

20th november 2014

### **Reformation anniversary 2017**

Dear friends, dear sisters and brothers,

31 October 2017 will see the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing his 95 theses onto a church door. Even though it is historically disputed whether the publication of the 95 theses actually took place this way, 31 October is regarded as a symbolic date; in the awareness of many people it marks the start of the worldwide Reformation.

In their preparations for the 2017 anniversary of the Reformation people have expressed a pronounced interest in making it ecumenical, international and culturally open. Compared to previous centenaries in Germany, the Reformation anniversary of 2017 can only be marked convincingly if the organizations are convinced that "the Reformation has become a world citizen" (EKD Synod, 07.11.2012). At present, outstanding projects are being designed by the Federal Republic of Germany for 2017, including the notable national exhibitions in Berlin, on the Wartburg and in Wittenberg.

The aim of this letter is to involve you closely in the project phase of the **World Reformation Exhibition**, which is one of the five major projects that have been agreed at the church level. We would very much like you to contribute to it.

The World Reformation Exhibition will be opened on 20 May 2017. Running until 10 September 2017, the exhibition is intended to create a unique "Reformation experience". At many places and in the historical city area of Wittenberg, the focus of interest will be on the living legacy of the Reformation. Numerous churches from the worldwide ecumenical movement, cultural bodies and civil society will present their own story of the Reformation and illustrate its potential for the future. Under the heading "Gate" the connection of historical events to our present and future will be demonstrated in high-quality temporary facilities (see enclosure (BRIEF) / attachment (EMAIL)).

Churches and confessional families, secular and church cultural bodies, along with educational institutions from all over the world will be able to share what they owe to the Reformation with others at this exhibition – and their enthusiasm will be catching! **Exhibition areas** are on offer with infrastructure in outdoor areas and in buildings.

This letter contains the first practical details and an application form.

May we also ask you to contact partners and consult with them on how you can take part in the World Reformation Exhibition. We would be very pleased if you could come to Wittenberg and become part of the World Reformation Exhibition community with your topics and issues. Already we ask you to keep in mind that we would like to invite young people and young adults from your countries to the Reformation anniversary in 2017. There will be a youth camp in Wittenberg and volunteers actively supporting all the projects.

If you are interested in participating you will receive more exact information about the (financial) conditions and (local) options in the near future.

The **Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)** and the **German Protestant Kirchentag (DEKT)** have founded the registered association **Reformationsjubiläum 2017 e.V.** primarily to practically implement the World Reformation Exhibition. This association will also co-organise the Kirchentag projects in Berlin and Wittenberg and mega-service of worship to be held on 28 May 2017 outside the unique townscape of Wittenberg.

The **Reformationsjubiläum 2017 e.V.** will send you regular news about all the projects and ways of participating. Later, more detailed letters will make the exhibition more and more real and offer models for fitting your planning into our planning. We would naturally be pleased to hear your ideas on this.

All over the world, life in Protestant churches is characterized by the involvement of many people, so we ask you to arrange for the creative participation of the greatest variety of institutions and individuals as possible. Internationally numerous bodies have already shown a great deal of interest in the 2017 Reformation anniversary. The events in 2017 will showcase Reformation faith, ecumenism, the different educational settings, as well as the arts and cultural scene of many countries.

The style of the Reformation anniversary is also intended to express a core concern of the great Reformation movement of the Middle Ages, notably to get everyone to take responsibility themselves for their faith, and their witness and service in the world.

In this spirit, we are looking forward to planning and celebrating this great anniversary with you. The invitation goes to all who wish to take part in this project.

With every good wish



Prof. Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm  
Chair of the Council of the  
Evangelical Church in Germany



Dr. Christina Aus der Au  
President of the  
German Protestant Kirchentag in 2017

Berlin, nov. 20<sup>th</sup> 2014

## World Reformation Exhibition – Invitation to participate

Dear friends,

We are very much looking forward to the World Reformation Exhibition which will be held in Lutherstadt Wittenberg from 20 May 2017 to 10 September 2017. It will include exhibits in many parts of the city showing what the Reformation has changed and brought forth in the last 500 years. At the same time, however, it is intended to make clear what the Reformation means in our present day and what impetus it can give for the future.

Topics that are decisive for our life today and play an important role for the future will be depicted at different parts of the town. Six thematic gates will open up the areas above the ramparts, leading into the inner-city area and characterising the whole space. The areas will present the themes of Spirituality, Youth, Peace-Justice-Care for Creation, Globalisation-One World, Ecumenism-Religion and Culture.

At the same time, the events in the individual sections will be enlivened and enriched by opportunities to share many different opinions in dialogue and encounter. An overview of the gate areas in Wittenberg and the Gate Narration is enclosed (BRIEF) / attached (EMAIL).

Besides the exhibition itself, there will be a daily programme featuring workshops, lectures, discussions and regular prayer-times. In addition, an evening programme will offer a great range of on-stage and cultural events throughout the inner city during the whole duration of the exhibition.

You are cordially invited to become part of this World Reformation Exhibition.

It would be appreciated if you could check to what extent you can approach your national and international partners (e.g. churches, cultural and educational institutions) and involve them in your planning. The Reformation is a worldwide phenomenon and we should all seize the opportunity to gather and together present these many different forms of Reformation in one place for this very special anniversary.

Only by pooling our forces can we mount such a major event as the



Ulrich Schneider  
Geschäftsführer

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Reformationsjubiläum 2017 e.V.  
Lehrter Str. 68  
10557 Berlin

Geschäftsführer:  
Hartwig Bodmann, Ulrich Schneider

Amtsgericht Stendal  
Vereinsregister VR 3400

Finanzamt-Körperschaften I Berlin  
Steuer-Nr.: 27 / 676 / 53263

World Reformation Exhibition and make it globally significant.

This letter includes documents about the Call for Interest; they ask you for some initial details. You should apply in good time to the association Reformationsjubiläum 2017 e.V., which will decide on whether to accept your application. Then we will consult with you and other participants about the position of your event area and you will receive more information to help you with further planning.

In order to coordinate the World Reformation Exhibition and shape its form and content, a voluntary project planning team has been established. It will be moderated by Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Margot Käßmann. The organisation and implementation of all the practical issues will be handled by the association Reformationsjubiläum 2017 e.V. under the management of Ulrich Schneider.

If you are interested in actively participating or have questions and comments, please turn to Anke Jaehn from the organisational office of Reformationsjubiläum 2017e.V., a.jaehn@r2017.org, tel. +49 (30) 403 650 231.

We look forward to your participation and your response on the form attached by **1 March 2015**.

Yours sincerely



Margot Käßmann  
*Special envoy for the 2017  
Reformation anniversary*



Ulrich Schneider  
*Executive Secretary  
Reformationsjubiläum 2017 e.V.*

Enclosed: Call for Interest in the World Reformation Exhibition  
Narration – Gates of Freedom

## Narration: Gates of freedom. World Reformation Exhibition

Whoever trusts the new paths, can hope  
for time and an eternal guide.  
The gates have been flung open.  
The land is bright and wide.<sup>1</sup>

In autumn 2017 it will be 500 years since Martin Luther caused a new day to dawn in the whole of Europe with his ninety-five theses. This date, and Luther himself, stand for a renewal movement that had many dynamic actors and shaped a whole century. The freedom of a Christian, church reform, the spread of education on a vast scale, new policies, the completely new understanding of professions and trades – all of these were forces for fundamental change. That epoch has shaped not just the churches to this day, it is also significant for cultural history. That is why 2017 is not just seen as a central theme by churches; the German Federal Parliament also unanimously declared the anniversary of the Reformation to be “a world-ranking event”.

Wittenberg became the place from whence words surged into the world that not only changed the church, faith, the whole of life and culture, but, in particular, made the freedom of the individual conscience a common good. And from the wish to give the changes a generally understandable language there developed ‘reformations’ and reforms that were, and still are, uniquely many-faceted and contradictory.

Perhaps we today are again confronting a change of epoch. The loss of trust in many authorities is widespread, both at the local, national and international level. The response is anger, despair, distraction, cynicism, rejection and lack of interest. But what do fresh starts, reform and Reformation look like in the 21st century?

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<sup>1</sup> „Vertraut den Neuen Wegen“, Klaus Peter Hertzsch, 1989,  
in: Protestant hymn book (EG) 395,3

Luther and many others before him, with him and after him have taught us that it is important to organize this life carefully, that the faith of each individual is unique and that this wealth and variety is precisely what needs to be protected and celebrated.

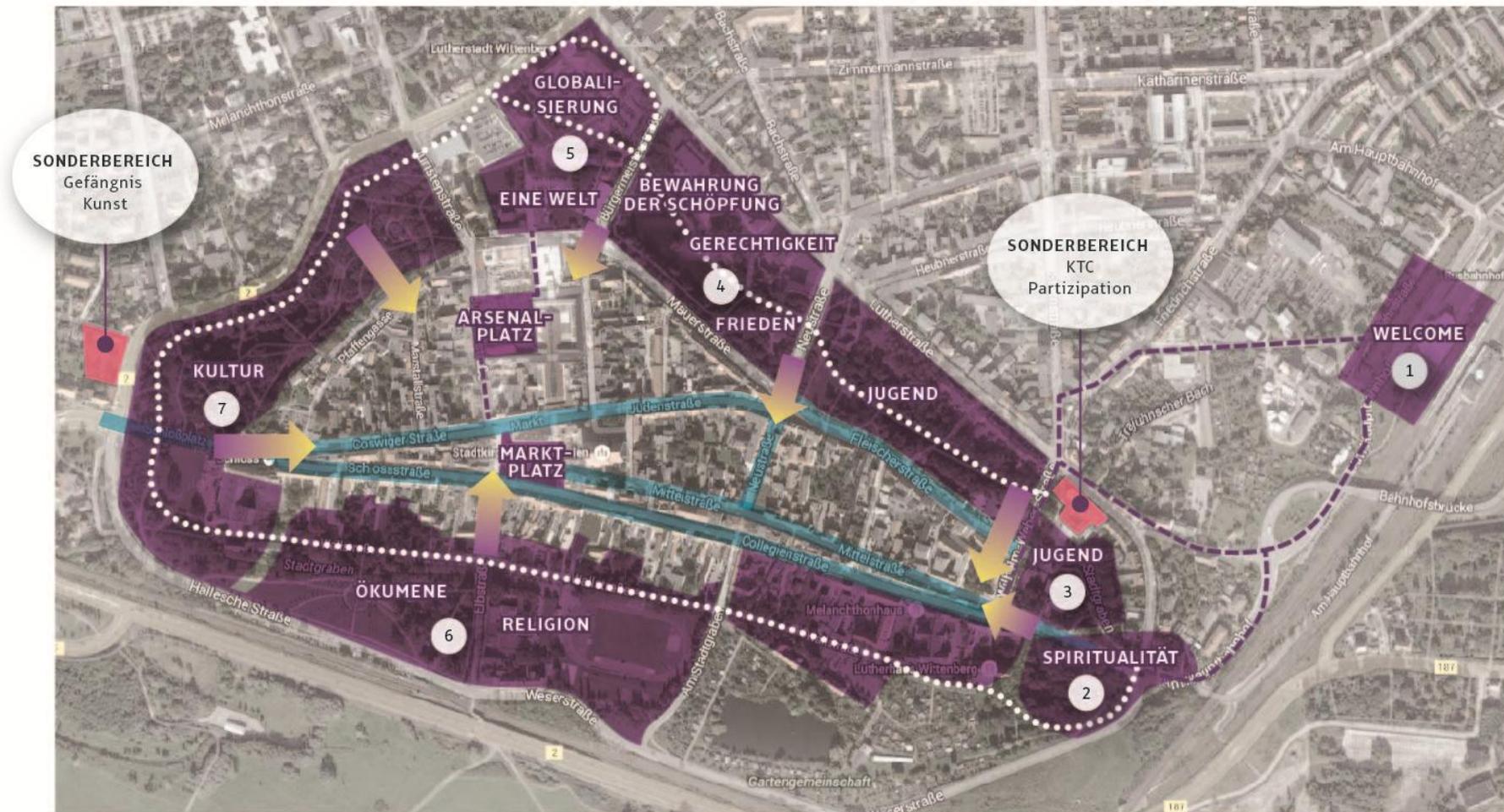
In Wittenberg, faith is to be experienced as a place and time for a thoughtful and meditative pause. It is a place to meet in a worldwide context without concern for self-optimization and the constant pursuit of goals – rather, to give greater depth in our lives.

That is precisely the underlying idea of the World Reformation Exhibition in Wittenberg. Freedom in faith is to be depicted, lived and celebrated there. We can celebrate an ecumenical festival of tolerance, of curiosity about one another, of attentive rituals in everyday life and on special occasions, with hosts and visitors from all over the world, reflecting back to Wittenberg the momentous ideas that energized so many places worldwide. And the world should not just be a visitor, as the issue is ‘worldliness’ itself - reform in politics, culture, civil society, media and business.

The gates of the city, both real and symbolic, will be wide open. Striding through them is an invitation to be transformed, fascinated, taking time for the significance of faith in the confusion and the challenges of this life, here and now. Yet it is not about celebrating the past, but of experiencing the beauty and variety of stories, of experiences, in order to keep them alive and flourishing for the future.

A world of free and open doors, in which people can think for themselves as desired by the Reformers: as self-reliant, pious and free individuals. That would be a message for the whole world. Against all forms of fundamentalism, against intolerance and sectarianism, Wittenberg celebrates the many aspects of faith and the freedom of individuals together. With courage and the boundless hope that we can learn from stories, that reconciliation is possible, that we can go back to the places in which we live through open gates into the freedom of the world and into the freedom of faith.

## Scheme of thematic areas



## ***World Reformation Exhibition – Call for Interest***

The World Reformation Exhibition focusing on the living heritage of the Reformation is to take place in Lutherstadt Wittenberg from 20 May 2017 to 10 September 2017.

Churches from the worldwide ecumenical movement, cultural bodies and civil society, along with representatives of the business community, will – in temporary exhibition facilities - present their own history of the Reformation and illustrate its future potential.

This Call for Interest goes to churches and denominational families, secular and church-related cultural organizations, as well as educational institutions from all over the world. At this exhibition they can inspire others with what they owe to the Reformation and show what priorities they want to set for present-day society.

### ***Important information for applications:***

- Your application (on the form below) to contribute to the World Reformation Exhibition must arrive by 1 March 2015. Please send it to:  
Reformationsjubiläum 2017 e.V.  
c/o Anke Jaehn  
Lehrter Straße 68  
D - 10557 Berlin  
Tel +49 (30) 403 650 231  
Fax +49 (30) 403 650 210  
[a.jaehn@r2017.org](mailto:a.jaehn@r2017.org)
- Please put your idea under a thematic heading indicating your field of work or what you would like to show at the world exhibition. Should none of the topics suit you, please note this (naming another topic, as appropriate) on the form.
- The financing of the exhibition areas and equipment in Wittenberg plus the staffing will be the responsibility of each group. The exhibition areas will be made available and managed centrally by the organization office of Reformationsjubiläum 2017 e.V. The participation in the world exhibition within the event grounds will entail costs for the contributors, also covering the temporary infrastructure (e.g. toilets and supervision) and inclusion in different program publications. The price per square metre will be about €950. The exact conditions plus the detailed equipment and technology, list for additional orders, will most probably be available from July 2015.
- The groups themselves will be responsible for accommodating their own participants in Wittenberg. The organization office can, if necessary, offer support for the referral of accommodation (hotels, holiday flats and guest apartments, youth hostels etc).
- The world exhibition will start on 20 May 2017 and end on 10 September 2017. If it is not possible for you alone to present yourself during the whole time of the world exhibition you can coordinate this e.g. with your partners and congregations. Perhaps the organization office can also assist you in coordinating with other participants.
- An implementation office will be staffed for the whole of the duration of the world exhibition in Wittenberg.

## ***Application form for active contribution to the World Reformation Exhibition***

To participate in the World Reformation Exhibition from 20 May 2017 to 10 September 2017 in Lutherstadt Wittenberg we need some preliminary data from you.

Please fill out the Application Form and send it by post, fax or email to the organization office:

Reformationsjubiläum 2017 e.V.  
 z.Hd. Anke Jaehn  
 Lehrter Str. 68  
 10557 Berlin  
 Fax +49 (30) 403 650 210  
 a.jaehn@r2017.org

### ***A. Personal data***

Institution/organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

Zipcode/town: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: Ms /Mr  \_\_\_\_\_  
Name, first name, acad.  
 ...

Telephone (office): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (mobile): \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Web site: \_\_\_\_\_

Details on cooperation partner: \_\_\_\_\_  
(as appropriate)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### ***B. Information on area required (if this is already known)***

(Additional equipment required will be requested at a later date.)

We are interested in actively contributing to the world exhibition and require:

an external area of about \_\_\_\_\_squ. m.

we will bring a stand/an installation (\_\_\_ m x \_\_\_ m)

we need a covered event area

we cannot say yet



***C. Information on the thematic area***

Our focal theme at the world exhibition is in the area of:

- Spirituality
- Youth
- Justice, peace and care for creation
- Globalisation/One World
- Ecumenism/religion
- Culture
- Not sure yet
- Quite different. It is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Place/date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, project leader