where the PC(USA) established the Special Committee on the Confession of Belhar. On the recommendation of this Special Committee, the 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the inclusion of Belhar in the Book of Confessions because of the clarity of its witness and its capacity to serve as a model for the PC(USA) to “speak and act with similar clarity at a time when it faces division, racism, and injustice.”

The Confession of Belhar is a unique voice among the predominantly European and North American confessions. It elevates the witness of Reformed Christians living under different circumstances and serves, even now, as a springboard to discuss its key themes of unity, reconciliation, and justice within a wide range of current issues.



For more Reformation Sunday resources, visit www.history.pcusa.org/rs

Belhar Confession: https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/theologyandworship/pdfs/belhar.pdf

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