

**On the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation:
A Commitment to Assure the Reformation Continues**

This year, 2017, is a landmark year for Protestant Christian denominations who find their roots in Martin Luther, and the Reformation he began when he nailed his 95 Theses to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany.

The recognition of the Protestant Reformation and its impact on the development of a wide array of congregations that are distinct and separate from the Roman Catholic Church has included scholarly seminars and celebrations around the globe, including Martin Luther/Reformation-related events on the Andrews University campus this fall.

In the context of these commemorations and in the recognition of the influence of Martin Luther on the modern Protestant church, prominent Protestant scholars prepared a document this year to acknowledge and celebrate, recognize and affirm basic Protestant Christian beliefs (e.g., *sola Scriptura*, the deity of Christ, justification by faith) and to affirm that the Reformation was not a mistake and it must continue. The document acknowledges that there are fundamental and important doctrinal differences among Protestant denominations—but no magisterium (e.g., the teaching office of the Roman Catholic church) is needed to determine how Protestants read Scripture or to determine basic Christian beliefs such as the Trinity, Christ’s atoning work, the Holy Spirit, baptism and more.

This 2017 document, called the “Reforming Catholic Confession,” intentionally used the word “catholic”—meaning simply “universal”—but used it in opposition to the Roman Catholic claim to be the true and only universal church. In other words, this document used the word “catholic” (“catholic” with a lower case “c”) as a way to describe a universal commitment by Protestants to the gospel of Jesus Christ under the authority of Holy Scripture, which is not subject to any earthly authority, including the Roman Catholic Church.

Originally, 250 professors and scholars were invited to sign this new statement to indicate their belief in and support of the idea that the Protestant Reformation continues to be relevant and vibrant and it must continue.

Those signatories included one of my colleagues, John Peckham, an associate professor of theology and Christian philosophy at the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. At the Seminary we agree with the still-relevant principles of the Protestant Reformation: We must continue to find courage and humility to focus on beliefs that are centered only in God and His revealed Word in the Bible.

I believe that commitment to continuing the Protestant Reformation also involves the Adventist Church, whose distinct series of 28 Fundamental Beliefs define a church congregation and community that remains unwavering in its commitments to embrace the centrality of the Bible and God to our beliefs and our spiritual devotion as a church community and as God’s children.



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