

Martin Luther (der 10. November 1483—der 2. Februar 1546)

Luther and Protestant Reformation

500 years after Martin Luther's excommunication: A chance for ecumenical Christianity

however: "Without eliminating the issues of the excommunication and the designation as Antichrist, a closer community between the Evangelical and Catholic churches is unthinkable. The year 2021, 500 years after the schism, would be a good juncture for officials on both sides to draw a line under the dispute."

The ball is now on both sides of the court at once. Both the pope in Rome and the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva must move toward each other. Meanwhile, in Germany, where it all began, the Churches are planning — to the extent that existing dogmatic regulations allow it — to hold a joint open-air service on Sunday, April 18, on the market square in Worms, under the motto "Here I Stand." The service will be led by the chair of the Council of the German Evangelical Church, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, and the head of the German Catholic Bishops' Conference, Georg Bätzing.

'Stand together for faith'

The pandemic, however, is not only getting in the way of ecumenical efforts. "In this year 2020, it once again became clear how important it is to take a stand for the joint faith in God made human through Christ, for neighborly love and the protection of the weak," said Thies Gundlach, one of the leading theologians of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), in an interview with Deutsche Welle. He added, "We are grateful for the positive developments towards ecumenism between the Evangelical and Catholic churches, which have led to a deeper sense of community between them in recent years."

For Gundlach, the events surrounding the Diet of Worms "are of great relevance to Church history and the history of the Reformation. With regard to modern ecumenism, we are grateful that the disputes of the past have been overcome." He went on to say that the ecumenical movement had made great contributions to mutual understanding and reconciliation in recent years through constructive theological deliberations.