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# Kirchen VolksBewegung

Church Reform Movement – Germany

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**We Are Church**

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*Examples from the work of the German Reform Movement We Are Church since October 2005*

## **National Convention „10 years of We Are Church” held on October 28-30, 2005 in Cologne**

The National Convention themed “10 years of *We Are Church* – keep moving”, took place in Cologne, where the movement started in 1995. Over 150 delegates from German dioceses as well as guests from Germany and abroad attended this meeting. The **Swiss theologian Prof. Dr. Josef Imbach**, who was rebuked by Rome, gave the main speech. The discussion that followed about the practicing Catholics’ expectations for the future of the Church was joined by **Dr. Martha Heizer**, a member of the **Austrian platform *We Are Church***. The lecture notes are available by e-mail order.

Sigrid Grabmeier, Karl Graml, Dietgard Heine, Dr. Richard Hegenbarth, Eva-Maria Kiklas and Christian Weisner were elected members of the Steering Committee for the next two years .

The National Convention ended with a vigil in front of Cologne’s Cathedral on Sunday morning. On the one hand, people were commemorating the numerous excluded from the Roman-Catholic Church. On the other hand, they were thankfully commemorating those people and signs bringing hope to our Church.

## **Open letter to the German bishops, ten years after “Church Referendum”**

Ten years after the Church Referendum, the newly elected Steering Committee called again on the German bishops to talk with the movement. Over the last ten years, the Reform Movement *We Are Church* has addressed both individual bishops and the German Bishops’ Conference without ever having a real dialogue. Studies, however, show that a large majority of practicing Catholics supports the ideas of the ChurchReferendum.

→ [www.wir-sind-kirche.de/wsk/aktuell/a\\_aktuell/i\\_20051220-offener\\_brief.htm](http://www.wir-sind-kirche.de/wsk/aktuell/a_aktuell/i_20051220-offener_brief.htm)

## **Requesting therapy for victims of sexual abuse in the Church**

In December 2005, it was reported that a number of children and teenagers had been sexually abused in the Diocese of Magdeburg many years ago. Referring to these incidents, *We Are Church* asked the bishops to offer psychotherapy for victims of sexual abuse in the Church. As early as in summer of 2002, the German Reform Movement *We Are Church* demanded that the German bishops take specific steps to remedy the situation. As a result, *We Are Church* founded “Zypresse-Not-Telefon”, a helpline for children and teenagers abused by priests and members of religious orders.

## **New counseling office for *Frauenwuerde e.V.* (Dignity of Women)**

On January 1, 2006 a new counseling office for women thinking about abortion was opened in Eschborn, a town near Frankfurt on the Main. It is one of six counseling offices of *Frauenwuerde e.V.* all over Germany.

## **About the revocation of the Catholic teaching license of Prof. Hasenhuettl by Bishop Marx**

*We Are Church* objected the revocation of the Catholic teaching license of the Catholic theologian Prof. Dr. Gotthold Hasenhuettl. He had been defrocked in the summer of 2003 and on January 4, 2006 the Bishop of Treves, Dr Reinhard Marx, rescinded his teaching license (Nihil obstat). *We Are Church* finds the bishop’s decision problematic, as the next German Catholic Convention (Katholikentag), themed “Justice before God’s Face”, will be held in Marx’s diocese.

Hasenhuettl was disciplined so severely because he did not regret his alleged “felony”: At the First German Ecumenical Convention in Berlin 2003 (1. Ökumenischer Kirchentag) he had invited protestant Christians to join the Holy Communion. → More information: [www.hasenhuettl.de.vu](http://www.hasenhuettl.de.vu)

It is hard to understand why Professor Hasenhuettl was disciplined so severely. There had seemed to be a trend towards greater tolerance in the Roman-Catholic Church: after the death of Pope John Paul II, the then-Cardinal Ratzinger gave the protestant prior of Taizé, Roger Schutz, the Holy Communion and at Roger Schutz’s requiem even non-Catholic Christians went to the Holy Communion. It was mentioned even in the Eucharist-Encyclical of April 17, 2003 that in exceptional cases non-Catholics could take the Holy Communion.



### Comment on the first encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI: “Is God’s love practiced also inside the Church?”

The comments of *We Are Church* Germany on the encyclical “Deus Caritas est” were frequently quoted in the media; the media focused on the hopeful signs we had pointed out in our statement. However, we are wondering whether the Pope’s words are concrete enough to have a lasting impact on society and within the Church; the question is also whether world wide distress has been focused sufficiently and whether the euro-centric attitude of Church can be overcome.

Additionally, our comments emphasize that the Catholic Church will not be able to call for subsidiary principles in society as long as the Vatican itself applies centralism without separation of powers and refuses to acknowledge the “laity” as equal partners.

### Statement “We are the parish!” on pastoral structural reforms in German dioceses

A new statement encourages all Christians to discuss and reflect the renewal and development of their own parish. At present, the dioceses in Germany react to the financial situation and the dramatic lack of priests by creating structural reforms according to economic management patterns (Mc Kinsey etc.). Diverging with our neighboring countries France and Switzerland, the German efforts on reforms suffer from a complete focus on the ordained priest, disregarding the common priesthood of all the faithful.

### Participation in German Catholic Convention (Katholikentag) in Saarbruecken, May 24 – 28, 2006

*We Are Church* Germany will participate in 96<sup>th</sup> German “Katholikentag” (Title: “Justice before God’s face” – [www.katholikentag.de](http://www.katholikentag.de)) by organizing three meetings, a large information desk and “talks at Jacob’s Well”. We emphasize “Justice within the Church” as we are convinced the Church can only call for justice in social and economic systems if the Church practices them in its own ranks.

The meetings organized by *We Are Church* focus on freedom in the Church, on the future of the community pastoral (with, among others, the participation of Dr Paul Michael Zulehner, professor for pastoral theology in Vienna, and a female Swiss community leader), and on ecumenical issues. → For more information see [www.wir-sind-kirche.de](http://www.wir-sind-kirche.de)

### Restriction of lay commitment by the Bishop of Regensburg

*We Are Church* has observed with deep concern the so-called reorganization and modernization of structures of lay commitment in the diocese of Regensburg by Bishop Dr. Mueller. Resisting the efforts of the German episcopate and the Central Committee of German Catholics to change his mind, Mueller continues to destroy the traditional and well-proven structural organization of the Church. → More information: [www.wsk-regensburg.de](http://www.wsk-regensburg.de) and [www.laienapostolat-regensburg.de](http://www.laienapostolat-regensburg.de)

### Further activities of *We Are Church* Germany since October 2005:

- Comment on disappointing results of the World Bishops’ Synod about the Eucharist
- Comment on Vatican instruction about homosexuality and ordination
- Press notice on Eugen Drewermann leaving the Catholic Church, a fact which was made public in Dec. 2005
- Support for SOLWODI, an initiative against sexual exploitation during the 2006 soccer world championship in Germany ([www.solwodi.de](http://www.solwodi.de))

### International work of *We Are Church* Germany

- Co-Organization of the conference of the European network “Church on the move” (April 28 – May 1, 2006 in Wiesbaden-Naurod) and the IMWAC Council (June 16 – 18, 2006 in Freising near Munich).
- *We Are Church* Germany will keep the presidency of *We Are Church* International until the next council meeting in June 2006

### Further dates of *We Are Church* Germany in 2006

March 24 – 26 19<sup>th</sup> National Convention “To liberty Christ freed us” in Treves  
May 6 – 7 Appeal for lay sermons (“KirchenVolksPredigt”)  
August 3 – 6 Seminar for people between the ages of 30 and 45: „Yes to faith – No to the Church?”  
September 10 – 15 Monitoring Pope Benedict’s second visit to Germany  
October 27 – 29 20<sup>th</sup> National Convention of *We Are Church* in Augsburg: “Parish – a non-realized vision”

Account for donations: **Wir sind Kirche Förderverein e.V. Konto 18 222 000 Darlehnskasse Münster e.G. (BLZ 400 602 65)**

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