

# The Presbyterian Church in Göttingen

## The "Evangelisch- Reformierte Gemein- de Göttingen"

### The Church Building

The Presbyterian congregation was founded in 1750 by French- and Swiss-reformed members of the newly founded university. The church on Untere Karspüle was built in 1753 by the famous Swiss botanist and surgeon, professor Albrecht von Haller. The church building, opposite the Institute of Botany, is a rectangular structure characterized by large windows. The baroque church interior, however, becomes an octagon with its tiered, wooden pews encircling the open space infused with light. The pulpit is raised above a simple table. Corinthian columns as well as pilasters surround it. The sounding board above the pulpit is crowned by a symbolized bible bearing the legend "Evangelium", signifying the gospel as the ultimate church authority. There is neither an altar nor a crucifix in the church - in accordance with the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment, Exodus 20:4: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image...". Presbyterian tradition disapproves of all visual art inside a church. In this respect, the extreme simplicity of a Presbyterian church interior differs from other protestant churches.

### The History

The Presbyterian or Reformed Church, just as the Lutheran Church, dates back to the Reformation of the 16th century.



Most important for the Presbyterian Church were the Swiss reformers Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) of Zürich and John Calvin (1509-1564) of Geneva. They centered their worship services – and indeed all Christian life - on the reading of the Bible, the singing of Psalms, preaching and prayers. Hence "reformed", i.e. renewed Church! The organization was and still is democratic – copied after the structure of the Swiss city-state. Calvin introduced 4 different offices in the congregation: the presbyters or elders, the preachers, the deacons and the teachers. Today, approximately 70 million Reformed Christians from 182 different churches in 90 countries are united in the World Alliance of Reformed (Presbyterian) Churches. In Germany, the Lutheran and the Reformed (Presbyterian) Churches are associated in the EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland). In 2003, 25,8 million Germans – about a 3rd of the population - belonged to the protestant churches of Germany.

### The Congregation

At the time of writing (2009), the Presbyterian congregation in Göttingen has 2.700 members living throughout the town. Our congregation has always been independent and self-governing. We have an elected presbytery consisting of 12 lay members and our two pastors. Every 3rd year, 6 new members are elected to the board. This assures the continuing vitality of the presbytery. Our members pay their church tithes and dues directly to our own church finance office.

You are cordially invited to visit our divine Service on Sundays at 10 a.m. or to join one of our varied church groups. You are also invited to come along to the North Sea calm "green island" of Spiekeroog, where the congregation offers many trips for visiting and staying in the hostel "Haus Winfried."

If you would like to know more about us, or to be shown around the church either individually or in a group, please contact us at the following address:  
Untere Karspüle 11, 37073 Göttingen /Germany.  
Tel. +49(0)551-54737-0 | Fax +49(0)551-54737-23  
[www.refo-goettingen.de](http://www.refo-goettingen.de) | [info@refo-goettingen.de](mailto:info@refo-goettingen.de) 2009

