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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we finalise this report in March 2020 the world is facing an unprecedented health crisis. Covid19 and the spread of the corona virus is challenging the ways in which we conceive of ourselves, our work, and our witness. Of course, it also has some significant implications for the work of Beyers Naudé Centre. Not only will it invite us to rethink how we engage in the tasks of public theology, it will also give us many opportunities to reconsider what we hold to be true, and good, and right.

As you will see, much of the activity that is reported upon comes from 2019. In that period we did not face any restrictions on public meetings, social contact, or travel. In fact 2019 was something of high point for the work and witness of the Centre. A great deal of groundbreaking research was conducted, and numerous new projects were initiated.

In particular, we are grateful for the establishment of the Unit for Reconciliation and Justice and the expansion of its work under the leadership of Prof Christo Thesnaar. Many important and topical issues were addressed during the year under the auspices of the Gender Unit, the Unit for Religion and Law and the Bonhoeffer Unit. We expanded our archives to include new materials, and also celebrated the launch of the John de Gruchy collection and the collection of Jaap Durand (in particular his volume of isiXhosa sermons, which is the first of its kind in an academic research environment). In addition to this, we also received some funding to begin planning the preparation of the Denise Ackermann archival collection. During the year we saw the publication of a number of groundbreaking publications. Among them was an exceptional volume of essays entitled, ‘Reconceiving reproductive health’ edited by Dr Nadia Marais, Dr Nina Müller Van Velden and Dr Manitza Kotze. We also published a collection of essays entitled ‘Enacting public theology’, under the editorship of Prof Clive Pearson from Charles Sturt University in Australia. These essays were all presented by public theologians from the Oceania region who participated in the 2016 Global Network for Public Theology meetings hosted by the Beyers Naudé Centre at Stellenbosch University. Another notable publication was a collection of essays and sermons by Prof Aslam Fataar, a prominent Islamic public theologian, entitled, ‘Searching for
Islamic ethical agency.’ This was a significant step for the Beyers Naudé Centre Collection on Public Theology, since it invites engagements in public theology from an Islamic perspective. Finally, our collaborative project with the Church of Sweden and the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS) was published with Wipf & Stock, ‘Freedom of Religion at Stake’, edited by Elisabeth Gerle, Göran Gunner, and Dion Forster. We continue to work on existing projects, with two books in the final stages of publication – a comprehensive volume on ‘African public theology’ (Langham Press), and a book on ‘Reconciliation, Forgiveness and Violence in Africa’ (SUN Media). Prof Nadine Bowers du Toit is in the final stages of an extensive project on Faith and Inequality among South African youth (funded by the Nagel Institute). We are looking forward to various publications coming from this project, as well as a new curriculum for the training of youth workers. In addition to this, we hosted many wonderful conferences and events, and as a result we deepened our partnerships with persons in various publics – the church, the academy, and society at large. You can get an overview of some of our work, and our projects, in this short video that we prepared in partnership with our friends from Kerk in Actie https://youtu.be/1x9d0z2Gsyo.

We remain grateful for the ongoing support and collaboration with partners, funders, the Faculty of Theology, various academic researchers, Churches and expert practitioners.

Dion Forster
Stellenbosch (March 2020)
PARTNERSHIPS

KERK IN ACTIE, THE NETHERLANDS

The Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology has a longstanding partnership with the Protestant Churches of the Netherlands. In particular, we are grateful for the support of Kerk in Actie who have funded various projects and a much valued staff member (Rev Rineke van Ginkel) in 2019.

SYNODICAL COMMISSION FOR DOCTRINE AND CURRENT AFFAIRS OF THE UNITING REFORMED CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (SKLAS)

The SKLAS conferences again made a major impact on local churches in the Western, Southern and Eastern Cape Synods. The Western Cape conference took place at the Goedgedacht Guest Farm (Malmesbury) on 11 February; on 4 March the Southern Cape conference was held at Carmel Guest Farm (George) and the Eastern Cape conference was at The Willows resort (Port Elizabeth) on 8 April.

In 2019, the focus was on the theme of Church and unity. The conferences focused on a variety of perspectives on unity and disunity in society and the Church. The aim was to equip attendees with theological insights and tools to engage the complexities of South Africa’s current social reality and to help the leaders to serve their Churches and communities in working for greater unity.

Speakers in 2019 included Rev Mzwandile Molo (SACC Conference elected member and Minister of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa) who spoke on: A focus on the importance of church unity and its implications for community solidarity and harmony. He was followed by Rev Rineke van Ginkel, Program Officer & Researcher, Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology leading a Contextual Bible Reading. The final speaker of the day was Dr Koos Oosthuysen (Former URCSA moderator of the Cape Synod and translator of the isiXhosa Bible) speaking on A focus on unity and disunity connected to culture and language.
Speakers at the Eastern Cape SKLAS: Dr Koos Oosthuizen, Dr Sipho Mahokoto (Chair for the day), Rev Rineke van Ginkel, Dr Eugene Fortein (Chair: SKLAS Committee), Rev Bulelani Vete (Scribe: SKLAS Committee), Rev Babalwa Sifuba (Facilitator: Group discussion) and Rev Mzwandile Molo

Attendance figures:

Western Cape: 35
Southern Cape: 30
Eastern Cape: 54

**CONTEXTUAL BIBLE READING TRAINING (CBR)**

Rev Rineke van Ginkel led this project. CBR helps people to cope with their realities and act towards transformation. It enables people to ‘own’ a biblical text, relate it to their lives, and see the possibility of change. Since 2017 the BNC have made CBR an integral part of the SKLAS conferences. These conferences aim to equip church leaders, of URCSA and broader, with theological insights and tools to engage the complexities of our current social reality and to help
them serve their Churches and communities. Seeing the immediate impact and benefit of our CBR sessions at the conferences, the aim is to take the development of this programme further.

Activities in 2019 included the SKLAS conferences on church unity, the beginning of a youth project with SA youth and a youth group from Dordrecht, The Netherlands as well as workshops in collaboration with the URCSA/DRC Witness/Congregational Ministry.

**NORTHERN CAPE ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE**

The annual conference took place in Kimberley on 8 November. The topic in 2019 was *Economics and violence* and the dean of the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, Prof Reggie Nel, spoke on *Economics, race and xenophobia*. Dr Marlene Mahokoto, Minister URC-Eersterivier-Suid, led a panel discussion on *The Church and gender based violence*. This was followed by a contextual Bible reading by Rev Rineke van Ginkel, Program Officer & Researcher, Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology and Ms Tayla Minnaar, PhD student and the day was concluded by Prof Dion Forster, who facilitated a group discussion.

The BNC is truly grateful to Kerk in Aktie for the continued generous support of this important work and look forward to growing the work and its influence in the years ahead.
SOUTH-SOUTH COLLABORATION

The South by South collaboration between South Africa and Brazil is ongoing. Prof Rudolf von Sinner has moved from Faculdades EST to the Pontifical Catholic University of Parana. In 2019 we translated the English chapters into Portuguese for the book publication on engagements between Brazilian and South African public theologies. A number of the participants in the project met together at the Global Network for Public Theology meetings in Bamberg, Germany, in September 2019, and then again at the Bonhoeffer Congress in Stellenbosch in January 2020. Prof Forster was invited to visit the Pontifical Catholic University as a visiting professor in August 2020. However, this will be put on hold until travel restrictions are lifted around Covid19. Once the Portuguese book has been published it will be translated into English for publication. In addition to this we continue to prepare for a wide ranging project that includes funding for staff exchanges, student exchanges, and collaborative research projects.
**UNITS**

**BONHOEFFER UNIT**

Throughout 2019 intensive planning for the XIII International Bonhoeffer Congress took place and the congress, held from 19-23 January 2020 at the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch, was a resounding success. Please see the 2020 Annual Report for more information of the Congress and the Pre-congress Colloquium.

Keynote speakers included Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, Wolfgang Huber, Nadia Marais, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Teddy Sakupapa, Reggie Williams, John de Gruchy and Terry Lovat.

**GENDER UNIT**

Ongoing events include the Thursdays in Black initiative, the popular Gender Unit Movie nights held three times a year as well as the #Pinktax campaign during Women’s Month that raised awareness regarding the social justice/human dignity issue of sanitary pads being completely unaffordable for many of those who find themselves in poverty.

Prof Claassens, in her capacity as Head of the Gender Unit, again regularly wrote for newspapers/popular publications 2019 terms of gender related concerns. Regular radio interviews and appearances at the recent Woordfees on a variety of gender related topics meant that the GU flag flew high.
Amidst very strict competition (only 2 postdocs were awarded by the Stellenbosch University’s Sub-committee), a postdoctoral fellowship was awarded for 2019 for the Gender Unit. On 1 May, Dr Sinenhlanhla S Chisale, from UNISA and UP, embarked on her new journey.

**Gender Unit conferences:**

**Transgression and Transformation Conference: The Role of Feminist, Postcolonial and Queer Biblical Interpretation in Fostering Communities of Justice, 13 – 15 March 2019**

The conference was hosted in collaboration with the Center for Theology, Women, and Gender of Princeton Theological Seminary. Keynote speakers included Prof Jacqueline Lapsley, Princeton Theological Seminary; Prof Christl Maier, Philipps University Marburg, Germany; Prof Dora Mbuwayesango, Hood Theological Seminary; Prof Linda Thomas, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, IL and Prof Charlene van der Walt, University of KwaZulu-Natal. This conference formed part of the Core Module of the Faculty of Theology’s MTh Gender and Health as well as the MDIV class and between 60-70 participants attended.

A collection of essays from the conference will be published with the international publisher T&T Clark. This volume which will be published under the title *Transgression and Transformation:*
A collection of essays from the 2017 Cultivating Change Agents conference with the title *Teaching for Change: Essays On Pedagogy, Gender And Theology In Africa* (ed. L. Juliana Claassens, Charlene van der Walt, and Funlola O. Olojede; SunMedia, 2019) was launched at the Transgression and Transformation conference.

**Sexual Reformation? Theological and ethical reflection on human sexuality, 6 – 7 May 2019**

A second consultation of the “Reconceiving Reproductive Health” project was hosted in Stellenbosch by the Gender Unit under direction of Drs Nina Müller van Velden (NWU), Nadia Marais (SU) and Manitza Kotze (NWU).


**Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians**

During the the 30 year Celebration of the Circle in Gaborone from 3-5 July, attended by Elna Mouton, Nina Müller van Velden and Sine Chisale, Prof Julie Claassens was awarded the Mentoring Champion award. Prof Mouton accepted the award on her behalf.
UNIT FOR RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE

Seminar on Justice and reconciliation in Africa, hosted by the Reconciliation and Justice Unit of the BNC on 1-3 October.

This seminar, funded by the Africa Collaboration Grant had the aim of providing a space for African scholars to engage in an academic think tank concerning justice and reconciliation in Africa, in particular to explore new opportunities for local contexts. Furthermore to motivate and stimulate those scholars who have graduated (with PHD’s) mainly from the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University on themes related to justice and reconciliation and who are based throughout Africa to engage in continuous research on themes related to reconciliation and justice within their local contexts. The contributions and the responses are to be published in 2020.
UNIT FOR RELIGION AND LAW

The Religion and Law Unit of the Beyers Naudé Centre (headed by Prof Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel and Prof Pieter Coertzen) was officially established in 2010. The Religion and Law Unit is an inter religious and interdisciplinary research and teaching unit of the University of Stellenbosch.

Through the various activities associated with the Religion and Unit, the aim is to

- Help foster a community of researchers in Religion and Law nationally as well as globally, especially on the continent of Africa
- To identify, examine and evaluate matters on the field of interaction between religion and law, and to make the results available to academic and religious communities, as well as on relevant legal and Government institutions either, by day conferences, workshops, conferences and publications.
- Initiate and participate in courageous conversations on various aspects of an intersectional understanding of Law and Religion.

PROJECTS

Archive – Prof Robert Vosloo

Christianity and the shifting of perceptions on Zionism – Dr Marthie Momberg

Contextual Bible Reading – Rev Rineke van Ginkel

Faith and Science – Prof Dion Forster

Human Dignity and Human Rights – Prof Julie Claassens

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of creation – Prof Nico Koopman

Moral Leadership – Dr Chris Jones

Publications – Prof Len Hansen

Reconciliation – Prof Christo Thesnaar and Dr Wilhelm Verwoerd

Responsible Citizenship – Prof Dion Forster
RESEARCHERS OF THE CENTRE

Prof Nadine Bowers du Toit
Prof Julie Claassens
Prof Pieter Coertzen
Dr Theresa Edlmann
Prof Dion Forster
Prof Len Hansen
Dr Chris Jones
Prof Nico Koopman
Dr Sipho Mahokoto
Dr Marthie Momberg
Prof Mary-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel
Prof Xolile Simon
Prof Dirkie Smit
Prof Christo Thesnaar
Dr Leslie van Rooi
Prof Prof Robert Vosloo
Dr Wilhelm Verwoerd
Dr Jacob Meiring
EVENTS AND PUBLICATIONS IN 2020

OTHER CONFERENCES, SYMPOSIA AND PUBLIC LECTURES IN WHICH THE BNC TOOK PART

On 13 February the BNC hosted a colloquium with Prof Ola Sigurdson and Dr Martin Westerholm from the University of Gothenburg. Prof Sigurdson spoke on Humour, Emancipation and Reconciliation: A Critical Inquiry and Prof Westerholm on Generosity and love as justice on the road towards justice.

On 19 March Prof Wolfram Weisse, Senior Research Fellow of the Academy of World Religions of the University of Hamburg spoke on Dialogical Theology: Openness towards others in the origins of religions and interreligious hermeneutics.

On 4 June Arne Rasmussen, Professor in systematic theology at the Department of literature, history of ideas, and religion of the University of Gothenburg, Sweden delivered a public lecture on Ecclesial moral formation: Theological ethics at the intersection of history, moral psychology and sociology. Prof Rasmussen is a fellow of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS) and extraordinary professor in Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, Faculty of Theology.

On 11 June the BNC hosted a colloquium with Prof David Tombs as the main speaker. His topic was Responses to the Naming of Jesus as a Victim of Sexual Violence. Professor Tombs’ paper was followed by responses from Shantelle Weber, Senior lecturer: Practical Theology and Missiology, Ashwin Thyssen, senior student leader and activist and Jeremy Punt, Professor: Old and New Testament. Professor David Tombs is the Howard Paterson Chair of Theology and Public Issues, at the University of...
Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand. He has a longstanding interest in contextual and liberation theologies and is author of Latin American Liberation Theology (Brill, 2002). His research is on religion and violence, and his current writing focusses on crucifixion.

On 22 August a Colloquium with the theme: Retrotopia/Utopia/Paradise was hosted at the Faculty by the BNC with the following presentations:

**Enticing, or forcing, the Angel of History to turn around once more? On Zygmunt Bauman’s notion of Retrotopia** (Helgard Pretorius, political philosopher and PhD student at Stellenbosch University)

*The return of nationalism and patriotism in Europe* (Theo de Wit, endowed professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands and an extraordinary professor at Stellenbosch University)

*Neither déja-vu nor the end of history: rethinking our political metaphors* (Vasti Roodt, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and the Head of the Unit for Social and Political Ethics in the Centre for Applied Ethics)

*But words came before your machetes: stories from a xenophobic life-world* (Judy-Ann Cilliers, political philosopher and PhD student at Stellenbosch University)

5 Sept: Public lecture by Maria Palme (PhD Student at the Europa-University, Flensburg) on Religion as Moral Guidance when Policy fails – Examples from South Korean and East German Transitions in 1988/89.
ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF BEYERS NAUDÉ’S BIRTHDAY

On 10 May the annual Beyers Naudé Birthday celebration was held at Wilgenhof men’s residence. This year, Oom Bey’s daughter, Liesel, spoke on “LIFE, THE UNVERSE AND BEYERS NAUDÉ”. She challenged the young men gathered: “You have been born in a pivotal time of history, not only in this country, but of this world, and as young people are faced with very serious questions relating to overpopulation, radical decline of various species, eco-systems which are under severe strain because of amongst other things, the amount of plastic and rubbish being generated because of a greedy consumer society polluting the earth, and the use of insecticides and pesticides creating havoc in nature and our own bodies”. Her advice is: “Know that life today and your future is demanding that you are willing to radically shift out-dated perspectives and perceptions of our world and how we live in it. Your life depends on it.”

WINTER SCHOOL

The BNC partnered with the Faculty of Theology, Ekklesia and Communitas once again in 2019 for a very successful Winter School, which took place from 16-18 July. The theme was
REFLECTING ON 25 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY– IN DIALOGUE WITH RELIGION. The following keynote speakers read papers: 16 July, Looking back, reaching forward: Prof Nadine Bowers-Du Toit; 17 July, Withholding good undermines democracy: Dr Pali Lehohla and on 18 July, No nation can win a struggle without faith: the struggle, religion, and the future of our democracy: Prof Alan Boesak. This event was attended by 221 church and community leaders.

A group of 20 delegates to the Winter School attended the Reconciliation Lunch on 17 July in Kayamandi, Stellenbosch. This is held at the Legacy Centre in Kayamandi every second Wednesday thirty to fifty people gather around the table, and every person is served bread, a warm meal, salads, fruit and cold drinks. It is a table that brings people together from different walks of life to share hearts, to learn and to grow together. Jan van Zyl, Minister of the DRC Moedergemeente Stellenbosch, facilitated the lunch conversation.
ANNUAL RUSSEL BOTMAN MEMORIAL LECTURE

On Wednesday 17 October Rev Dr Setri Nyomi, former General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) spoke on Justice for all? The time for change in now! Prof Ingrid Woolard, Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and Professor in the Department of Economics, SU, delivered the response. The recipients of the Russel Botman Bursary Fund were introduced at the event.

Book launches

On 23 April, the BNC hosted the launch of Rev Peter Storey’s book “I beg to differ – ministry among the teargas”
BEYERS NAUDÉ ARCHIVE

Completed Collections:

• Beyers Naudé’s sermons and lectures
• Pro Veritate
• Christian Institute
• Bernard Lategan
• Russel Botman
• Ben Marais
• Horst Kleinschmidt (Naudé house arrest correspondence)
• John de Gruchy
• Jaap Durand

In progress:

• Denise Ackerman

PUBLICATIONS

BEYERS NAUDÉ CENTRE SERIES ON PUBLIC THEOLOGY


**DIRKIE SMIT COLLECTION**

OTHER PUBLICATIONS PUBLISHED UNDER THE NAME OF THE BEYERS NAUDÉ CENTRE


PUBLICATIONS IN PROGRESS


**STAFF**

**STAFF MEMBERS OF THE CENTRE**

Chair of the Management Board – Prof Nico Koopman

Director – Prof Dion Forster

Programme co-ordinator – Ms Marita Snyman

Co-worker – Rev Rineke van Ginkel

Marketing and liaison – Ms Helette van der Westhuizen

Financial administrator – Ms Escois Benjamin

**FINANCES**

Please refer to the appendix for the financial report for the period January 2019 – December 2019.

Signed:

[Signature]

Prof Dion Forster

Director: Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology

Faculty of Theology

Stellenbosch University