



- [About us](#)
- [Member churches](#)
- [What we do](#)
- [Get involved](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Press centre](#)

- **English**
- [Deutsch](#)
- [Français](#)
- [Español](#)
- [Português](#)
- [한국어](#)
- ...



A worldwide fellowship of churches seeking unity, a common witness and Christian service

German president and Danish queen celebrate church where Reformation began

04 October 2016

By Stephen Brown*

The Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany - celebrated worldwide as the place where the 16th century Lutheran Reformation began - has been rededicated following renovation work at a service attended by German President Joachim Gauck and Queen Margrethe II of Denmark.

"I am very pleased that we will soon be commemorating and celebrating - aware of our tradition while looking to the future - the 500th anniversary of this event that had worldwide consequences and had its beginning here in the Castle Church at Wittenberg," Gauck said in an address at end of the 2 October service.

Luther is said to have nailed 95 Theses denouncing church abuses to the door of the Castle Church on 31 October 1517, unleashing the events that led to the Reformation.

The door at the Castle Church (Schlosskirche in German) where the theses are now displayed "reminds us of the unspectacular event of an academic dispute that sparked off world history", said Gauck, who was a Lutheran pastor and civil rights activist in the former East Germany.

During the service, a red altar hanging donated by Queen Margrethe which she designed and embroidered herself was unveiled. The hanging portrays tongues of fire and its central motif is a Luther rose - a symbol of Lutheranism - embroidered with tiny stitches known as petit point.

Queen Margrethe is known for her interest in creating woven and embroidered church textiles. She said the request to create an altar hanging for the church had been a pleasant surprise to which she dedicated herself with joy and respect.

In her address, she recalled the longstanding links between the Danish monarchy and Wittenberg. King Christian II took refuge in the town after being forced into exile in 1523. King Christian III, who made Lutheranism the official religion of Denmark in 1536, had as a young man attended the Diet of Worms in 1521 where he heard Luther defend himself against charges of heresy.

The renovation work on the church, first dedicated in 1503, is reported to have cost about 7.8 million euros.

"After years of restoration, the doors of the Schlosskirche are open again," said Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, who heads the Evangelical Church in Germany as the chairperson of its council.

"Doors are also symbols. They can mean insularity and withdrawal or openness and hospitality," said Bedford-Strohm. "Today it stands for an open, welcoming church."

The service in Wittenberg took place in advance of events throughout Europe to begin 12 months of activities leading to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

"When in the coming days the Reformation jubilee is launched in Lund, Berlin, Geneva and Rome, Wittenberg will be at the heart of Europe," said Bedford-Strohm.

Following the service, Queen Margrethe joined Bishop Bedford-Strohm and other dignitaries for a ceremony where she planted a tree on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark in the nearby Luther Garden.

Churches from all over the world and from all confessions have been invited to sponsor one of the 500 trees to be



The Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. Photo: Stephen Brown

planted there by 2017 to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and the worldwide links that it symbolizes.

“We are very happy indeed that Queen Margrethe as the head of the church has planted the tree for the Danish church,” said Pastor Hans W. Kasch, director of the Lutheran World Federation centre in Wittenberg, who led the ceremony. “It shows how important the church and the queen see the international and ecumenical contacts of the churches.”

[Den Reformationsstädten Europas](#) (in German)

[500 Jahre Reformation](#) (in German)

[Reformation 2017 - The European Roadmap](#) (in German)

[Event: European Reformation Roadmap launch](#)

**Stephen Brown is a freelance journalist.*



[Sign up to receive WCC news by email!](#)

- [Events](#)
- [News](#)
 - [German president and Danish queen celebrate church where Reformation began](#)
- [News in other languages](#)
- [Sign up for WCC press list](#)
- [Request for an interview](#)

© 2016 [World Council of Churches](#)

- [Site Map](#)
- [Conditions for Use and Privacy Policy](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- [Contact](#)