

The winners of the Reformation Poetry Contest

by [Jill Peláez Baumgaertner](#)

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To mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the *Century*—with the generous financial support of [LutheranArts](#)—sponsored a “Reformation Poetry Contest” for poems informed by the theology, faith, and practice of Christians of the Reformation. We received hundreds of submissions, including many poems we would have been pleased to print in our pages.

In the end, however, the *Century* staff selected two: “[Cutting away](#)” by Patrick Cabellow Hansel (first prize) and “[The Sin-Boldly-Bulwark-Never-Failing Blues](#)” by Bill Stadick (second prize).

Hansel is pastor of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Minneapolis and editor of *The Phoenix of Phillips*, a literary magazine for the city’s Phillips neighborhood. He has written a poem in which several tenets of Reformation theology—the priesthood of all believers, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*—infuse a barbershop that's also a confessional. This is a poem that does what all good poems do—it tells the truth indirectly through metaphor, connecting with something much larger than the immediate situation being described. It provides a new angle of vision on familiar ideas, reimagining them in a delightful way.

Bill Stadick, the second prize winner, works for a communications firm in Milwaukee. His poem is edgy, filled with puns, rampant with neologism and allusion,

refreshingly bold and exceptionally clever. Its emphasis is justification, and the poem ends with a twist on Luther's "Here I stand." This is a poem that stretches the boundaries in all of the right ways.

Congratulations to the winners, and many thanks to all who submitted poems to the contest.