



Everyone is invited, not just Protestant Christians, but people of all backgrounds and of all faiths, as well as those who have no strong link to any church or faith.

"The Kirchentag demonstrates a 'Protestant profile' in the best sense of the word. It brings together the light-heartedness of girls in their cropped tops listening, quite untypically for young people of their age, to a church brass band with the struggle for a more just economic order. It encourages institutionalised doubt without the constant risk of faith turning into fundamentalism. Its strength is that of questioning, shaking up old-established views – that is why it is a meeting place for the protagonists of globalisation and their critics ... and for Christians and Muslims to debate the value of religious freedom.

There is no other place ... where that is possible in quite the same way."

Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany's most widely read quality newspaper, June 2007

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For further information go to www.kirchentag.de

Contact

German Protestant Kirchentag
Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag
Magdeburger Str. 59
36037 Fulda
GERMANY

Tel: +49-661/96950-0
Fax: +49-661/96950-90
info@kirchentag.de

What we do, who we are



A forum for civil society
A festival of faith and spirituality



*German
Protestant
Kirchentag*

"A mixture of an Open University summer school, a Bible convention, Taizé, a synod meeting, the Edinburgh Festival, a brass band festival for 500 bands, an ideal homes exhibition and a cup final – all rolled into one and all going on at the same time ..."

That's how one participant from Great Britain has described the "Kirchentag", a phenomenon that, like the word itself, is hard to define or compare to anything else. It is a unique event and a tremendous experience.

Every two years in a different German city, about 100,000 people gather together for five days in May or June, from Wednesday to Sunday. The programme offers about 3,000 separate events:

- **discussions on social, ethical and political issues**, from the personal to the community and global levels, including globalisation, bioethics, justice, peace and the integrity of creation;
- **debates about theology and experiences of spirituality** – in dialogue between Christians of different confessions, with people of other religions and with people from the secular world who are looking for meaning, faith or authenticity;
- **worship, Bible studies and prayers**;
- **concerts** with classical music, jazz, rock, pop or gospel, **theatre performances** and **comedy**;
- **exhibitions** like the "market of possibilities"; quiet **meditation** and big **open-air events**.

The Kirchentag deals with all the issues about which people are concerned, in Germany and worldwide. The convention's events are characterised by their high public profile – nationally and internationally – as well as by an exceptional combination of seriousness and lightness, thoughtful reflection, authentic dialogue, open encounter and happiness spread by the participants all around the city.



People from the grassroots and representatives of the establishment meet at the Kirchentag. High-level politicians and academics, church leaders, economic or media personalities give lectures or Bible studies and participate in panels. At the same time, initiatives and organisations like Amnesty International or ATTAC along with as yet unknown artists, bands and songwriters contribute to the programme as well. Polished speeches contrast with people talking frankly about their personal experiences in everyday life. It is this wide variety and diversity that makes the Kirchentag so attractive and meaningful not only for the churches and for congregational life, but also for politics and society.

Presidents and prime ministers from Germany and abroad, Nobel Prize laureates, prominent academics and artists contribute to the Kirchentag. Nobel Peace Prize laureates attending the Kirchentag in recent years have included, for instance, Muhammad Yunus, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Wangari Maathai, the Dalai Lama, Rigoberta Menchú, Willy Brandt, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel.

Nearly half of the participants are under 30. About 5,000 visitors come from outside Germany, representing more than 80 countries. And a third to a half of the participants – or 30,000 to 50,000 people – actively contribute to the programme on a voluntary basis.

History and Principles



REINOLD VON THADDEN-TRIEGLAFF,
THE FOUNDER

"The German Protestant Kirchentag seeks to bring together people asking questions about the Christian faith. It aims to encourage responsibility in the church, to equip them for witness and service in the world and to make a contribution to the worldwide Christian community."

From the Preamble to the
Kirchentag Statutes

Founded in 1949, the Kirchentag is as old as the Federal Republic of Germany – but still very young and alive.

After the disaster of National Socialism, the initiators of the Kirchentag – at the centre of which was a German landowner called Reinold von Thadden-Trieglaff – decided to create a movement of Christian faith and responsibility for the world. This movement of Christian laypeople is, still today, the bond and the basis for the events that take place every two years.

Those who established the German Protestant Kirchentag – independently of the church in a Protestant spirit of freedom – were people who had been brought together by Christian faith and commitment to the future of the church and of the world after the Second World War. They wanted to create an opportunity to examine their consciences, form their own opinions and become more critical.

Free participation and open, even controversial dialogue are the ways in which the Kirchentag looks for Christian answers to the questions of our time. The Kirchentag not only reflects social and political changes and challenges but can also have a direct impact on renewal and change in churches and society. Those who are responsible for and commit themselves to the Kirchentag are strongly rooted in their Protestant faith and in the ecumenical community of Christians worldwide.