

INTERNATIONALE SCHLOSSKIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT

International Castle Church Community

Dear Members of the International Castle Church Community,

We are sending out this newsletter shortly before the 2016 Reformation Festival, to share our joy over the completion of the renovation work at the Castle Church and to provide important information.

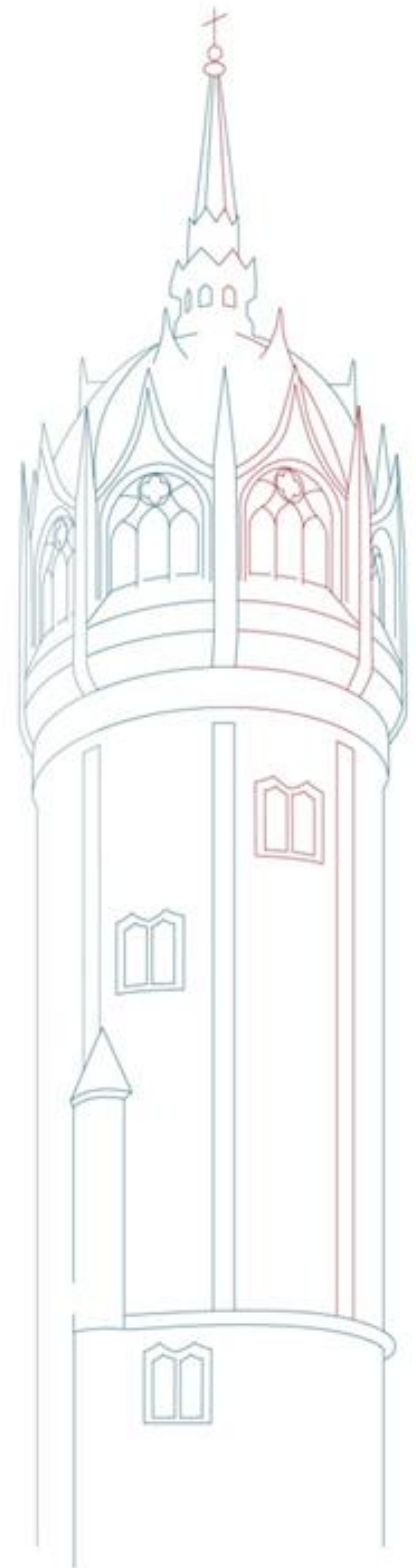
The moment arrived on October 2: After four years of construction, the Castle Church shone with a new resplendence, again available for visitors to contemplate and view. The Festival worship service gathered a large congregation from many places from a variety of countries. It was a special joy to have the participation of her majesty, Queen Margrethe II of Denmark; German President Joachim Gauck; Saxony-Anhalt Governor, Dr. Reiner Haselhoff; the Council Chair of the EKD, Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm; guests from our partner congregation in Hadersleben, Denmark with its wonderful Boys' Choir, as well as many residents of Wittenberg. The crowds were so large that not all could be accommodated inside the Castle Church, where the seating was limited due to security measures.

The idea to broadcast the worship service on television, not only in central Germany but also in the local downtown shopping mall, turned out to be a 'home run'. About 400 people participated in the worship service there. They also enjoyed the live pre-worship music of the Castle Church Gospel Choir.

The Danish Queen had a special gift for the Castle Church. She had designed and created a red antependium for the altar. The parament will adorn the altar on Reformation Day and Pentecost in the future, completing the set of paraments that can be used in Castle Church services.

It was a wonderful Thanksgiving Sunday; the worship service was the high point. Thanks -- for all that we have received from God, for the completed renovations of the Castle Church, and for the protection of all the renovation workers -- were expressed in word and song in this service.

As you all learned in the last newsletter, the Chairman of the International Castle Church Community died at the end of May, way too early. At the meeting of the Advisory Council of the congregation, I was chosen to be the successor, having previously served as the Deputy Chairman. The Director of the Evangelical Academy, Friedrich Kramer, was chosen as the new Deputy Chairman. Together we intend to try to pursue his vision for our international congregation: Bringing people together from many countries who feel connected to the life of the Castle Church in order to promote its spiritual and cultural life.





The new antependium created by the Queen.

Foto: Christa Hansen

This includes the Reformation Festival presentations this year. We will have three worship services including an English language service, with representatives of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). We look forward to a special concert at 5:00 pm, "A Festival of Songs", featuring the Boys' Choir from Stuttgart. Of course, we will also have the usual crowd of confirmands gathering outside the Theses Doors at the conclusion of their annual Confirmation Gathering.

The gift of a hymnal from the Hadersleben congregation prompted the Advisory Council to encourage a collection of hymnals from different countries. Each hymnal collected in the church or in the Seminary would illustrate the international character of our congregation. The International Congregation was founded on the idea, among others, that people in various countries are drawn together to the spiritual life of the Castle Church. So, we would be thrilled if you could bring us (or send us) a hymnal from your church or congregation. If you have an individual hymn that you particularly like, you can also send that (email is probably the best way to send it.)

We call your attention to this 2017 date:

On Pentecost June 4, we will again have a multi-language worship service in connection with the International Castle Church Community.

The Commemorative Year for the 500th Anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation will lead many guests to Wittenberg. Several of you will be visiting the Castle Church allowing yourselves to be captured by its special charm and spiritual allure. The International Castle Church Community provides a good opportunity to support the connection to this house of God, its architecture and proclamation. Please encourage others to become members. You can find a link to a registration form on our website.

In conclusion, I thank you all for your partnership and your support. I greet you with the verse of the Reformation Festival:

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.

Yours Truly,
Hans Kasch

Wittenberg, October 2016