

INTERNATIONALE SCHLOSSKIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT

Dear members of the International Castle Church Community

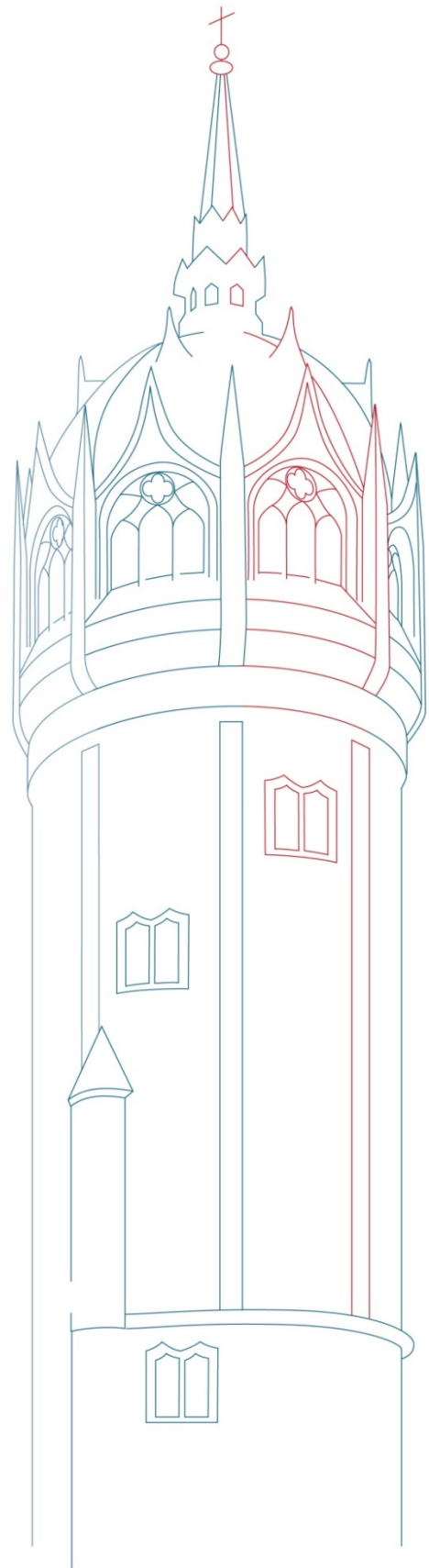
"Come Holy Spirit!" – that's our warm greeting to you from here in Lutherstadt Wittenberg. May the living, active Spirit of God bind us together in our world-wide community, and in the International Castle Church Community that allows us to connect members from four continents.

As a sign of our connectedness, you are receiving this annual newsletter along with our heartfelt gratitude for your support of the work in the Castle Church, with your prayers, and with your contributions.

Much has happened in the Castle Church since our last newsletter. First of all, there has been the somber realization of how few people have come to Wittenberg even one year after the Reformation celebration. Many of us had hoped for a longer lasting impact, but now we have returned to normal routines. We are happy to greet those who do come, and would, of course, be pleased to see one or more members of the ICCG return!

Here are some recent events:

- *Tenth anniversary of the Gospel Choir and the Scola Cantorum Adam Rener (the liturgical chamber choir)*
- *The Handbell Choir is among the three ensembles of the Castle Church directed by Sarah and Thomas Herzer, and also receives support from the ICCG. In the past year, the Handbell Choir traveled to California.*
- *Sarah Herzer took over the position of Director of our Board of Directors a year after Hans Kasch's retirement.*
- *The new director of the LWF-Center, Inken Wöhlbrandt, is now also a member of the ICCG Board of Directors.*
- *Renke Brahms will be the representative from the Wittenberg Foundation to the ICCG.*
- *The Confirmation Camp continues and again filled the Castle Church with many confirmands. Annually about 8.000 confirmands are in town.*
- *The Castle Church Forum offered a Melanchthon Studies Day in 2018 and a day focused on the topic of migration in 2019.*
- *Dr. Sabine Kramer is the new Director of the Evangelical Preaching Seminary in Wittenberg.*
- *Friedrich Kramer left the ICCG Board when he was recently elected bishop of the Evangelical Church of Middle Germany.*
- *The new director of the Evangelical Academy of Saxony-Anhalt is Christoph Maier, who had been in the Bethlehem congregation in Leipzig. He will begin working in Wittenberg on March 1, 2020.*



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So that guests are appropriately accompanied through the Castle Church, an additional group of trained church guides has been installed. Together with the operations managers, the church greeters, and volunteers who support our work in general, this new group will assure that the diverse and various questions from the tourists can be answered and that the tourists better understand the 'Proclamation' this church building's architecture offers.

On Pentecost, our worship once again celebrated the ICCC. The new director of the Preaching Seminary, Dr. Sabine Kramer, preached. Pastor Christa Hansen from Hadersleben (Denmark), also a member of the ICCC Board, led the liturgy. During the greeting at the beginning of service, a welcome was offered to ICCC members from 14 countries and all present greeted each other in German, English, Danish, Finnish, Swedish, Hungarian, Kiswaheli, Dutch, French, Polish, and Icelandic. It was a joyous mix of languages- yes, it was Pentecost!

On October 31st, there was an eight o'clock service in English, followed at ten by the first service in German, where the preacher was Dr. Sabine Kramer and the liturgist was Pastor Christa Hansen. At 11:30, the second service in German began, with President Annette Kurschus deputy of the Church Council of the ECG and liturgist Renke Brahms from the Wittenberg Foundation. Thomas Herzer directed the Gospel Choir singing at both German services. A "Festival of Songs" took place at 5 o'clock. Many thanks to all members of the ICCC, who were also in Wittenberg this year!

Part of Superintendent Christian Beuchel's responsibility in Wittenberg included having the role of pastor for the Castle Church Congregation. He has moved to Halle with Diakonia and we now have Dr. Gabriele Metzner as our new Superintendent. She is already known to many and will be working together with the staff of the Preaching Seminary to hold events for the various constituencies of the Castle and Castle Church. Our ICCC Board will also be re-constituted and continue its work.

As our mission states, the ICCC attempts to promote the diverse life of the Castle Church. Paragraph 1: "The ICCC promotes particularly spiritual life, culture and education within the Castle Church community." The ICCC Board has now purchased four communion chalices as well as two patens and will present these to the Castle Church congregation. With this, we have a sign of our spiritual bond with the Castle Church, which will continue to bind us when Communion is celebrated. Heartfelt thanks to all whose donations made this purchase possible. Up until now, the congregation has often had to borrow communion ware from other congregations.

To date, the contributions are not enough to purchase accompanying ciboria. We would be grateful for further donations, regardless of the amount. To all our donors, we offer a heartfelt thanks!

*We wish you all the best of greetings from Luther's very lively town.
May God bless you and your service!*

Friedrich Kramer – outgoing deputy President of the Board