At the World Exhibition on the Reformation with the Church of Light

The Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau will be present at the World Exhibition on the Reformation in the Luther city of Wittenberg with its prize winning Church of Light. The restrained elegance and the lighting from within this church not only demonstrates possibilities for church architecture in the future, but it also serves to bring people in and around it together in conversation. The Church of Light is located in the area dedicated to “Globalization – One World” at the World Exhibition, directly in front of the New Town Hall of Wittenberg. The Exhibition centers around the biblical mandate “thou shalt be a blessing”. How can we “make being blessed” an element of our lives, and how can this impact our society and the world we live in? These questions will be part of the various offers presented at the Church of Light, which can be experienced as a place of blessing during these days in Wittenberg. (v/dk)

New Church District Boundaries as of Fall 2017

In November 2016 already the Synod – EKHN’s highest decision making body – resolved to draw the Church District boundaries anew, and to reduce these from six to five. This mainly affects the existing Church Districts of Rhine Main and Southern Nassau, which are in large part to be combined and united as the Church District of Rhine Main. The resolution is to be implemented when Provost Gabriele Scherle retires as of September of this year. Provost Oliver Albrecht will then head the new Church District of Rhine Main. He will also be the main contact person for the relationships with the Presbytery Church of Ghana, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and the United Church of Christ New York Conference. (dk)

Ecumenical Church Convention (Kirchentag) in Frankfurt in 2021

Dr. Volker Jung, EKHN Church President, and Dr. Georg Bätzling, Bishop of Limburg, invite all to the third ecumenical Church Convention in Frankfurt – to be held between May 12–16, 2021. Their joint announcement states: “Following the large and very moving ecumenical Church Conventions held in 2003 and 2010, many people in our country yearn to again be able to send a joint message transcending religious boundaries, giving testimony before the entire world to our common faith in the resurrected Christ, along with our commitment to our joint responsibility for the peaceful coexistence of all people in our country and beyond.” (dk/jb)

500 Years of Reformation – Celebrating an Ecumenical Worship Service Together

For the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN) together with the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Limburg and Mainz and the Regional Council of Churches will celebrate an Ecumenical Vesper Service on August 25th. It will take place in the Catholic Cathedral of St. Bartholomew in Frankfurt and Dr. Volker Jung, EKHN Church President, will give the sermon. After the Vespers all are invited for an ecumenical encounter. EKHN has chosen this setting to demonstrate its ecumenical bond and to express its conviction that the Reformation begun by Martin Luther influenced all churches in Germany – not only the Protestant churches. It is very important that we confront the history of the Reformation, even if this history was often associated with conflict. (dk/jb)

Editorial

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I send you greetings from the Church in Christ,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Throughout the year 2017 conferences, symposiums and the EKHN as a whole are celebrating this jubilee with hundreds of different events. Our motto, “Discovering God Anew”, is meant to express that the Reformation was not a single event in 1517, but rather that Reformation is an ongoing process and that we are continuously asked to rediscover God in our lives and in our Churches.

I wish you an enjoyable read. May God’s Spirit strengthen our ecumenical fellowship.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Detlev Knoche

Discovering God Anew

A wide, ecumenical and international horizon for Reformation celebrations

On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses against the sale of indulgences by the Church. The famous nailing of the theses on the door of the Castle Church in the German City of Wittenberg laid the foundation for the Reformation. This not only led to the separation of the Protestant from the Catholic Church, but also led to far reaching changes throughout Europe and gained steadily in importance worldwide over the course of time. October 31, 2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of the posting of the theses. This Reformation jubilee is celebrated in a big way in many countries and in many Protestant Churches. Like all the member churches of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN) is organizing many worship services and manifold events for this anniversary year in most of its regions, institutions and congregations. Following the good spirit of the Reformation, the jubilee offers an opportunity for a fresh approach towards the issues of the Reformation. EKHN has placed the celebratory year under the motto: “Discovering God Anew – Reformation since 1517.”

“...the basic issue of the Reformation was – and remains – the question about God,” says Volker Jung, the EKHN Church President. “Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli and the other reformers rediscovered God as a God of love. God turns toward us people with love, and God wants to deliver us from all of our entanglements.” Christian belief reminds us, “that each of us individually is much more than that what each of us achieve”. In God’s eyes everyone remains a “beloved child – with all its successes but also with all its failures.” Even people in whose lives faith hardly plays a role any longer can turn to God. Thus modern “fears of hell” can be conquered, as they once were during Martin Luther’s times by the belief in a God of love.

EKHN wants to celebrate this jubilee “with a wide open horizon, ecumenically and internationally,” says Church President Jung: “We want to celebrate it also with a view towards local challenges and worldwide problems. We want to celebrate it with the hope in God, who comforts us in our homes and in each worship service and who, at the same time, keeps the whole world and everything on it protected and safe. This is to be the perspective for our Church.”
The European Roadmap: Following the Tracks of the Reformation

The European Reformation Roadmap is a special project of the Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland - EKD). With this Roadmap the Evangelical Church commemorates the posting of Martin Luther’s Theses on indulgences in 1517, and emphasizes the importance of the Reformation within a Europe-wide context.

To advertise and prepare for the large World Exhibition on the Reformation in Wittenberg in the summer of 2017, prominent Protestant personalities are travelling throughout Europe in a large truck. Italy, France, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Ireland and Poland as well as important Reformation cities throughout Germany are way stations on the truck’s itinerary.

During a visit to EKH’s Polish Lutheran Partner Church in February, Church President Volker Jung was able to welcome the Reformation truck during its stop at the Polish border city of Giszyn. He held a speech in front of representatives of the Protestant partner church and Polish politicians arguing against nationalism and populism: “Let us dignify the meaning of the Reformation – not only nationally but also Europe-wide. Let us celebrate the Reformation within a Europe-wide context.

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The truck stopped in Worms on December 10, 2016, and in Herborn on May 9, 2017, both way stations within the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN). A colorful and discerning program was offered at these stops in celebration of the Reformation.

In 1521 Martin Luther defended the 95 Theses and his writings before Emperor Charles V at the Imperial Diet of Worms. Three years later a German Protestant Mass was printed for the first time. In 1584 the Academia Nassauensis, the Herborn Academy, was founded in Herborn by Count John VI of Nassau-Dillenburg. This Academy was reformed from the beginning by its founding father, the theologian Caspar Olevian.

What are your highlights this year?

Dean Dr. Jürgen Sauer

Following Martin Luther’s Tracks

The Luther Trail 1521 connects the Wartburg and Worms over nearly 400 kilometers as it leads through Thuringia, Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate. At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther refused to retract his Theses. His writings were banned as a result. The “Luther Trail in Hessen” society (Lutherweg in Hessen) is responsible for the Hessian section of the route. Information regarding the society, current developments, offers for those hiking the pilgrimage trail and seminars for those who accompany pilgrimages is available on the Internet at www.lutherweg-in-hessen.de. All venues along the way are easily reached by public transportation. By 2017 the route is to be completely marked with signs, and lodging is to be available for those undertaking the pilgrimage. A large part of the first leg of the trip follows the Rhine Terrace Trail (Rheinterrassenweg). Members of the Luther Trail association take care of the Luther Trail between the Wartburg and Wittenberg. Information on the route’s direction, the separate stations along the way and special dates regarding the Luther Decade are available on the Internet at www.lutherweg.de.

The jubilee offers an important impulse, a close focus on Martin Luther’s life and work. In this manner God can – hopefully – be discovered anew as a basis and a goal for our own lives.

What long-lasting effect do you hope for?

It is my hope that groups of pilgrims from many different regions walk the Luther Trail and that they, in so doing, find a sense of community, trace Luther’s works and gather spiritual experiences.

What significance does Martin Luther hold for you personally?

I especially looked forward to May 14, 2017. The Luther Trail 1521 was officially opened on this day. All were invited to the castle church of Romrod for a festive opening service. Martin Hein, the Bishop of the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck, and Volker Jung, President of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau, participated in the service.

Following the service the pilgrim trail from Wartburg to Worms was officially opened. Many guests were invited from church and politics, from the Association of the Luther Trail 1521.

What significance does this jubilee hold for rural areas?

The service took place in the Wartburg Castle church, which exhibited a large part of Luther’s work. Luther did not, from a theological perspective, regard heaven as a place above the clouds, but rather defined it and the kingdom of heaven as a place above the clouds, but rather defined it and the kingdom of heaven as a place where one finds fulfillment in faith and where he can be found: “Nothing is so small that God is not greater. Nothing is so large that God is not smaller. Nothing is so short that God is not longer. Nothing is so wide that God is not narrower. It is an inexpressible being, above and beyond anything that can be named or thought.” And Luther does not, from a theological perspective, regard heaven as a place above the clouds, but rather defines it and the kingdom of heaven as a place which can simultaneously exist above the Earth yet also in its middle. Where one finds fulfillment in faith and where he can be found: “Nothing is so small that God is not greater. Nothing is so large that God is not smaller. Nothing is so short that God is not longer. Nothing is so wide that God is not narrower. It is an inexpressible being, above and beyond anything that can be named or thought.” And Luther does not, from a theological perspective, regard heaven as a place above the clouds, but rather defines it and the kingdom of heaven as a place which can simultaneously exist above the Earth yet also in its middle. Where one finds fulfillment in faith and where he can be found: “Nothing is so small that God is...