



[Welcome](#) > [Conferences & FAQ](#) > EurECA Conference 2005

EurECA Conference 2005

How now shall we love?

Le Rimlishof, Buhl, France

The location for the 2005 EurECA conference was Le Rimlishof in Alsace, France. The cluster of buildings which make up the complex, nestle on the verdant slopes of a small valley between Buhl and St Barnabé. Once the site of a hillside farm, over 50 years ago it became a conference and retreat centre under the auspices of La Ligue Pour La Lecture de la Bible (Scripture Union). From 5th to 9th May this year it became the meeting-place of Christian educators from all over Europe.

About seventy participants from many countries gathered together: from Britain to Bulgaria; Finland to France; Poland to Portugal; Switzerland to Spain; and many more - as I run out of alliterations! They came together from new Christian schools; older church schools; state schools of various kinds; international schools and theological seminaries. Some were leaders of national associations of Christian teachers; some worked with organisations supporting Christian work and witness in schools; some supported home educators. Over the weekend, at meals and coffee breaks, those who had met at previous conferences renewed their fellowship and those attending for the first time forged friendships which will continue for a long time to come.

The key speakers on the central theme Love in the Context of Education were Luc Bussière and Armin Mauerhofer. They gave challenging addresses on:

- Love in theological and philosophical contexts
- Love in the everyday educational setting>
- Love in the school classroom

A good variety of workshop sessions, led by the main speakers and others, sought to apply thinking to particular educational issues within the overall theme. The strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of different national and regional situations were discussed in small groups. On a lighter note, on the last evening, participants engaged us with songs and stories from their own countries. There were also reports of items for prayer, including new openings to share the Christian message, particularly in countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Most poignantly in this context, were concerns expressed by some of our colleagues from these emerging nations. They told how, in contrast to the days when persecution led to unity of purpose among Christians across the denominations, democratisation had, at times, led to division and dispute, splitting friendships and fellowship in some of the developing churches. Christian teachers and schools, particularly some independent Christian establishments, were not immune from the impact of this in their service. They value our prayers.

The General Assembly of EurECA took place during the conference. As some of our colleagues retired from the profession, the need for fresh, dare I say, younger blood was emphasised as members were asked to join the Board for the first time. John Shortt, EurECA Travelling Secretary shared with us the many blessings and challenges he has had. John has worked tirelessly to visit many countries, particularly those in the former East, to support and encourage Christians involved in education across Europe. He reported on his work and how through e-mail and postal contact, as well as face-to-face in meetings and conferences, he had promoted networking. It was encouraging and challenging to us all as we learned how hungry so many are for the Word of God; in many places, after a dearth of fellowship and freedom to worship. Support him in prayer and find out

more about his interesting work by adding your e-mail address to his contact list.

As always on these occasions, a key feature was the informal fellowship among participants around meal tables; on outings to local places of interest and sometimes late into the evening after the day's sessions were long over. The conference closed with a Communion Service. For a short time, we laid aside our individual educational cares and concerns as John Shortt opened the scriptures and led us in worship. The singing in different languages of favourite hymns, which have crossed national boundaries, was inspirational. The service was a fitting close to an enjoyable weekend; a moving experience of international Christian fellowship, across denominational, linguistic and cultural divides.

As the conference closed and participants returned to their homes and occupations in the four corners of Europe and beyond, they could not but leave feeling refreshed and challenged. Refreshed by new and renewed friendships and fellowship in Christ; challenged that in the changing world Christian educators must seek a shared vision which goes beyond our own vista and spheres of influence. As I thought of the need for Christians in Europe generally and for those who work in education in particular, to lay aside their differences for the sake of the Gospel, I recalled a banner which I once read. It appeared in a document on international education; but it could be a clarion call to Christians across Europe and the world!

Coming together is beginning.
Staying together is progress.
Working together is the future of the world.

John Muir (The Association of Christian Teachers, Scotland)