

*What Does the Reformation Have to Do
with Us as Grace Baptist Church?*



*The Reformation Wall
University of Geneva*

The Reformation Wall is a monument located in Geneva, Switzerland. It honors many of the prominent and main individuals who were part of the Protestant Reformation. The Wall is on the grounds of the University of Geneva. At the center of the monument are four statues: Theodore Beza (1519-1605), John Calvin (1509-1564), William Farel (1489-1565), and John Knox (1513-1572). To the left of the central statues facing the wall and ordered from left to right) are the statues of William the Silent (1533-1584), Gaspard de Coligny (1519-1572), and Frederick William of Brandenburg (1620-1688). To the right (ordered from left to right) are the statues of Roger Williams (1603-1684), Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), and Stephen Bocksay (1557-1606).

After Darkness, Light

Along the wall to either side of the central statues is engraved the motto of both the Reformation and Geneva: *Post Tenebras Lux* (After Darkness, Light). Reformation occurs when the light of God's Word shines into places of spiritual and cultural darkness and transforms the people of God. This is why the motto of the Protestant Reformation became "After Darkness, Light."

For us, as a Baptist Church, it is significant that Roger William's statue is featured on the Reformation Wall.

Roger Williams

Roger Williams was a Puritan, an English Reformed theologian, and later a Reformed Baptist who was expelled by the Puritan leaders from the Massachusetts Bay Colony because local officials thought that he was spreading "new and dangerous ideas" to his congregants. His views on religious freedom and tolerance, coupled with his disapproval of the practice of confiscating land from Native Americans, earned him the wrath of his church and banishment from the colony.



Roger Williams

He fled the Massachusetts colony under the threat of impending arrest and he began the settlement of Providence Plantations in 1636 as a refuge offering freedom of conscience. Of the thirteen original colonies, Rhode Island was the only one without a state church. He is best remembered as the originator of the principle of separation of church and state. Most of Williams's contemporaries and critics regarded his ideas as a prescription for chaos and anarchy. The vast majority believed that each nation must have its own national church, and could require that dissenters conform. Rhode Island was so threatening to its neighbors that they tried for the next hundred years to extinguish the "lively experiment" in religious freedom that began in 1636.

Williams was a student of Native American languages, having edited the first dictionary of these languages. He was also an early advocate for fair dealings with Native Americans and one of the first abolitionists in North America, having organized the first attempt to prohibit slavery in any of the British American colonies.

In 1638 Roger Williams founded the very first Baptist church established in America, also known as the First Baptist Church of Providence.