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## **GREETINGS TO AMERICAN COMMUNITY LEADERS:**

Welcome to Germany and to Wittenberg. As you visit some of the places where Martin Luther lived, worked, and preached, you will have a unique opportunity to learn firsthand about one of the most influential figures in history. Not only was Martin Luther instrumental in making the Bible accessible to millions around the world, but his translation was a unifying force in creating the modern German language. As you know, the legacy of Luther's personal spiritual quest was forged 500 years ago in these very

lands. This anniversary, following the tragedies and the triumphs of the 20th century, and occurring during the complex challenges of the present day, is proof that Luther's legacy has special meaning for us today.

Last year, my wife Kimberly and I visited Wittenberg with my father, a retired Presbyterian minister. The teachings of Martin Luther about the power of personal faith had played a role in his own spiritual quest. My father was also very conscious, however, of the fact that we were visiting a whole region

that had been effectively sealed off during the Cold War, for some 50 years – or most of his adult life. In that context, the Reformation, which symbolized the right of individual freedom in religious expression – something which has also been an essential American liberty since the founding of the United States as a democracy – had special meaning. And indeed, the church played an important part in the resistance to the government of the DDR, in the Peaceful Revolution, and in the Fall of the Wall. Kimberly and I wish you an inspirational journey through this consequential and fascinating time in history.

Ambassador John B. Emerson

