Prof Julie Claassens of the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University and Dr Miranda Pillay of the Department of Religion, University of Western Cape cordially invites you to the Annual Conference of the Stellenbosch and University of Western Cape Chapters of the

CIRCLE OF CONCERNED AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANS

One Day Conference on

GENDER AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

DATE:
THURSDAY 8 MAY 2014

TIME:
8:00- 16:30

VENUE:
THE CHAPEL, FACULTY OF THEOLOGY, STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

RSVP:
Nadia Marias, nadiam@sun.ac.za
before or on April 30, 2014

Cost R100 including lunch and tea

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is a community of African women theologians who come together to reflect on what it means to be women of faith within their experiences of religion, culture, politics and social-economic structures in Africa.

The Circle seeks to build the capacity of African women to actively work for social justice in their communities by sharing skills and insights with each other. A key discussion point is the complex relationship between gender, religion and culture and how to advance current knowledge by communicating with writing skills.

The Stellenbosch chapter of the Circle invites females (and males who share in the Circle’s objectives) that are pastors, scholars and students in the area to work collaboratively on various writing projects regarding the promotion of gender justice in our church and society.
Prof Julie Claassens van die Fakulteit Teologie, Universiteit Stellenbosch en Dr Miranda Pillay van die Departement Godsdiens en Teologie, Universiteit van Wes-Kaap nooi alle belangstellendes na die jaarlikse konferensie van die CIRCLE OF CONCERNED AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANS

met die tema

GENDER AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

DATUM:
DONDERDAG 8 MEI 2014

TYD:
8:00-16:30

PLEK:
DIE KAPEL, FAKULTEIT TEOLOGIE, UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH

RSVP:
Nadia Marias, nadiam@sun.ac.za
Voor of op 30 April 2014

Koste R100 middagete en tee ingesluit

Die Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians bestaan uit groepe Afrika vroue teoloë wat reg oor die kontinent op gereelde basis bymekaar kom om saam te dink oor wat dit beteken om teologie te beoefen binne die onderskeie godsdienstige, kulturele, politieke en sosio-ekonomiese kontekste.

Die doel van die Circle is om ’n ruimte te skep waar Afrika vroue mekaar kan help om die uitdaging van hul onderskeie gemeenskappe aan te spreek. Die ontwikkeling van skryfvaardighede asook insig in die komplekse verhouding tussen gender, godsdiens en kultuur, is van die vaardighede wat aandag geniet.

Belangstellendes (ook mans wat die Circle se doelstellings ondersteun) word genooi om betrokke te raak by die Circle se projekte ter bevordering van geslaggelykheid en geregtigheid in die kerk en samelewing.
PROGRAMME

08:00 – 08:15  Registration

08:15 – 08:30  Welcome and Arrangements  
Julie Claassens

08:30 – 10:30  Session 1 (Chair Julie Claassens)

Gender and Human Flourishing: What is Sexual about Sexual Violence?  
Louise du Toit

Blessed? A Critical Analysis of Salvation in Denise Ackermann  
Nadia Marais

Happiness and Human Flourishing? An African Woman Theological Perspective.  
Rozelle Robson

10:30 – 11:00  Tea

11:00 – 13:00  Session 2 (Chair Miranda Pillay)

African Traditional Religion and Human Flourishing: An appraisal of a Black Woman’s Voice During the TRC Hearings  
Lerato Sandiswa Kobe

Journeys of Faith and HIV into Human Flourishing  
Aneleh Fourie-Le Roux

Women’s Laments: The role of Pastoral Care in Recovering from Trauma  
Nobuntu Matholeni

13:00 – 14:00  Lunch

14:00 – 16:15  Session 3 (Chair Elna Mouton)

Re-reading Irenaeus for the Sake of True Human Flourishing  
Lisel Joubert

Crucifixion of Hyper-masculinity for the Sake of Human Dignity: A Queer (Re)reading of the Lukan narrative of the Cross  
Nina Muller

God, Gaia and Us – Can We Flourish or Will we Perish? Religious Ecofeminism Revisited in the Light of Climate
Change
Francine Becker

Sex Selection through Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis and Human Flourishing
Manitza Kotzé

16:15 – 16:30 The Way Forward
ABSTRACTS

Louise du Toit, Gender and human flourishing: What is sexual about sexual violence?

Early feminist attempts to address the scourge of sexual violence overemphasised the violent aspect of sexual violence at the cost of properly acknowledging its sexual aspect. The problems associated with treating rape as a sexual rather than a violent crime, and the associated notorious use of ‘without consent’ as a key aspect of rape’s legal definition, are well known and should be kept in mind. Keeping these firmly in mind, in this contribution I nevertheless want to revisit the question: what is sexual about sexual violence? I wish to link this with the conference theme by contrasting sexual violence with the goods of sex: sexual intimacy and intercourse, and the erotic encounter.


Happiness and human flourishing has increasingly, especially in American and German theological writing, become a focus in systematic theological research on creation, salvation and eschatology. The doctrine of salvation has particularly interesting (including etymological) connections with the notions of well-being and health. This paper, which forms part of PhD research on human flourishing, proposes to do a critical analysis of renowned Circle theologian Denise Ackermann’s understanding of salvation, since (1) feminist theology (and feminist theologians) has a particular concern for the 'flourishing of all', and (2) African theological voices on human flourishing should contribute to the emerging theological thinking on human flourishing. In this paper, it will be argued that salvation in Ackermann’s thought is infused with the vision for 'abundant life for all', which culminates with the notion of 'blessing'.


“Happy” is the name of a song by Pharrel Williams recently nominated for the 2014 Academy Awards. With 44,990,706 hits, Williams’ song seems to have struck a cord with society. The 45 million hits on Youtube is an indication of the growing awareness within society to live and partake in a happy life.

There exist within western society voices who promote a particular “brand” of happiness. Amidst these contending voices, a theological conversation has begun. This is evident in the “God and Human Flourishing Consultations” held annually at Yale Centre for Faith and Culture. In view of the “Gender and Human Flourishing Conference” one may ask in which ways an African Woman Theologian, such as Mercy Amba Oduyoye, contributes to this conversation.

A reading of Mercy Oduyoye will provide the opportunity to reflect on an African, Woman’s and Theological perspective on human flourishing. Oduyoye notes, “With Christianity promising fullness of life, women have stuck closely to churches in the hope that as the body of Christ, the Church, by God’s grace and the power of Jesus, will meet their need through its ministrations; if not now, then in the near future” (2001:112).

By paying attention to the recurring themes within the corpus of Oduyoye’s literature: Oduyoye’s argument for the fullness of life will be used as guideline for constructing a theology of happiness and human flourishing. While Oduyoye does not use the word “flourishing,” a case may be made premised on its semantic potential. The article will accordingly attempt to capture Mercy Oduyoye’s contribution to the growing conversation on happiness and human flourishing.
Lerato Sandiswa Kobe “African Traditional Religion and Human Flourishing: An appraisal of a black woman’s voice during the TRC Hearings”

This paper draws on a well-known narration from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) proceedings with specific reference to testimonies relating to what became known as the “Gugulethu Seven killings”. Essentially, the paper explores the testimony of Mrs Konile, a black woman whose son was murdered by the apartheid government’s security forces. During the TRC hearings, Mrs Konile ‘failed’ to effectively narrate her story which resulted in her testimony being dismissed as being incoherent. This paper examines the underlying attributes of Mrs Konile’s testimony and investigates why she was incapable of articulating her experience in a convincing way. The analysis aims to acknowledge, identify and give insights about this woman’s testimony from an African Traditional Religion viewpoint (specifically with reference to isiXhosa cultural perspective), in light of Nussbaum’s observation that “functionings, not simply capabilities, are what render a life fully human”.

Aneleh Fourie-Le Roux, “Journeys of faith and HIV into Human Flourishing”

Musa Dube writes: “The denial of the body, its sacredness and provision for its needs as a form of worship has meant being ashamed of that which God found worthy of being created in God’s own image.” HIV has had a devastating effect on the lives of millions of people, and HIV diagnosis has often reduced people, and especially women to objects of shame and judgement. However, ever so often we are surprised, encouraged and challenged by the testimonies of men and women who have rediscovered their true worth and in this rediscovery or home-coming they are not just hanging on for dear life, but truly flourishing, despite being HIV positive.

Ezra Chitando writes that “African Theology has the opportunity to reframe the story of HIV and AIDS in Africa”. And since the story of HIV in Africa is very often the story of women; I would like to focus on selected episodes in the journeys of a few HIV positive women of faith as they also journeyed in their faith and understanding of God’s presence in their lives; to a place of flourishing and fulfilment.

Nobuntu Matholeni, “Women’s Laments: The role of Pastoral Care in Recovering from Trauma”

This paper seeks to investigate the role of lament in the lives of women who are facing trauma in moving toward spiritual healing and emotional flourishing. This paper will focus on the role of pastoral care and counselling in reaching out to these women, in particular on the importance of employing God-images in their lives that may help them to recover from trauma. This paper seeks to explore the role of positive God images in the lives of these women. Furthermore, in light of the link between lament and resistance, this paper will explore how lament may help these women re-establish who they are.

Lisel Joubert, Re-reading Irenaeus for the sake of true human flourishing

The early Church father Irenaeus has the dubious honour to be quoted regularly in discussion on human dignity. He is then quoted as saying: “The glory of God is man fully alive”. This quote, where ‘man’ is usually exchanged for ‘humanity’, however is rarely traced back to its original context. Did he mean, what we in modern scholarship discussing human dignity and the flourishing of humanity, want him to mean? In this paper I will look at the bigger historical and literary context of this statement taken from the work of Irenaeus and evaluate
if his theology which is filled with concepts like “glory”, “seeing” and “being alive” can really help us in rethinking human flourishing in light of gender orientated themes.

Nina Muller “Crucifixion of hypermasculinity for the sake of human dignity: a queer (re)reading of the Lukan narrative of the cross”

Central Christian faith-narratives, such as the narrative of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, have the potential to either support or threaten meaningful and dignified lives of both men and women. From the perspective of gender and sexuality, the Christian church has more often than not abused the crucifixion narrative as a means to uphold unequal and oppressive heteronormative (male) power that have had harmful effects on men and women on all levels of their existence – be it physically, emotionally or spiritually. Within contexts of gender-based discrimination, abuse and violence, such type of popular interpretations of the crucifixion narrative are in dire need of reimagining.

The Gospel of Luke appears to support the image of a hypermasculine Jesus on the cross. In this paper, I will propose a queer reading or reimagining of this version of the narrative of the cross. Such queering and reimagining places deliberate emphasis on the shameful nature of the crucifixion, particularly in light of the socially-constructed nature of masculinity in the 1st century. From such a perspective the Lukan crucifixion narrative may become a narrative of the crucifixion of hypermasculinity. Accordingly this may serve as a source of life-giving and healing teachings, rituals and practices within the Christian church that embraces the worth of all persons.

Francine Becker, “God, Gaia and Us – can we flourish or will we perish? Religious ecofeminism revisited in the light of climate change.”

As women’s and ecological movements converge and overlap, new possibilities are arising that can enable human as well as global flourishing. People are provoked to ask what it means to be alive, to be living beings, to be spirited bodies enmeshed in a complex sociality within a pluriverse of other spirited bodies. In a theological paradigm where the dualism of body and spirit has been blurred and even oscillates, Sallie McFague’s metaphor of the universe as God’s body can be revisited. Following Latour’s “associations of humans and nonhumans” that body may be the pluriverse, a body playing out infinite rhythms, in which male and female form a fundamental but not exclusive earth rhythm. Gaia—no longer the unacknowledged background of human history—is now intruding by rudely ignoring pretensions to a risk free world under human control.

Manitza Kotzé, “Sex selection through Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis and Human Flourishing”

The term human flourishing is one used more and more regularly in bioethical discourse surrounding human genetic engineering and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), with many advocates arguing that these biotechnologies should be utilised to maximise “human flourishing”. One aspect that does not feature as prominently in the discussion on human flourishing in bioethics, although it is addressed in other conversations, is that especially the utilisation of PGD holds extensive implications for gender relations, given that this biotechnology is most commonly used for sex selection. This article will investigate the various reasons put forward for selecting the sex of one’s future child and attempt to indicate in what way they contribute to and influence the discourse on human flourishing in bioethics and the implications this would have for concerns regarding gender.