

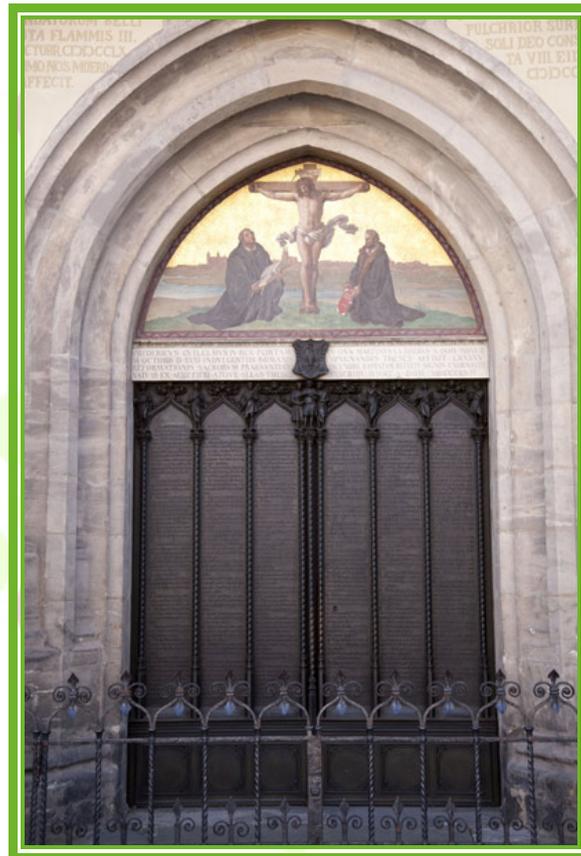
## 500 Protestant Schools – One World

### Towards the Reformation Jubilee 2017

Second International Conference of **schools500reformation**

October 15 – 17 2015, in Wittenberg, Germany

Nearly 500 years after Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to this door...



...nearly 100 Protestant leaders of schools from Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Europe met for three days in Wittenberg to

- learn about each other and about **schools500reformation**
- discuss the identity and profile of Protestant schools in an ecumenical and global horizon
- establish new contacts and partnerships
- plan and coordinate further steps towards the Reformation Jubilee 2017
- experience and celebrate the interplay of reformation, education and global responsibility in Martin Luther's home town, Wittenberg.

This summary recognises that words and pictures can only give an outline of a special time of fellowship that delegates were privileged to share together.

Opening the conference, **Prof. Dr. Siebren Miedema of the VU University Amsterdam in The Netherlands** explored what is Protestant in Protestant Schools, rooted, as they are, in the Reformation. A central aim of the project **schools500reformation** is to create a global network of schools as part of the celebrations of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Reformation. Over 550 schools had already signed up to this, a very hopeful sign of continuing reformation (ecclesia semper reformanda). The establishments and all the participants are positioning themselves as Protestant schools and as Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, trying to make clear and distinct what it means for them to be a Protestant School and to be Christian today in a secular age.

Professor Miedema explained that, during the Reformation, the reformers formulated five theological convictions, the five Solas, stating the core issues, the essentials of Christianity:

1. **Sola Scriptura:** the bible alone is our highest authority
2. **Sola Fide:** we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ alone
3. **Sola Gratia:** we are saved by the grace of God alone
4. **Solus Christus:** Jesus Christ alone is our lord, Saviour and King
5. **Soli Deo Gloria:** we live for the glory of God alone

He outlined key elements of Luther's reformation programme, which might be seen as follows:

- that Christian schools are the place for all children without distinction between children based on gender or social background;
- religious education should be a/the core subject in the curriculum;
- (local) governments should take responsibility for good education for all;
- Christian schools should be open, welcoming places, safe havens for children and young people, places where the unconditional love of God we receive as His gift to us is the cement for the relationship between pupils and teachers, and among teachers.

There is no fixed and universal, that is one and only, answer to the question, *what is Protestant in Protestant Schools?* Protestant schools (like all other schools) are always schools in context, that is, schools in a particular town or city, in a specific region of a country, in a country with particular educational practices, policies, regulations, demands, educational concepts, sometimes embedded in unique relationships between state and church, with a particular pupil and teacher population, and last but not least with a particular institutional biography, the school's genealogy.

Therefore, it is important that every school should answer the question in a contextual way, on its own account.

In order to help delegates answer the question, "What makes my school a Protestant school?", three types of school were identified:

- *Tradition oriented schools*, where personal development and religious education are stressed, bringing the Gospel to pupils and ensuring that they are educated in the Bible and in Christianity.

- *Diversity oriented schools*, where the transmission of skills and equal opportunities are important to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society. RE is less important, but pupils understand Christian values.
- *Meaningful learning oriented schools*, with an emphasis on balanced attention to education, the Bildung (edification), the embracing personhood formation of pupils in all domains of their development. Children are encouraged to think for themselves and be open to others. RE strongly addresses the Christian position but also uses a method that is more focused on religious diversity.

This keynote opening lecture led to lively discussions in workshops which focussed on questions set in the lecture:

- What do we think, in 2015 and the time ahead, that the embracing or broad identity of Protestant schools should be?
- How do we relate to the portraits in terms of Tradition oriented schools, Diversity oriented schools, and Meaningful learning oriented schools?
- Are there real constraints in our own organisations, in the national educational policy system or in a particular conceptualisation of the separation of church and state?
- Is the Protestant aspect exclusively related to the religious dimension of our school's identity (one-dimensional) or is it in theory and practice approached in a multidimensional way with a strong relationship between the religious, educational and pedagogical-organizational components?
- How about the professional and personal commitment of the teachers and other staff in school?
- Is there an openness for receiving the gifts of God and Jesus through his Holy Spirit?

Since all schools are seen in their own context, no single answer was sought: delegates discussed their own establishments and shared ideas and experiences around these additional questions:

- Are Christian schools a place for all children without distinctions made which are based on gender or social background?
- Is religious education a core subject in the curricula of our schools?
- Is there openness to meet pupils and adults from other religions and worldviews in our schools?
- Do governments take enough responsibility for good education for all?
- Are Christian schools open, welcoming places, safe havens for children and young people?
- Are they also places where the unconditional love of God we receive as His gift to us, is the cement for the relationship between pupils and teachers, and among teachers?

The workshops split delegates into smaller groups with a rich variety of backgrounds – ethnic, spiritual and cultural – and gave fascinating confirmation that there is no single answer to these questions, but also confirmed that all were working in unity with a shared Protestant belief.

Following up from this, **Prof. Dr. Henrik Simojoki of the University of Bamberg** brought us the exciting news that there are almost 20,000 Protestant Schools in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the context of Global Protestantism, he expounded theological entry points for the **schools500reformation** project. With 1.4 billion Christians in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, twice as many as in North America and Europe, the number of Protestant Schools in these Southern hemisphere countries should not, but may, surprise us in the North.

Professor Simojoki illustrated **the central presumption of the project:**

*In today's global society, issues of identity and profile of Protestant schools, or the mission of Protestant education, can be adequately answered only in a global horizon.*

In today's world, contexts that are geographically separated on a map actually move closer together day by day and, at the same time, further away. Syria and South-Germany are the latest example for sudden overlaps of seemingly distant contexts. It is beyond doubt that the recent waves of mass-migration will change not only the social reality, but also the religious landscape in both countries to an extent which is currently difficult to oversee.

Protestant schools worldwide embrace an enormous plurality of contexts and an impressive and rich spectrum of denominations, our project including Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Adventist and Mennonite schools. But the design of our logo spirals us towards one centre, a single core of Protestant identity and belief.

A global dimension is present in the Evangelist Luke's use of the Greek word "oikuméne", meaning the whole or inhabited world. Referring specifically to three of Martin Luther's 95 theses, a vision of global Protestantism was presented using three of the solae with which delegates were now becoming familiar:

- *sola grata* – universal grace.

If God's universal grace really covers each and all of us then Protestant education must not stop at national borders.

- *sola scriptura* – global gospel.

As young people in the Netherlands learning with the Bible tend to do so differently from their peers in Tanzania or Indonesia, if these young people were suddenly to meet and work together, they may at first feel a little uneasy, challenged by these differences. In a globalized world, it becomes more and more important, that our students and their teachers acquire competencies in dealing with differences within Christianity. As educators, we know and should learn to appreciate the educational value of differences even more. Encounters with religious otherness broadens our own horizons, we can learn a lot about ourselves and our own perspective by dealing with differences constructively. So, religious learning in today's global society has to include and cherish both: the commonalities as well as the differences.

- *sola fide* – public faith.

To really be a Church in the world, the church has to be a church for the world, and so must Protestant Schools, not with the club-mentality of some elitist private schools, cultivating an inward-bound, exclusive identity of being Protestant, but, as the salt of the earth, striving into the public, to the market places, ferociously seeking to make a difference.

This led Professor Simojoki to identify an important aim for the conference:

*To open up and explore the global horizon of faith and education.*

And this aim was immediately fulfilled as two African speakers gave an African Perspective of Protestant schools in Rwanda and Sudan.

First, **The Rev'd. Samuel Mutabazi, Protestant Council of Rwanda, Kigali, Rwanda** told the conference how, as in many African countries, Rwandan schools were initially set up by missionaries, providing for the poor and marginalised, often affected by famine and otherwise condemned to life in ignorance. Protestant schools now contribute to education for all in Africa, with 19,403 schools educating 4.5 million pupils in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 1,580 schools in Cameroon educating 500,000 pupils, plus 15 universities, and 1,311 schools in Rwanda with more than 700,000 pupils, as well as 6 Protestant universities.

Around each of these schools are new buildings for small commercial enterprises, lodgings for teachers, small markets to provide for local needs, as well as electrical and sanitary installations. Parental involvement is encouraged so that provision is made for whole families. Different Protestant churches put aside their different emphases to work together, finding unity in diversity.

Challenges have arisen in several areas, including tensions between Catholic and Protestant providers, difficulties accessing state funding, nationalisation, zeal for evangelisation replacing careful development planning, quantity supplanting quality, a lack of properly qualified teachers, poor infrastructure, and defining the nature of the value which is added by Protestant identity.

Nevertheless, the numbers of Protestant schools in Africa has continued to grow since the early days of missionaries, contributing enormously to the development of all African countries by offering equal rights and basic education as well as providing opportunities for evangelisation.

This gave rise to a proposal, widely endorsed by delegates:

*The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Protestantism gives an opportunity for the 500 schools to draft a global Protestant Schools charter.*

Widening this African perspective, **Stephen Lubari of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and the Sudan Department of Education and Training** made a special plea for links with South Sudan, torn by continuing conflict, lacking social services and infrastructure, with high death rates from malnutrition, famine, poor hygiene and sanitation. The vision of the Episcopal Church is for quality education with Christian values in all its 43 dioceses. They already have 250 schools educating 50,000 pupils, and one Teacher Training College and now seek to

make these more distinctively Christian, with more places led and staffed by better-trained teachers and headteachers.

*Any school or association willing to form a link with South Sudan is urged to make contact.*

Turning now to the challenge of aligning Protestant schools worldwide with a movement for global learning, **Liam Wegimont, Principal of Mount Temple Comprehensive School in Dublin, Ireland** was the next speaker. He pointed out that, at the heart of what we are about are stories we can tell and visions we can share as schools, situating our stories and visions as Protestant schools within broad movements in education, and global change. And at the heart of who we are and what we do are Teaching and Learning, Care and Community, and Engagement with the World. In the crucible of decision-making, what matters, what grounds us, what provides ethical direction, are stories of our past as schools, and visions of the future.

*Without a vision, the people perish* – but Mr Wegimont caused amusement by pointing out that we would certainly perish if we relied on managerialist versions of organisational vision-mission-objective making processes!

As a deeper people, we need a vision inspired by Protestant ideals.

- We are about reformation;
- We agree to differ; we celebrate difference;
- We are Protestant – we are protesting against injustice;
- We are free-thinking; we promote freedom and freedom of thought; we speak truth to power;
- We are countercultural – and have a joyfully-critical stance towards dominant cultural values;
- We will not be told – we encourage independence of spirit;
- We Question All Authority (except in this office!).

We may, he suggested, treat with suspicion the privatisation of education, global commodification or reducing education to equipping pupils with skills for a workforce. However, we can see hope in a global learning movement that replaces the North-South divide, and the myth of development, with a global consciousness that builds on a post-colonial perspective to create global solidarity based on cognitive justice...together we can transform the world in favour of greater justice and human rights for all.

- The number of extremely poor people rose inexorably until the middle of the 20th century, then roughly stabilized for a few decades. Since the 1990s, the number of poor has plummeted.
- In 1990, more than 12 million children died before the age of 5; this toll has since dropped by more than half.
- Some 16,000 children still die unnecessarily each day. It's maddening and tragic to watch children dying simply because they were born in the wrong place at the wrong time.
- But one reason for our current complacency is a feeling that poverty is inevitable — and that's unwarranted.

*“The world’s best-kept secret is that we live at a historic inflection point when extreme poverty is retreating. United Nations members have just agreed the elimination of extreme poverty by 2030.”* New York Times, October 13th 2015.

Mr Wegimont then asked what this has to do with Protestant schools, and what, in any case, it means to be Protestant schools in a global world? Protestant schools can focus on academic traditions of knowledge in an environment where personal development is nourished, preparing good citizens and committing to social transformation with the aim of changing the world. As the Maastricht Congress decided in 2002, *“Global Education ... is Education that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all.”*

Global education is a process that is participatory, involves a vision of Justice, Equality, Human Rights, Sustainability, and an analysis that links local and global dimensions of issues. It is also an educational response to the realities of a globalising world, an educational necessity in an age of unequal globalisation and growing inequality, an antidote to the globalisation and commoditisation of education and a curricular prerogative – education that is not Global is not really education.

The challenge for us is to align our small stories to broader movements for educational transformation and global change, including movements for Global Learning, to choose stories and visions that put social justice and local and global analysis at the heart, and to align Protestant education with broad global learning movements.

Having listened to inspiring talks and shared thoughts and ideas in workshops, delegates were then encouraged to share ideas directly on a one-to-one basis, encouraged by **Dr. Klára Tarr Cselovszky**, Chair of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) in Hungary. She saw School Twinning as an Ecumenical Opportunity, and was keen to lose no time to promote an initiative to get the schools present at the conference to twin together. In the context of resounding justification of the need for global education and global awareness, and of the heartfelt calls, especially from African countries, for twinning, a risky exercise was undertaken. This was “risky” because delegates were asked to interact together on a one-to-one basis, with no allowance made for language differences – they had to manage. And the risk was justified, because everyone did manage, and thrived all the more on having to manage!

All delegates were given five postcards, and were asked to write down what they could offer another school on a twinning basis. With several delegates to meet individually, each was able to offer the other a gift of their expertise, as expressed on the postcard, with name, address and contact details already written down.

The buzz that this created in the hall was testament to the success of the activity. Everyone went away having met new people, perhaps from new countries, always with new ideas. Many links were made, and we pray that they may bear fruit in the future.

This was a productive end to a busy and fulfilling day, all delegates having ideas in their heads, new relationships in prospect and postcards with contact details in their hands.

Back in the conference hall on Friday morning, **Prof. Dr. Annette Scheunpflug** and **Prof. Dr. Henrik Simojoki** of the University of Bamberg together with other partners, looked back to what had already been achieved as an introduction to the current status of the **schools500reformation** project, and then to begin to define the Next Steps.

Celebrating 500 years of the Reformation gives us the opportunity of exploring and understanding, communicating and celebrating, acting and showing solidarity. The timetable focuses on key aims each year:

2014 – To rediscover roots in Reformation worldwide

2015 – To love each other – serve others in the global world today

2016 – To take responsibility and speak up locally and globally

2017 – To celebrate faith – live life.

Aiming to make Protestant Schools more visible, the project sought 500 schools. By October 2015, there were already more than 550:

*319 from Africa, 160 from Europe, 35 from South America, 11 from North America, 3 from Australia, 2 from Asia, with more joining all the time.*

Regional conferences, for example in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Rwanda and Tanzania in 2014, have improved understanding between Protestant school leaders, while pupils in linked schools have shared projects, for example, history lessons via the internet. Communication has been enhanced by our newsletters, celebrating diverse activities from The Netherlands to Tanzania in text and picture, while YouTube postings have shared music from Brazil to Germany. Practical action has been taken, for example, as members of the Wilhelm-Löwe Schule in Germany have travelled to and worked with a Jubilee School in Rwanda.

And the way ahead might include sharing lessons, sending in school portraits, making small movies as student-reporters, encounters and exchanges, pupils and teachers in linked schools sending postcards or comments, following each other on Facebook and other social media.

In 2017, 300 places will be made available at a Youth Camp in Wittenberg to encourage those from Protestant schools to join in.

We want to work on the worldwide quality of Protestant education, starting by listening to what our pupils want, encouraging them to write their own theses and then sharing them worldwide, seeking to understand them.

In our vision, by 2017, 1000 schools will have joined the platform, there will be 10,000 trees growing in Tanzania, A Thesis for a Better Future from 500 school classes will be given on the same day to regional, national governments and to the UN. And by 2022, protestant schools and different associations worldwide will be working together in a more globally visible way.



Delegates were then privileged to be introduced to **Bishop Prof. Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm**, Head of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany. He gave a vivid demonstration of how to speak up publicly by capturing the attention of the conference, and holding it throughout his talk. As the patron of [schools500reformation](#), he emphatically underlined the necessity of global networking in the field of Protestant education. Further, he pointed out that the reformation jubilee 2017 should be celebrated ecumenically as a great Christ festival, as Luther himself would have wished. His lecture was grounded in a view of public theology that responds to the search for ethical orientation in questions of public relevance. Referring to current challenges like climate change and other phenomena of global injustice, he illustrated how Protestant schools could be agents of change in a global civil society.

The catalyst for the start of the Reformation were Luther's 95 theses. **Prof. Dr. Annette Scheunpflug** and **Prof. Dr. Henrik Simojoki** from Bamberg University explained how this protest for a better future had inspired them to seek 95 theses for a better future from today's students at Protestant Schools Worldwide. Suggestions will be discussed in participating schools and compiled into a 2017 version of 95 theses of Protestant schools worldwide and will be the basis for developing projects within [schools500reformation](#).

They had already made a start, with 32 schools, mainly from Africa and Europe, already contributing, and these early contributions were shared with delegates.

Injustice is a central concern to pupils, children's rights are passionately defended and advocated. A marked difference in tone is apparent – in Africa, the better world is described to a greater extent in terms of faith (*"A good world: The peace of the heart, that of people born again by the word of God"* – DRC), while Europeans focus more on good human behaviour and coexistence (*"A good world consists of tolerance, acceptance of colour, religion, appearance, disease and origin. We must try to help actively and to create respect"* – Germany). Some reveal experiences of severe suffering, oppression and violence, but, despite many grievances, they are clearly written by people of hope (*"Being corrupted, someone completely loses one's dignity, and becomes a person with weak personality. Regardless of my age and tribe, as Martin Luther, I will fight against corruption until the end"* – DRC). They see Jesus as their model (*"Some pastors sow hatred and tribalism among Christians, whereas Jesus came for everyone"* – DRC) and, like Luther, protest against the financial interests of the church and clergy (*"We protest against the fact that in current churches, evangelisation is*

*about money. Prayer is conditioned by the amount requested by the pastor; however, money divides communities and creates conflicts. – DRC”*

Young people express a real vision for a better Church that is more tolerant, more focussed on the needs of young people, open to renewal (*“The Church must renew itself because the terminology of church, whereby church become monument, great house built by human being, whereas the church is our body, our heart...” – Rwanda*).

And young people worldwide seek true learning before examinations (*“At school, we criticise that we have to do too many tests; we are only learning for these tests and do not know anything afterwards.” – Germany. “We protest against favouritism in public examinations. When candidates sit for public examinations, some are considered successful when they have simply bribed their way and this leads to mediocrity. Some are even declared successful when they have not sat for the examination.” – DRC*)

Pupils worldwide recognise the importance of *“an attractive and good learning environment” – DRC*. But most importantly, *“A good school is more than just a school” – Germany*. It should be rooted in Christian faith as well as open to other religious world-views.

In all schools and age groups, these young people show a prophetic awareness of what is wrong in today’s world, church and school. Their protest is powerful, outspoken and rigorous; grievances are not whitewashed, they are highly sensitive to any form of injustice, they side with the poor, weak and powerless, with a special emphasis on children’s rights.

Delegates were then split into regional groups to work together to propose ideas on how to shape the future in Protestant schools. A range of interesting and practical suggestions were made and these were brought together with other ideas for the way forward in a plenary session the following day.

**Schools500reformation** will continue to gather momentum as we approach the Reformation Jubilee in 2017. But the month of May 2017 will see special events organised to celebrate this important anniversary. It would be a veritable feast for all Protestant schools, explained **Marlehn Thieme**, Head of Reformationsjubiläum 2017, member of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany and Head of the Council for Sustainable Development, Germany. Martin Luther had brought the Bible to the people of his time by translating it into German for the first time, encouraging them to think of and learn about God afresh. 500 years later, with many people alienated from God, we have an opportunity of shaping a new personal relationship with Him and redesigning community and church for the One World of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Events planned to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary include

- World Reformation Exhibition May to September 10th, 2017
- European Reformation Roadmap November 2016 to May 2017
- Kirchentag on the way May 25th to May 27th 2017 (Magdeburg, Dessau, Halle/Eisleben, Leipzig, Erfurt, Jena/Weimar).
- Festive Service in Wittenberg Sunday, May 28th 2017, attracting 200,000 – 300,000 people and including other events, such as an open air concert.
- Gates of Freedom, a World Reformation Exhibition on the ramparts of Wittenberg from May to September, with seven gates designed by uni-

versity architecture departments: Welcome, Spirituality, Youth, Integrity of creation/justice/peace, Globalization/one world, Ecumenism/religion, CultureAsisi 360 Panorama – Luther 1517, a creative concept

- Luther and AvantGarde – an exhibition of contemporary art based on Luther as an example for progressive thinking
- Youth Camps June – September north of Wittenberg, accommodating 1500 at a time and including its own programme of activities

Steps are being taken to move towards this Jubilee in different ways worldwide. A powerful Anglican response was outlined by **Richard Parrish**, Headteacher of Archbishop Tenison CE High School in Croydon, UK. Although delegates had assembled from around the world, inevitably bringing a plethora of different emphases, Mr Parrish emphasised similarity and unity. Protestant Schools come together from all corners of the globe sharing and believing the same Gospel, understanding what it means to be a true human being created in the image of God and redeemed through the life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. This Gospel gives us a unique educational mandate to encourage both adults and young people to understand their stature, their security, their purpose as human beings in Christ. Hence the vision we share in Protestant schools to educate the whole person.

We also know who we are and what we have in common. And this is revealed not so much in the story we tell, as in the song we sing. For the real thing we have in common is not the context in which we work or the challenges which we face but the spirit in which we work and with which we face them.

Mr Parrish told a memorable story to illustrate Jesus's example to us most effectively: There was a boy who made a boat and he took it to the lake to make it sail. And the wind took it and he lost it from sight. A little time later he was walking through the town and he saw his very own boat for sale in a shop window. So he went in and bought it. And then he said to the boat: "now you are twice mine; first I made you and now I bought you".

And so it is with us, created by God and now also redeemed by him. That is our song, Redemption's song, of a shared Christian hope, sung with a worshipping heart.

Since we know where we have come from and understand who we are as Protestant educators, can we also see where we are going? We have to work towards a new Reformation, first for ourselves, then for our staff, our students, our schools, our churches and our communities. Nothing less will do.

And we cannot be Protestant schools on our own. Our task is Global Responsibility, a shared responsibility in which we each have our part to play in shaping the future of the global Protestant brand of education. Our core task does not change: it is still the pastoral task of caring for our students; the pedagogical task of teaching them, the academic task of setting a curriculum for them, the administrative task of schooling and the educational task of having a coherent vision of what we are doing and why.

This is the task from which we dare not be distracted, the task which we can do more of together if we are really serious about improving the global quality of Protestant education.

Unified by such inspiring lectures, with ideas shared in workshops and through discussions in pairs and groups, formally organised in the conference centre and informally continued throughout the time together (including in the local beer hall over a drink) a clear vision emerged of the next steps to be taken. These were summarised on the last day:

- Attract new schools, institutions and associations to participate.
- Collect further theses, especially from N and S America, Asia, Oceania.
- Compile our 2017 edition of 95 Theses.
- Create a charter / value statement of Protestant Schools worldwide.
- Provide monthly themes on the homepage that can be elaborated and discussed by students in different countries.
- Promote discussions between teachers in Protestant Schools on the Forum.
- Promote international cooperation in projects and teaching/learning in different subjects.
- Enable video-conferences between classes.
- Gather and publicise global forms of celebrating the 500 jubilee.
- Publicise, enable and gather new ideas for the youth camp in Wittenberg 2017.
- Facilitate the twinning of schools.
- Create international/transnational initiatives on pressing injustices like corruption.
- Create learning material based on the themes.
- Share important events of individual schools and associations globally by using the homepage.
- Share regional events through the homepage.
- Upload music videos, greetings and other materials for sharing.

The Kingdom of Heaven is built out of very small things, mustard seeds, said **Dr. Wim Kuiper**, President of the International Association for Christian Education and Head of Verus (Vereniging voor katholiek en christelijk onderwijs), as he brought the conference to a close. Similarly, [schools500reformation](#) was the idea of just a few people; Annette Scheunpflug, Birgit Sandler-Koschel and some others, started to build a worldwide network of protestant schools and rally them around the celebration of 500 years Reformation.

From a small group in Eisenach in 2013 came a steering group, then the money was found to install a nucleus at the University of Bamberg and now nearly 100 delegates are here in Wittenberg, with more than 550 schools already connected. It had been a great blessing for all of us to meet and to learn from each other, it enriches and inspires us; it gives us courage and hope and it will lead, in fact, had already led, to very concrete actions and signs of an ongoing reformation, transformation and social change for the good.

It seemed that some priorities had emerged, such as defining more clearly what the essentials are of a common view on protestant schooling; a protestant pedagogy and ethos in education; something like a charter. This can be used within our schools but also in our public appearance, on a local and on a global level.

In addition, it seemed important for all to be aware of the common mission as protestant schools, in a globalizing and deeply troubled world. In order to find our voice, we have to carry on getting more and more connected with each other and, by doing so, we also have to set clear signs of our ongoing reformatory work as protestant schools; in our own context, but also within our network and in the world at large.

Dr Kuiper warmly thanked all who had made the conference possible; the team of Bamberg University, the EKD and Brot für die Welt, and hoped that all delegates would return home with a lot of new ideas and inspiration about how to improve the flourishing of their own protestant schools, and hoped that all would be able to foster their connections and include more colleagues over the next few years and perhaps meet each other in twinnings, visits, virtual connections or again in Wittenberg in the year of the jubilee.

*Alasdair Coates, Treasurer of the Anglican Academy and Secondary School Heads, UK.*

