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School of Theology NEWSLETTER



This is the third newsletter of the School of Theology of Friedensau Adventist University (FAU). Thus we can almost say that it already has become a good tradition. As the newly elected rector of this institution and a theologian myself I am proud of our faculty and students and their achievements.

Looking back, a couple of months ago, a statement "On the Practice of Ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" was issued by the School of Theology to encourage further study of the biblical meaning of this sacred rite. (You can find it on our website.) This past May, Friedensau hosted a scholarly symposium on "Perceptions of the Protestant Reformation in Seventh-day Adventism" that gained high appreciation among the participants and in the Adventist church (more on it below).

Looking forward, in April 2017 FAU will host the bi-annual Theology Teachers' Convention for the three European regions of the SDA church. In view of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, its theme will be "Freedom and Accountability", a major theological and societal concern of the Magisterial Reformers. It is also highly relevant in the church today.

As one of the leading Adventist institutions in Europe, we want to contribute to academic research and scholarly debate. We are focused on serving the worldwide church in fulfilling its mission. We invite you to share our commitment wherever you are.

Prof. Dr. Roland E. Fischer, Rector

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2nd IAS Symposium Held on Campus

How did and do Seventh-day Adventists perceive the 16th-century Reformation? This question and other related ones brought more than 70 people including scholars from various parts of the world together at the IAS symposium held at Friedensau, May 9-12, 2016. They met at a round table in a cordial and friendly atmosphere reflecting on Adventists' perspectives of the Protestant Reformation. The symposium's highlights also included spiritual reflections with devotions centering on the reformation and ended with a trip to Wittenberg where the German reformation all started with Martin Luther.



Let the Flame Continue to Burn

In 2017, the city of Wittenberg will be crowded with people from all over the world who are visiting the birthplace of the Protestant Reformation. On May 12, there was just a small group taking a look at the church doors where supposedly Martin Luther had nailed his 95 theses almost 500 years ago.

The group comes from Friedensau—only about 40 miles away—where they participated in the 2nd symposium of the Institute of Adventist Studies at Friedensau Adventist University, discussing for three days “Perceptions of the Protestant Reformation in Seventh-day Adventism.” 17 contributors from Europe, America and Asia presented and discussed 18 papers grouped into three major sections: Martin Luther in Seventh-day Adventist Perspective, Perspectives on the Magisterial and Radical Reformation, and The Impact of the Reformation on Seventh-day Adventism. 30 guest auditors and 20 theology students from Friedensau Adventist University attended the meetings, introduced each day by a morning meditation led by one of the theology teachers of the university.

Now, on this sunny spring day, the conference participants enjoy an excursion to Lutherstadt Wittenberg, looking back on a symposium packed with impressive insights on how the Protestant Reformation was studied, understood, reinterpreted, and kept alive throughout the history of Seventh-day Adventism. Today it is our task to apply the new insights and let the flame of the reformation burn brighter every day in order to spread the truth of the everlasting gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

For those of you who would have liked to participate in this Reformation symposium, there is good news. The conference papers will be published in a book to appear on time for the Luther year 2017. We will inform you when it is available in upcoming editions of this newsletter. Stay tuned ...



News Report from the Conference

“For the first time ever at a major conference, scholars of church history brought Anabaptists into the conversation about the Reformation’s meaning for the Adventist Church. Well- and lesser-known reformers came into play every day, raising provocative questions about the church’s identity and spiritual health. Around a table in the “Culture Barn” at beautiful Friedensau Adventist University in the former East Germany, participants reflected on the “Perceptions of the Protestant Reformation in Seventh-day Adventism.” They had come together, from Germany, the United States and places as far away as the Philippines, under the auspices of the university’s Institute of Adventist Studies.”

Charles Scriven, USA, contributor

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Responses from Conference Participants

„It was truly both very enjoyable and a high honor to be part of this conference, and I look forward to continued interaction with friends, new and old, we worked with at the conference.”

Nicholas Miller, Andrews University, USA, keynote speaker

„Dear Friends at Friedensau! It was a great privilege for me to attend the 2nd Symposium of the Institute of Adventist Studies. Thank you so much for organizing it. The presentations and the information they contained were of great benefit to me! I am looking forward to the printed version of the papers. Thank you for the certificate as well!”

Tihomir Sabo, AUC College of Theology, Marusevec, Croatia

„It was a great pleasure for me to be at Friedensau for the first time and enjoy the place and the meetings. Congratulations on the wonderful job you and your team did in organizing this event and making us feel very welcome!”

Sergio Becerra, Universidad Adventista del Plata, Argentina, guest auditor

„The Reformation Symposium was a first class experience. The surroundings were beautiful and tranquil, the food delicious and plentiful, the hosts most solicitous. The form of the conference was remarkable as the scholar participants sat around an inner circle of tables and participants surrounding them giving both closeness yet a slight distinction at the same time. But what most interested and touched me was the gentle thoughtful, reflective tone as presenters wrestled with the original meaning and contemporary relevance of events and writings of the past. Liberal leaning and conservative leaning sat together in respectful dialogue -- a model of the community and engagement. I over heard one professor state it was the most unique conference he has ever attended. Kudos Friedensau.”

Mark Ranzinger, USA (observer, physician)



Conference Organizer Explains *raison d'être*

Rolf J. Pöhler, IAS director and main conference organizer, explained in an interview the goal of the symposium.

[Watch the five-minute interview here ...](#)

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