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Reformation truck travelling from Geneva to 67 European cities

Events that mark the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation are being launched today in the Reformation city of Geneva. Federal Councillor Alain Berset gave the welcoming address. The Reformation truck, which will travel from Geneva to 67 Reformation cities in 19 countries, was unveiled at the international commencement. Events to mark the anniversary will be held in Switzerland and throughout Europe in the coming months. The aim is not to return to a mystical date in history, but rather to reflect on what the Reformation means to the generations of today and tomorrow.

In his address, Federal Councillor Alain Berset described the Reformation as being “a movement whose spiritual, cultural, societal and political influence has shaped large parts of the globe for half a millennium.” The Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs also emphasised the key role played by Switzerland in the Reformation: “Switzerland was one of the epicentres of this spiritual and social earthquake.” Federal Councillor Berset called for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation to be celebrated inter-denomination-ally, and to deepen dialogue, as there is much more that unites Protestants and Catholics than divides them.

Anniversary celebration in the spirit of freedom

The importance of the ecumenical aspect in this anniversary year was also stressed by the President of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, Gottfried Locher. The Reformers of 500 years ago were not looking to create a schism within the Church, but simply to renew the existing Church. For the Federation of Churches, what counts most is not Luther's posting of his theses 500 years ago, but rather to reflect on what the Reformation means to the generations of today and tomorrow. “think open – act free – believe anew”: this is the slogan that the Church Federation chose for the anniversary. At its core is the Reformation's concept of freedom, as Gottfried Locher commented: “All people are equal before God – this tenet of the reformers was a liberating message 500 years ago. And it has remained a message of freedom to this day.” In this sense, the Reformation is of significance not just to Protestants, but also to people of other faiths and to non-believers alike.

The Reformation truck and the European Roadmap Project

The Reformation truck, which will spend the next six months travelling throughout Europe, was formally inaugurated in Geneva. "The Reformation truck, which will pass through 19 countries, highlights the fact that the Reformation is a global citizen", commented Chairman of the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm. The Reformation truck will stop for 36 hours in each city in order to present the local history of the Reformation. The ultimate destination is Wittenberg, where Martin Luther lived and worked, and where the World Reformation Exhibition – Gates of Freedom opens on 20 May 2017. Switzerland will be present with an artistic concept. The pavilion will be designed by the Basel-based architects Christ & Gantenbein.

Geneva - Reformation City and City of Peace

A fascinating programme will be staged over the coming two days on the Plaine de Plainpalais in Geneva, where the Reformation Coach can be viewed. Events will also include an inter-cultural and inter-faith evening for the youth. "The objective is to demonstrate that Geneva, not least due to its Reformation history, has become a City of Peace", says organiser and President of the Protestant Church of Geneva, Emmanuel Fuchs. Many international organisations are headquartered in Geneva, for example the World Council of Churches (WCC), which brings together some 350 different churches with over 500 million believers. For WCC General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit, the current Church movement towards unity is emblematic of the fact that "there is a path towards reciprocal understanding, towards reconciliation and ultimately towards peace."

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