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School of Theology NEWSLETTER



Good theology

When teaching students, one question that we frequently ask ourselves is: What is good theology? How can we pass on convictions – but also methods? How can we develop our students' knowledge – and wisdom? And what will help enrich their thinking skills – as well as their

personality? Well, these are all things that we are trying to do with our students here in Friedensau. Of course, we are still learning. But we do aim at providing space where people can reflect on their faith and learn how to serve the church and humanity better.

As an Adventist institution of higher learning, our God-given aim is to “give him glory” (Rev 14:7). Our lives, our reasoning, our personal goals – all this has a higher purpose. What is more, the gospel is to reach “every nation, tribe, language and people” (Rev 14:6). This is why we initiated Institutes of Adventist Studies and of Mission Studies – to express our faith in a way that appeals to people today, and to share it in a way that attracts them to our Saviour. We invite you to participate of His story and our story by connecting with us. Let us know how you want to be part of a community of research and study to support God's mission today.

[Stefan Höschele](#), Ph.D., Dean of Theology

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Arthur Daniells Institute of Mission Studies Holds Second International Symposium on Adventist Mission in Europe

During the last two centuries, Europe has experienced major changes threatening the well-being and even the existence of the Christian churches. These changes include secularisation, individualism, declining birth rates, a decreasing interest in the church, but also a growing interest in spirituality. The Arthur Daniells Institute of Mission Studies (ADIMIS) of Friedensau Adventist University is addressing the need of the church in Europe to become a more relevant institution for the contemporary world.

ADIMIS has conducted research on issues like the European secular society, demographic developments within the church, and analysis of conversions and drop-outs. These studies show that many congregations suffer from major church-health-related deficiencies like demographic shifts, declining participation in mission and ministry, and clashes with society. If not addressed on time, they will have irreparable consequences. ADIMIS is committed to conduct empirical research on Europe as a mission field, to train pastors and theologians through the MTS program, to provide space for the exchange of ideas, and to foster networking among SDA institutions in Europe. ADIMIS is also planning research studies on the conversion process in congregations throughout Germany and Europe and other studies that shed light on the situation of the church in Europe in order to discover better ways of sharing the Gospel across the European continent.

One of the major activities of ADIMIS is the yearly International Symposium on Adventist Mission in Europe convening on the premises of Friedensau Adventist University and bringing together pastors, theologians, researchers, and church members from different regions. The main objectives are (1) to create a platform for professional reflection, analysis, and exchange of ideas on SDA mission work in Europe; (2) to explore biblical principles and research results regarding past and present experiences; and (3) to plan for the utilization of research tools and outlining new research areas for supporting mission work in Europe. The first two conventions took place in November 2015 and 2016 with participants from 12 and 29 countries, respectively, all of which are involved in some way or another in Adventist mission work in Europe. The program included morning devotionals, presentations, discussions, and planning sessions.

Reinder Bruinsma (Netherlands) and László Szabó (Germany) discussed theological and empirical aspects of church health. Paolo Benini (Italy), Andreas Pfeiffer (Germany) and Arnold Zwahlen (Switzerland) focused on best practice models for mission-oriented small group ministries in secular contexts and on the requirements for small group ministries that are significant in the European context. Jurriën den Hollander (Netherlands) presented the results of a study showing the challenges faced by the church and how the Netherlands Union is tackling them. Other topics included "Motivating members to take responsibility" (Atte Helminen, Finland), "How do Adventist mission theology and inter-church relations correlate?" (Stefan Höschele, Germany), and "Constructs in inculturation: Models of adapting Adventist theology with their biblical underpinnings" (Chigemezi Wogu, Nigeria).

A notable example of empirical studies connected to church strategizing was the analysis of demographical data of the Bulgarian SDA Church presented by Vladimir Krumov, a pastor from Bulgaria and former MTS student. He gave an overview of the challenges the Bulgarian church is facing today, summarized the methods and approaches discussed in contemporary missiological literature, and outlined recommendations for tackling unhealthy discipleship processes, ineffective evangelism, aging, gender gap and irrelevant worship services.

Plans for the 3rd symposium on November 27–30, 2017, are laid and previous participants are looking forward to it. For more information write to laszlo.szabo@thf-friedensau.de.



A special visit to Germany

Recently, Pastor Joseph Bulengela and his wife Martha visited Friedensau University again after fifteen years. It was to them "like treading on the old academic paths" where he had graduated with a "Master of Theology" degree in 2001. Since then Pr. Bulengela has worked in Tanzania as District Pastor, Stewardship Director, Lecturer at the University of Arusha and finally as President of South Nyanza Conference located south of Lake Victoria. Their son Peter returned to Germany in 2010 for his own studies.

It was a privilege for Peter's parents to attend his "Master of Arts in Counseling" Graduation at the Friedensau Adventist University held on October 16, 2016. Pr. Bulengela writes: "We praise God for this accomplishment. I still remember the motto of the University at the time of my studies: *Studieren mit Visionen* (Studying with a Vision) which inspired me to take Biblical languages seriously under our 'Gamaliel' teacher, Prof. Rieckmann. Many students at the University of Arusha benefitted from this effort later on."

While in Germany, Pr. and Mrs. Bulengela visited old acquaintances and refreshed the relationships they have had during their former stay in Friedensau. They enjoyed walking around the Friedensau Campus, visiting the playground where their three children used to play with other children. Pr. Bulengela and his wife were accompanied by their third son Mussa Bulengela. They were all very much impressed by the friendly welcome and hospitality of the University Administration and Lecturers. The graduation itself was a thrilling event, including the news that their son had won an academic prize. The family thanked the University for leading their son to higher academic levels, making him a worthy representative of his mother land.

Through Dr. László Szabó, Lecturer in Mission Studies, through academic and mission activities the Adventist Church in Germany is still connected to its former mission field. Pr. Bulengela expressed his gratitude to the University for sending outstanding lecturers to the University of Arusha who have been very helpful in teaching Biblical languages. "The hospitality of the people of Friedensau such as Dr. Heinz, Dr. Höschele (Dean of the School of Theology), Prof. Dr. Pöhler and others was to us like a winter cake and hot tea which made our stay warm and satisfactory. May God bless the *Hochschule* Friedensau to remain a tower of mission work until our Lord comes."

Pastor Joseph Bulengela is now retired and lives in Mwanza, P.O. Box 10459, Tanzania (josebulengela@gmail.com).




German course at Friedensau Adventist University

At the beginning of the academic year, which always begins in September, there were 24 new students in the German course eager to learn a new language and explore a new culture. After a placement test, the students were divided into two groups according to their level of German language skills. No German is needed to join the beginners' group.

The German course includes grammar classes, reading, writing, listening comprehension, phonetics, conversation classes, literature classes, regional and cultural studies, and field trips to various cities in the vicinity. At the end of one year it is astonishing and very gratifying for students and teachers to see the fruits of their hard work. Students who came with almost no knowledge of German are able to converse with locals and are themselves surprised to see how well they can manage the language already.

German is a challenging, but also a very fascinating language. If you (or someone you know) would like to broaden your horizon, get to know a new culture, and learn a new language that is beneficial for careers in many areas, come to Friedensau Adventist University!

For more information, go to <http://www.thh-friedensau.de/studies/german-as-a-foreign-language/> or contact the German course director: aila.stammer@thh-friedensau.de.



**Institute of
Adventist Studies:
Second International
Symposium**

**Perceptions of the
Protestant Reformation
in Seventh-day Adventism**

**FRIEDENSAU
ADVENTIST
UNIVERSITY**

New Book on the Reformation Forthcoming

Last May, 18 scholarly papers were presented at the Second Symposium of the Institute of Adventist Studies in Friedensau. The presentations – dealing with “Perceptions of the Protestant Reformation on Seventh-day Adventism” – are currently being prepared for publication. Watch for more information in the next newsletter.

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