



Festive Service of Worship for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation on 31 October 2017

Sermon:

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

Liturgy:

Bishop Ilse Junkermann

Special envoy of the EKD Council
for the Reformation anniversary 2017
Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Margot Käßmann

Superintendent Christian Beuchel, Wittenberg

Devid Striesow

Reinhard Cardinal Marx, archbishop of Munich-Freising

Revd Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit,
General secretary of the World Council of Churches

Matthias Pohl, parish council chair, Castle Church, Wittenberg

Students from the Luther-Melanchthon high school, Wittenberg

Thomaner choir, Leipzig
Conductor: Gotthold Schwarz

Organ: Thomas Herzer, cantor of Castle Church, Wittenberg

Castle Church wind ensemble. Conductor: Klaus Vogelsang

Selected wind players from the Evangelical Church in Central
Germany (ECCG). Conductor: Frank Plewka

Revd Holger Treutmann, ECCG broadcasting coordinator with MDR

© **Broadcast: MDR**

31 October 2017

3-4pm

Recording:

Frank Bartuschat

Management:

Götz Filenius

Editing:

Susanne Sturm

Silence

EG 362 Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott

Those officiating proceed through the new door (castle)

Congregation
rises.

Organ prelude

Otto Diemel: Ein feste Burg

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott, Ein gute Wehr und Waffen; / Er hilft uns frei
aus aller Not, / Die uns jetzt hat betroffen. / Der alt' böse Feind, / Mit Ernst
er's jetzt meint, / Gross' Macht und viel List / Sein' grausam' Rüstung ist, /
Auf Erd' ist nicht seinsgleichen.

Mit unsrer Macht ist nichts getan, / Wir sind gar bald verloren; / Es streit't für
uns der rechte Mann, / Den Gott hat selbst erkoren.

Fragst du, wer der ist? / Er heisst Jesu Christ, / Der Herr Zebaoth, / Und ist
kein andrer Gott, Das Feld muss er behalten.

Und wenn die Welt voll Teufel wär' / Und wollt' uns gar verschlingen, / So
fürchten wir uns nicht so sehr, / Es soll uns doch gelingen. / Der Fürst
dieser Welt, / Wie sau'r er sich stellt, / Tut er uns doch nicht, / Das macht, er
ist gericht't, / Ein Wörtlein kann ihn fällen.

Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn / Und kein'n Dank dazu haben; / Er ist bei
uns wohl auf dem Plan / Mit seinem Geist und Gaben. / Nehmen sie den
Leib, / Gut, Ehr', Kind und Weib: / Lass fahren dahin, Sie haben's kein'n
Gewinn, / Das Reich muss uns doch bleiben.

Opening and welcome

L: In the name of God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

C: Amen

L: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C: who made heaven and earth.

L: The Lord be with you

C: And also with you.

Congregation
sits

Bishop Ilse Junkermann

A warm welcome to the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

500 years of Reformation.

In the beginning was the Word.

This verse has accompanied us through the anniversary year, and in the years before.

Martin Luther placed Scripture in the centre again; he translated it into our language.

The Bible is close to us.

It gives us comfort.

It opens to us the doors of God's love.

We are celebrating Reformation Day and greet all of you in the congregation - here in the church, watching in a nearby hall in Wittenberg, on TV and radio, and in churches and parish rooms where people are participating in this service.

Superintendent Beuchel

95 Theses.

They mark the beginning of the Reformation. Exactly 500 years ago today, here at the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

95 propositions that open our eyes.

95 statements that lead us to the biblical roots.

We have gathered here with representatives of our country and our churches; I am very glad of that. The fact that Church and State are separate is good for both.

That they shape our society in mutual respect is a genuine achievement.

We hear the Word.

It does us both good.

It was there in the beginning and may it dwell abundantly among us today.

Bishop Ilse Junkermann

The church is older than the Reformation.

We look back over a history of separation between the confessions. It is horrifying to see what people did to one another while wrestling for the truth.

The barriers in families and among friends remain painful to this day. We continue to pray for the ecumenical movement. And we have taken steps of unity to a point of no return. We are celebrating the Reformation anniversary as a *Christusfest*, a festival of Christ.

God, in the beginning was your Word, keep us united in Jesus Christ.

Superintendent Beuchel

In the beginning was the Word and it has become a celebration. A Reformation Year. With a big Ferris wheel for conversations above the town roofs.

Or an old printing press, where everyone could print a page of the Bible and take it home with them.

In the 360° Panorama they could immerse themselves in Wittenberg 500 years ago, and understand history better.

Many issues have remained significant to this day and are important for the future.

Wittenberg is privileged to play host.

People come here from all over the world and feel the power of God.

Words can change, create insights and enable us to understand one another.

In the beginning is God's Word.

It makes space for itself as we talk to one another.

Psalm - Antiphon:

I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea.

Antiphon: I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city, the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Antiphon: I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.

Antiphon: I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.

Prayer for the day

Triune God,
you are our refuge and strength,
give us trust in your Word,

so that your love frees our heart
and your law gives us guidance.

Renew the church according to your will and guide our steps onto good paths.

This we pray through Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen

Words of Luther in the beginning

I simply could not love the God of justice. He punishes sinners. --- Love God? ... No: I hated him. I really hated him.

I was an exemplary monk. No one better than me. And yet: I felt like a sinner and always had a bad conscience... I was constantly troubled. I could not imagine that I was right for God. I did not dare even to hope. All that was within me was resistance to God.

Then God took pity and opened my eyes - this is what happened:

I pondered day and night, until I made a new discovery. It dawned on me that the context of the words was different to what I had thought up till then.

I began to understand that the person God is looking for is not the one who performs the best. It is the one who trusts God: God will be merciful to me and make up for where I fall short. Then I can look God in the eye without hesitating. I can do nothing to please God. God loves me. The just person lives by the gift of God.

Then I felt completely reborn. The gates had opened for me. I entered Paradise itself.

Canon:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

95 Theses

95 Theses for discussion with the scholars -
all can have their say.

We must talk so that something changes and nothing important or eternal is neglected.

Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying "Do penance...," wanted the entire life of the faithful to be one of penitence.

(Thesis 1)

Canon

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Wealth and poverty. We must talk.
 Money and God - how does that fit together
 if faith is a gift?

Christians are to be taught that the one who gives to a poor person or lends to the needy does a better deed than if a person acquires indulgences.
 (Thesis 43)

Canon

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

What is holy? To me and to you?
 And what can we do without?

The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God. (Thesis 62)

Canon

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Epistle

Let us listen to words from Romans 3 that became especially important to Luther.

Congregation rises.

But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works?
 No, but by the law of faith.

For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

Hallelujah

Hallelujah verse

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favour and honour. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.
 Halleluja

EG 140,1-5 Brunn alles Heils (fountain of all salvation)

Congregation
sits.

Organ prelude

1. Brunn alles Heils, dich ehren wir und öffnen unsern Mund vor dir; aus deiner Gottheit Heiligtum dein hoher Segen auf uns komm.
2. Der Herr, der Schöpfer, bei uns bleib, er segne uns nach Seel und Leib, und uns behüte seine Macht vor allem Übel Tag und Nacht.
3. Der Herr, der Heiland, unser Licht, uns leuchten lass sein Angesicht, dass wir ihn schauen und glauben frei, dass er uns ewig gnädig sei.
4. Der Herr, der Tröster, ob uns schweb, sein Antlitz über uns erhebe, dass uns sein Bild werd eingedrückt, und geb uns Frieden unverrückt.
5. Gott Vater, Sohn und Heiliger Geist, o Segensbrunn, der ewig fließt: durchfließ Herz, Sinn und Wandel wohl, mach uns deins Lobs und Segens voll!

The Gospel (in English)

Congregation
rises.

The gospel reading for Reformation Day is taken from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5. It applies to everyone in the world.

Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

'Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

'Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.

'Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

'Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Glory be to you, O Lord

Praise to you, O Christ

Creed

Let us confess the faith of all Christians. We stand up for it, saying together: Congregation
remains
standing.

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father;
God from God, light from light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit
and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he
ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will
come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will
have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in the one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.
Amen

Congregation
sits

Motet “Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf” BWV 226

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. (Rom 8:26)

Sermon

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

Romans 8:26 : “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.”

My dear Friends,

It was an act of liberation when, 500 years ago today, the Augustinian monk Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses in Wittenberg, perhaps even a few metres from here, on the door of this church. For him personally it was an act of liberation. Liberation from the fear of a God demanding more than a human being can fulfil. Liberation from the compulsion to have to earn one's salvation.

It was also an act of liberation for the church. It was a wake-up call to his Catholic church that it needed religious renewal. Luther did not want to found a new church but to call the Church of Jesus Christ back to its Lord.

And it was also an act of liberation for the world. It showed that the dictates of power and money should give way to a new freedom shown in love.

Wrestling with God and the world, and being liberated from deep despair - for Martin Luther the words of Paul's letter to the Romans had a very personal significance. "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." We have heard these same words.

And now we are sitting here, 500 years later, in a country that is likewise wrestling with itself. A country that has never been so blessed. A country that has shown an impressive amount of empathy. A country that has made many efforts, including moral efforts. And, at the same time, a country in which some people feel morally overtaxed. A country in which people are afraid of losing their familiar world, their sense of safety. A country where people long to feel at home.

A country that, for all those reasons, so urgently needs the Reformation message of justification by faith alone!

This country will not be helped by setting a limit on the numbers of needy people to be supported, or by moral appeals to persevere. What this country needs is a new inner freedom. What this country needs is a strength that overcomes fear and strengthens love. What this country needs is the Spirit that helps us in our weakness. What this country needs is justification by faith alone and not by works.

Where can a new inner freedom come from? And a new confidence for our country with all its diverse approaches to life and sources of orientation?

We Christians are many, even today, and the message of forgiveness and love that sustains can still help to shape our society. In the year that lies behind us we have devoted ourselves to this to an almost unprecedented extent. We did not want any hero-worship of Martin Luther. And to our Jewish brothers and sisters we expressed our shame at Martin Luther's invective against the Jews. We called our intolerance against the Anabaptists and other persecuted groups by its name. We confessed our guilt for disparaging other Christian churches and asked forgiveness. And we told them what we love about them today.

We have come to a new understanding that Christ is not divided and so his church must no longer be divided. And no one should think that we can be induced to stray from the path towards visible unity in reconciled diversity. Setbacks will not deter us from continuing towards this goal. I thank my brother in Christ, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, and all those who with him work for Christian unity, for all their courage, supportiveness and friendship. And on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation I call, from Wittenberg, to the Pope in Rome: Pope Francis, brother in Christ, we give heartfelt thanks to God for your witness of love and mercy, which for us Protestants also means witnessing to Christ. We thank you for your signs of reconciliation among the churches. And whenever you come here to Wittenberg we will warmly welcome you, half a millennium after Luther burnt the papal bull of excommunication! We want to talk with Christ and then go forward courageously. We trust that the Spirit will help us in our weakness!

Hymn: „Komm, Heiliger Geist“ (Come, Holy Spirit)

Komm Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott,
erfüll mit deiner Gnaden Gut,
deiner Gläubigen Herz, Mut und Sinn,
dein brennend Lieb entzünd in ihn
O Herr Durch deines Lichtes Glanz
zum Glauben du versammelt hast

das Volk aus aller Welt Zungen.
Das sei dir, Herr, zu Lob gesungen.
Halleluja, Halleluja

Du heiliges Licht, edler Hort,
lass leuchten uns des Lebens Wort,
und lehr uns Gott recht erkennen
von Herzen Vater ihn nennen.
O Herr behüt vor fremder Lehr,
dass wir nicht Meister suchen mehr
denn Jesus mit rechtem Glauben
und ihm aus ganzer Macht vertrauen.

The world needs a joint witness to Christ so urgently! The witness that we can give as churches is not obtrusive. The church, too, remains a praying church. It does not know any better. It struggles and sighs at the side of the people of the earth and asks for God's Spirit and guidance. And for God's power and blessing. Let us help our country to sense how blessed it is, and gain new confidence!

The core Reformation convictions are, still today, inspiring sources of strength for a society worth living in.

The central conviction concerns life by faith alone. It is the awareness that each person is of infinite value. Each person is made in the image of God. No one must first earn their dignity. Not through economic achievement. Not even through good moral behaviour. Human dignity is inviolable. The strength of our country lies not in making children in kindergarten fit for globalisation but in helping them to feel, deep in their souls, how precious each and every one of them is.

The Reformers used the old word 'penitence' as another expression of sure faith. The first of the 95 Theses is about penitence: "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying 'Do penance...,' wanted the entire life of the faithful to be one of penitence." These words call us to stop and think, to reflect on ourselves, to take a step back from ourselves that is not only good for every single person but also for the whole country. Are we actually going in the right direction? What is wrong with us if we shower hate and mockery on each other via the internet? What understanding of political debate do we have if we only see the splinter in the eye of others and not the beam in our own eye? Where are the blind spots in our self-image as a country if we see ourselves as benefactors for the world and hardly notice how much our prosperity is generated at the expense of others? The first victims of human-induced climate change are precisely the people who have contributed least to it.

Yes, penitence and the resultant humility do a country good!

The centrepiece of Reformation faith is freedom. Martin Luther's most important treatise is called "The Freedom of a Christian". And freedom is one of the mega-issues of our age. Is freedom the liberation from any obligation? Is freedom the possibility of choosing among a thousand options? Or is freedom the innermost strength to follow our conscience, even against external authorities – because nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord – as the Apostle Paul said. Here too, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Having the courage of our convictions, intervening in public debates

not from rage but from inner freedom - this is the attitude our country needs. This freedom is good for our country!

A spiritual renewal went out from Wittenberg, to people in Germany, Europe and worldwide. To men and women from all social classes. That is why, for me, the 500th anniversary is a day to give thanks. Thanks for the impetus for religious renewal that stemmed from the Reformation and has proved effective up to the present day. We give thanks that the conflicts and wars between the confessions in the past have now become a continuing process of reconciliation, understanding and friendship. It is my hope that this process may also send a message to a world threatened by conflicts and divisions. On this Reformation day I pray that God will give us the strength to continue on this path, endowing each one of us with what is most important for the church of the future - the ability to reach out to others with the love of which we speak.

The peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Christ Jesus our Lord.

AMEN

Motette BWV 226 – part 2

Fugue

And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Chorale

Du heilige Brunst, süßer Trost,
Nun hilf uns, fröhlich und getrost
In deinem Dienst beständig bleiben,
Die Trübsal uns nicht abtreiben.
O Herr, durch dein Kraft uns bereit
Und stärk des Fleisches Blödigkeit,
Daß wir hie ritterlich ringen,
Durch Tod und Leben zu dir dringen.
Halleluja, halleluja.

Handing on the Bible

Margot Käßmann – student from Luther-Melanchthon high school

Martin Luther put the Bible back in the centre. People were to be able to read what was in it and to think about it themselves. Since then, countless people have drawn their hope, their faith and their conscience from this book. I am passing the Bible on to a student from the Luther-Melanchthon high school here in Wittenberg, whom we cordially ask – on behalf of the next generation – to keep this Bible alive and to pass it on to a child in due course and to their children's children. May God bless all who hear God's Word and keep it.

Theses

Beuchel – Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC

The 95 Theses mark the beginning of the Reformation; till today they have been a topic for discussion and have become a symbol of renewal in the spirit of Christ. For all the church related to the first publication of the 95 Theses, I now present this copy of the 95 Theses to Olav Fykse Tveit, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches. The Reformation churches see this as a symbol of their contribution to the whole Christian family worldwide. God bless all who give space to the spirit of renewal.

Hildesheim Cross of Reconciliation

Bishop Prof. Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm It is a special joy for me that Reinhard Cardinal Marx is with us at this service, as we organized the anniversary year together with the Roman Catholic Church. For the first time in history, the focus is on reconciliation, not on differences.

Our church is older than the Reformation. And we have taken steps towards one another which we do not want to reverse. We are reminded of this by the Cross of Reconciliation that we set upright in Hildesheim. It sends a signal: We want to be Christians together for our country in the middle of Europe. That is why we are symbolically handing on this cross to the topmost representative of Germany, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in order to show that we want to bring this spirit of reconciliation into all the conflicts of our age. God bless all those who serve reconciliation.

Prayer

Organ improvisation on refrain “Komm Heil’ger Geist”

Reformation – a festive year lies behind us.

O God, we thank you for the celebrations on all continents in our country and here in Wittenberg. We have been able to discover you anew. Awaken a longing for you, we pray, and may the words of Scripture fill many with your Holy Spirit.

Give new faith today and tomorrow, for
“In the beginning was the Word” (Jn 1:1).

Refrain: Komm Heil’ger Geist mit deiner Kraft, die uns verbindet und Leben schafft.

Reformation gives us courage.

O God, we thank you for your Word; it gives us faith, it shapes language and culture. From your Word grows strength for new ideas and confidence, even in uncertain times.

Continue to speak to us, we pray, for “your Word is a lamp to our feet” (Ps 119, 105).

Refrain: Komm Heil’ger Geist mit deiner Kraft, die uns verbindet und Leben schafft

Reformation is a journey of discovery

God, we thank you.

We were curious, amazed.

We laughed and had fun together, made new friends and strengthened the bonds of fellowship. We are grateful for all who helped, for all the support and promotion that this festival has enjoyed.

Let us be a blessing to many, for you said:

“I will bless you and ... you will be a blessing” (Gen 12:2-3).

Refrain: Komm Heil’ger Geist mit deiner Kraft, die uns verbindet und Leben schafft

Reformation is a world citizen.

O God, we thank you for the ecumenical movement, for the cooperation of the denominations and the many churches active in the world. We see in this the wealth of your goodness.

We have wounded each other in history and this still happens.

Give us strength, we pray, to forgive and the courage for reconciliation.

Lead us further along the path to unity in Jesus Christ and keep these words alive in our hearts:

“Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20).

Refrain: Komm, Heil’ger Geist mit deiner Kraft, die uns verbindet und Leben schafft.

Reformation gets people moving.

God, we thank you for all those who have been responded to the cares and loneliness of others, to refugees and to situations of destruction.

We pray that you may strengthen law and justice in this country and in the world.

After all, we still believe:

“Righteousness and peace will kiss each other” (Psalm 85:10).

Refrain: Komm Heil’ger Geist mit deiner Kraft, die uns verbindet und Leben schafft.

Gathering together all that we have on our hearts, as our Saviour taught us so we pray:

Congregation
rises.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn 421

Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich (Give us peace in our time, O Lord)

Verleih' uns Frieden gnädiglich, Herr Gott, zu unser'n Zeiten, Es ist doch ja kein Ander' nicht, Der für uns könnte streiten, Denn du, unser Gott alleine.

The benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace

Amen

Postlude during recession

**Carl Stein: Prelude and fugue on
"Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott"**