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German Protestant Church Congress in Hanover in 2 days

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A monumental church event is scheduled for April 30th – May 4th, 2025, in Hanover. Hundreds of events, church services, prayer/discussion groups, and music will take place, and guests from all over the world are expected. Hanover will be packed and vibrant.

As the organizers describe it: A vibrant faith, culture, and music festival with a platform for critical debate, a unique opportunity to experience community! The motto "Courageous – Strong – Courageous" is intended to send a statement to the world, especially in these particularly difficult and critical times. Just before the Church Congress, a new war between India and Pakistan is looming. Things are simmering in Taiwan and China, the fronts remain entrenched in Ukraine and Russia, fighting is intensifying again between Israel and the Gaza Strip, and there is no peace in Afghanistan either.

When I think back to my visit to the 20th World Youth Day in Cologne in 2005, where the German Pope Benedict XVI was present and, among other things, conducted the closing service, the world was still in order. It is what it is, and we all must and can only hope for the common sense of politicians, advisors, and those in charge that this outbreak does not escalate into a global problem. Unfortunately, I have legitimate doubts about that. That's about the problems. Now for the Church Congress. Let me put it this way:

If you want an overview of the multitude of events, dates, and locations, you should install the app right away. Due to the large number of events, it is practically impossible to print out a map of the event locations, and the detailed program booklet with over 450 pages would also be difficult to carry around in print. However, it is an indispensable tool for planning visits throughout the day. In the program booklet, all events are divided into categories for clarity; for example, there is a section devoted to the first and last day, such as the opening and closing services. The heading for each event includes the type of event, the time, information about the event, and a code that allows you to view interactive information online.

For example, the venue. To ensure that the sometimes longer distances can be covered comfortably, the ticket for the Church Days also serves as a travel ticket for the city center and all three regional zones. This ensures that everyone can get to any location. Other sections include Bible studies, keynote panels, the socio-political and spiritual program, culture, encounters and counseling, and a marketplace of opportunities. Please note: Due to the expected high attendance at the Kirchentag, the organizer has already advised that admission to events/services may be denied due to overcrowding. Early arrival is therefore

Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

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essential.

At the start on Wednesday, there will be two parallel opening services, both from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The live-streamed service will take place on the stage on the Human Rights Square under the theme "Colorfully Connected," featuring Bishop Meister (sermon) from Hanover, among others. The President of the 39th German Evangelical Church Congress, Ms. Siegesmund, will also be present. The second service will take place on the stage on the Opera Square under the motto "Curious." In addition to the theologian and director of RefLab Zurich, Ms. Baumberger, Superintendent Günther from Göttingen and Pastor Möring from Hamburg will be present, as will Torsten Zugehör, a member of the Church Congress executive committee, and others.

For some, the highlight of this Wednesday will be the large service from 6:00 p.m. to approximately 6:30 p.m., also on the Human Rights Square, where Hanover Mayor Onay, Federal President Steinmeier, Mr. Weil, Minister-President of Lower Saxony, and Bishop Dr. Wilmer of Hildesheim will speak. Please note: Increased security measures apply to this service, including identity checks. Arrive early and admission is limited. It should also be noted that many events take place simultaneously in different locations. This means that visitors must decide in advance which event they want to attend. Apart from events on the exhibition grounds, it is therefore not possible to switch or simply attend both events at the same time.

On Wednesday evenings, street festivals under the motto "Sounds of the Heart" take place at various locations, usually from 6 p.m. onwards. This will be the case on the following stages/squares: Stage at the Leinewelle, Leinetorbrücke, Marktkirche, Kröpcke, Köbelinger Markt, Hannah-Arendt-Platz, Schmiedestr./Osterstr., Platz der Weltausstellung, Ballhofplatz, Frederikenplatz, Georgstr. and Ernst-August-Platz. Two concerts will conclude the evening: a concert by Marquess starting at 8 p.m. on the Platz der Menschenrechte stage, and Sacred Concerts with a concert on the Opernplatz stage, also starting at 8 p.m. And those who follow the concerts until the end at 9:30 p.m. can take part in the night blessing with a sea of candles afterwards.

Which will take place on each stage. Various Bible studies will be taking place on Thursday starting at 9:30 a.m. I've picked out a few here with special participants. In Hall 16 of the Hanover Exhibition Center, this will be with Bodo Ramelow. In the Theater Aegi on Aegidientorplatz, it will be with Winfried Kretschmann, and in Halls 14/15, Hubertus Heil will be there. At the Schauspielhaus Prinzenstr. you can meet Luisa Neubauer (please don't). On Friday the Bible study continues at 9:30 a.m. with Katrin - Göring - Eckhardt in the Convention Center Hall 2 of the exhibition center, in Hall 2 with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Margot Käßmann, in the Neustadt City and Court Church of St. Johannis Rote Reihe 8 with Dr. Thomas de Maziere.

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In Hall 4 of the exhibition center with Mr. Weil, and finally in Hall 17 with Armin Laschet. On Saturday, starting at 9:30 a.m., you can meet Bettina Limperg, President of the Federal Court of Justice, in Hall 16, along with Bishop Dr. Bätzing, Chairman of the German Bishops' Conference. In Hall 2, you can meet Dr. Eckhardt von Hirschhausen. Ms. Merkel will also be there on the first day; unfortunately, I couldn't find the date, but if you look, you'll find it. The panels will focus on current, burning, and well-known unresolved issues. In Hall 2, each Thursday and Friday, starting at 10 a.m., there will be a current topic; I could imagine the current tensions between India and Pakistan, for example. Also interesting:

Hall 4, starting at 3 p.m. on Friday: Between loss of prosperity and profit maximization. Practically everyone is affected and involved in some way. Same hall on Saturday, starting at 11 a.m., with the topic: Sexual violence and abuse of power. And again on this day, another current topic will be discussed in Hall 16, starting at 7 p.m. Of course, services and prayers will be held in all sorts of churches and venues every day. Due to the diversity, I can only refer to the program, which can be viewed online. Here is the link: www.kirchentag.de . By the way, if you would like access to a complete map of Hanover, not the relatively small section shown on the Kirchentag website, visit this link: https://shorturl.at/8rsJH

Of course, there will also be smaller thematic panels, talks, and discussions. For example, on Friday at 11:00 a.m. in Hall 17 with Ricarda Lang, Dr. Justus von Daniels, Correctiv and Louis Klamroth, moderator of Hart aber fair, and other guests. In my opinion, the three right people have been invited. On Saturday, from 11:00 a.m., the topic will be: Racist Realities, Anti-Racist Demands at the Marktkirche Hanns – Lilje Platz. Already on Thursday, the focus will be on right-wing extremist codes and their deconstruction at the Volkshochschule (adult education center) on Burgstrasse 1st floor. On Saturday, at the same location, the panel "Preserving Humanity in War" will take place at 11:00 a.m.

Followed by "Alternatives to War and the Military" at 1:00 p.m.; a panel that should be mandatory for some of the politicians and speakers present at the Church Congress. Also at 1:00 p.m., the panel will address respect on the internet, another fascinating topic. That's it for now with the presentations of selected events; there are many more worth mentioning; just browse the online program booklet. But I'd like to point out one more thing at the end: The interactive forum in the Convention Center Hall 1 at the exhibition center on Thursday from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. will explore the Bible through 81 texts. Nine themes, each with nine Bible texts.

You can engage in conversation and exchange with experts at so-called discussion islands. And there are plenty of them; around 20 doctors and professors will be available to answer questions. Take advantage of this opportunity. Let's skip to the end. Finally, on Sunday, the live-streamed closing service will take place at 10:00 a.m. on the Human Rights Square with the participation of numerous clergy, celebrities, and artists. And that's after five days of the Kirchentag with encounters and exchanges of experiences from all

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over the world, hopefully also with the acquisition of new experiences, values, and knowledge that will make this world a better place to live. Courageous, strong, and courageous.

Oh, I forgot something: Of course, I'll be there every day of the Kirchentag. Recognizable by the yellow vest with a cross print on the back and front, along with the Kirchentag logo. I also carry a special red Kirchentag PHOTO ID card. Anyone who recognizes me and can tell me the Kirchentag motto will receive a souvenir of this event: a 40mm diameter medal with an image of Jesus on the front, and the Last Supper with the 12 Apostles on the back. 24k gold-plated. While supplies last. I reserve the right to give medals to selected participants.

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