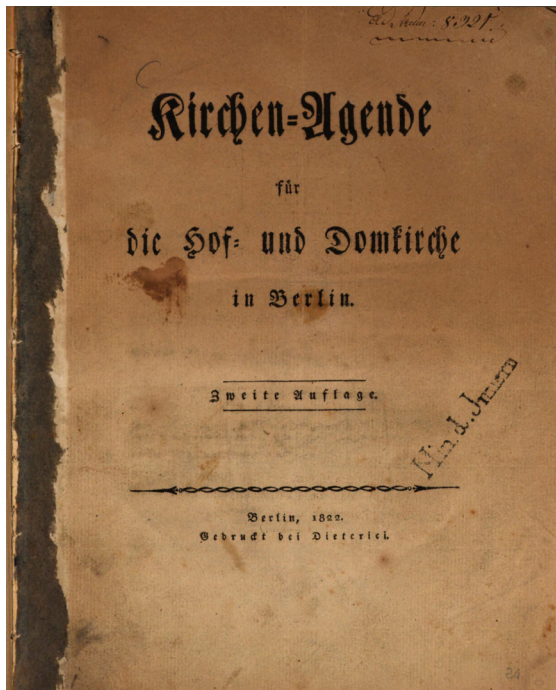


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## This Week in Eden History

### November 7 | Evangelical Church of Prussia



*Title page of the Agende (book of worship) developed for use in both Lutheran and Reformed congregations in Prussia, 1822. A copy of the book is located in Eden Archives | Image source: [Münchener Digitalisierungs Zentrum Digitale Bibliothek](#)*

The formation of the **Evangelical Church of Prussia** began on **Nov. 7, 1817**, when King Frederick William III expressed his desire to unite Lutheran and Reformed congregations in his realm. This was the first of several decrees that resulted in the creation of the largest European Protestant church at the time and provided a model for what would later become the Evangelical Synod of North America.

The Prussian ruling family had converted to Calvinism in 1617, although the majority of its subjects remained Lutheran. Calvinist presence increased over time as Prussia welcomed refugees fleeing oppression from other European countries. Ongoing tensions between Reformed and Lutheran confessions suggested to the rulers that a united church would be beneficial.

After Frederick III ascended the throne, his decrees gradually moved the two confessions toward union. First, in 1798, he ordered development of a common liturgy for use in both Lutheran and Reformed congregations.

In 1808, the secular administrations of the Lutheran and Reformed churches merged into one office under the Ministry of the Interior. On Oct. 30, 1817, a union communion service was conducted at St. Nicholas Church in Berlin. Frederick then expressed his desire on Nov. 7, 1817 that all the Lutheran and

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Reformed congregations unite into one church (he could not enforce it legally). Many congregations cooperated, but some resisted and remained separate according to their own confessions.

Frederick gradually increased pressure to unify. The common book of worship, begun in 1798, was published in 1821, and Protestant congregations were directed to use it exclusively in 1822. Despite Lutheran objections, a large majority complied by 1825. Congregations and pastors were directed to use the new communion liturgy for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession in 1830, but “Old Lutheran” conservatives fiercely resisted. Many emigrated to the United States and Australia between 1835 and 1840 forming what would become the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church of Australia, respectively.

The concept of a united Protestant church spread to other German territories and was brought to the U.S. by the founders of the Evangelical Synod of North America, the denomination that established Eden Seminary.

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