Virtual conference 2021
17-19 February

Keynote speaker – Wednesday 17 February

Rieger Joerg (Vanderbilt University)

Rethinking Religion and What Really Matters: Some Proposals for Practical Theologians

COVID-19 has thrown new light on the nature of inequality as a global problem. This has implications for reassessing what really matters in people’s lives, related to what theologians have sometimes called matters of “ultimate concern.” What do such reassessments mean for rethinking the role and function of religion, with a view towards what religion can contribute to the formation of feasible alternatives? The presentations will conclude by spelling out some vital lessons for practical theology and related fields.

Profile: Joerg Rieger is Distinguished Professor of Theology, Cal Turner Chancellor’s Chair of Wesleyan Studies, and the Founding Director of the Wendland-Cook Program in Religion and Justice at Vanderbilt University. Author and editor of 24 books and over 160 academic articles, his books include Jesus vs. Caesar: For People Tired of Serving the Wrong God (2018), No Religion but Social Religion: Liberating Wesleyan Theology (2018), Unified We are a Force: How Faith and Labor Can Overcome America’s Inequalities (with Rosemarie Henkel-Rieger, 2016), Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude (with Kwok Pui-lan, 2012), No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future (2009), and Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times (2007).
Panel discussions – Thursday 18 February

Panel discussion 1:

**Nell, Ian; Wepener, Cas & Weber, Shantelle (Stellenbosch University)**

**Practical Theology during a pandemic? A call for reflection on spirituality, liturgy and children**

The purpose of this panel presentation is to investigate the possible impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had on the spirituality of ministers; lockdown liturgies and the place and position of children in churches during this time. This intra-disciplinary lens on Practical theological reflection is based on research conducted as part of a larger book project on Practical Theology during a pandemic. Firstly; reflection on what the impact of the pandemic on the spirituality of a selected group of Reformed ministers is given. Here, the following question is explored: How did the pandemic affect your personal spirituality? Secondly; lockdown liturgies under levels 4 and 5 when no gathering was allowed is reflected on through the lenses of place and embodiment. By means of four probes the aim is the development of a praxis theory for the celebration of liturgy when bodily movement is restricted by spatial confines. Insights gained from the probes are connected by means of Post's ritual-liturgical methodology of interference to develop a (preliminary) praxis theory of place and embodiment for lockdown liturgy. Finally; we reflect on how children have been affected by this global pandemic. The place and position children occupy within the institutional church and societies experiencing crisis is explored through the lens of Child Theology and Ecclesiology.

Panel discussion 2:

**Discerning the times: The South African religious landscape – why a census is important**

A census gives a quantitative description of the characteristics of a population and religion is an important part of this picture. The last time a question on religion was part of a South African census was with the 2001 census. The General Household 2013 and the Community Survey 2016 contained questions on religion and are significant markers for the 2021 census to ask about the South African religious demography. An important and critical aspect would be to reflect on the role and influence of religion in understanding and managing religious practices and responses in a (post)-pandemic South Africa?

**Hackett, Conrad and Ausubel, Jacob (PEW Research, USA)**

**The people with no religion in South Africa: How to make sense of conflicting data suggesting their number could be rising, dropping or be stable?**

In North America and Western Europe, the share of people who don’t identify with any religion is rising. How does South Africa compare? Some evidence suggests a similar pattern. The share of adult respondents who didn’t identify with a religion rose from 9% in the 1990 World Values Survey to 18% in the 2013 World Values Survey. However, there is also evidence of the opposite trend. Consider that all recent surveys by Stats SA have a smaller share of adults with no religion than was measured in the 2001 census, when 16% of adults fell in this category. Finally, there is evidence, such as data from Pew’s Global Attitudes Project, that nonaffiliation shares may be fairly stable. This paper seeks to explain these seemingly divergent results by considering differences between sources. It will highlight consistent patterns of which groups are less likely to identify with religion and finally, it will draw preliminary conclusions about the real affiliation trends in South Africa.
Roux, Niel (StatsSA)

The measurement of religion in South African censuses and surveys since 1994, and plans for Census 2021

Censuses and nationally representative social surveys are vital tools to provide a valid and reliable measure of religion in society. The value of religion in South African society was underscored soon after the first democratic elections when Statistics South Africa found place for a question in Census 1996, the country’s first post-apartheid census. Although a similar question was asked in the 2001 census, religion was inexplicably excluded from Census 2011. Following a barrage of criticism from religious communities, questions on religion were included in the General Household Survey (2013-2015) and the 2016 Community Survey.

The questions that were asked in 1996 and 2001 were, unfortunately, very different from those that were subsequently included, almost certainly leading to some variation in results. Although the questions that were used were very similar, results obtained from the General Household Survey (GHS) and the Community Survey were similarly affected by variations in the sampling, questions wording, and period of data collection. The paper will investigate these factors.

Statistics South Africa is presently preparing for the next census that will take place during October 2021. During consultations it became clear that religious communities require high quality, accurate and reliable information on actual religious practice to inter alia inform policy development and working with faith communities. This need is, however, plagued by concern about what would actually be measured by the census. At some level it was observed that the census would actually measure a vague cultural affiliation rather than actual religious practice. This looming doubt is compounded by disagreement in the religious communities and amongst academics about the questions that should be asked, and the response options that should be provided.

Schoeman, Kobus (University of the Free State)

Religion and the 2016 Community Survey – what do we learn about the South African religious landscape?

Religion is an integral component of the South African society and plays an essential role in the lives of many people, and the 2016 Community Survey helps to understand this. Christianity is the majority religion in South Africa, nearly 80% of the population are nominally associated with the Christian faith, noteworthy are the changes that happened within the composition of the Christian religion:

- Mainline churches are in decline;
- African Independent Churches stayed more or less the same;
- The Pentecostal and Charismatic churches more than doubled.

The fastest-growing part of Christianity is not mainstream denominations but Pentecostal or Charismatic churches, and this is part of a global trend. Islam stayed less than 2% of the South African population. Other religions (African Traditional Religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, ext.) remained less than 10% of the population. These trends pose unique challenges towards the understanding of the role of religion in the South African society.
**Keynote panel discussion – Friday 19 February**

**Brown, Sally** (Princeton Theological Seminary)


US society is a patchwork of like-minded sub-communities of conviction. The worldviews and religious belief systems of these communities are fed and reinforced by media “vortexes” (convergences of social media communities, blogospheres, and cable news sources) that barely touch, let alone overlap. Arguably, online worship, which emerged as the “norm” for many congregations during the pandemic, tends to reinforce these communities’ insularity. Online worship makes it easier than ever to affiliate with a community of the like-minded. Yet, as everyone begins to circulate again in the weekday world of work, commerce, education, child-rearing, and extended family relationships, communities steeped in radically disjunct “worlds” will share public space. This places a premium on the public witness of ordinary Christians, and suggests that shaping listeners’ imagination for redemptive witness will be a homiletical priority.

**Profile:** Sally A. Brown, PhD ’01 (Princeton Theological Seminary), is Princeton Seminary’s Elizabeth M. Engle Professor of Preaching and Worship. She is an ordained Presbyterian minister with more than 20 years of parish and non-parish pastoral experience prior to beginning her academic career in 1998. She continues to teach and preach in local congregations. Her academic interests include homiletical theology (theological claims, both explicit and implicit, conveyed in sermons), especially theologies of redemption; feminist and anti-racist biblical interpretation for preaching; and the way preaching can, and should, equip the imagination and habitus of listeners for creative, improvisational witness in their weekday world(s). At the PhD level, she teaches seminars in contemporary homiletical theory, theologies of proclamation, and the relationship of the philosophical hermeneutical tradition to constructive practical theology.

**Gwaxaza, Lwamkelo Micheal** (Mount Coke Methodist Church)

**Using Theology as a tool of reconstruction during and after the period of destruction. Hope for the future**

This paper seeks to examine the destruction endured by humanity during the time of the coronavirus. Covid 19 needs no explanation it has no explanation it has explained itself in bedrooms, kitchen and in society. It is with no doubt that life that has been known by humanity has been turned upside down in a manner that is unknown. There is no sector in the life of humanity that has not endured the punch of the coronavirus. Some sectors in humanity will rise while others will be defeated. Within the African context the coronavirus has brought many realities that needs serious attention. There is a deep sense in which African philosophy itself has undergone the brutality of coronavirus. The notion of I am because you are. The notion of living life with others has been thrown out of the window and was been insert is the notion of individualism which is foreign to African sociology.

There is no doubt that some of the effects of Coved 19 will not only impact the present but also the future. Many people within the African setup will still endure life introduced by Covid19 even if it will be something in history. It is with no doubt that all that the coronavirus has pinched every corner of living. Coronavirus has visited the religious, political, economic sectors and has led to the collapse of things. Things have since changed and voices of destruction has been the chorus of the day. Life of new normal has traumatic experiences that cannot be neglected as if nothing has happened. This means that there is a lot of work that needs to be done within the lives of people. Life has shifted in a tragic manner for human beings and this needs attention.

This paper therefore aims at using theology as a response towards the process of reconstruction during and post COVID-19. Theology can be used as a response towards these social realities. Covid 19 has actually allowed theology to revise itself, what is theology, how can it be defined within the context of Covid19. Migliore defines theology as follows, “faith seeking understanding”. The definition of theology calls it to find understanding in such times. Theology always has a mandate of it being done in the past, present and in the future. Amongst the tools to be used for in the process of reconstruction theology cannot be left out. The advantage of using theology as a tool is that it can be local and at the same it is a global too.

**Profile:** Rev. Lwamkelo Gwaxaza is a Probationer Minister stationed at Mount Coke Circuit, King Williams Town. Lwamkelo is an author of 2 books, Our God of Ubuntu is infected by the Coronavirus and Listening to voices of gender based violence and corruption.
An Olive Agenda for Perpetual-Pandemic Mission

Crisis can spark clarification. The more significant the crisis, the more substantial the potential for clarity. In this time of sustained crises surrounding COVID-19 and countless other personal and public traumas around the world, what seems to be increasingly clear is that we now reside within a state of perpetual pandemics, thus the need to recalibrate and reimagine an “Olive Agenda” that invigorates Christian mission and transforms local and global conflict through economic opportunity and environmental sustainability.

First introduced by the late Steve de Gruchy, an Olive Agenda integrates the “brown agenda” of economic opportunity and “green agenda” of environmental sustainability, and in doing so “…holds together that which religious and political discourse rends apart: Earth, land, climate, labor, time, family, food, nutrition, health, hunger, poverty, power and violence.” For practical theologians seeking to engage when the full impact of COVID-19 may require generations to fully unfold, an opportunity has presented itself to amplify and align the Olive Agenda with Christian mission for the sake of human flourishing.

Profile: The Rev. Dr. Brian E. Konkol serves as Dean of Hendricks Chapel and Professor of Practice in the Department of Religion at Syracuse University. Konkol is a member of the Chancellor’s Executive Team and is responsible for guiding, nurturing and enhancing religious, spiritual, moral and ethical life at the University and across its extended community. Konkol is an ordained Lutheran minister, published author, and sought-after speaker. He lived overseas for nearly a decade while serving in South America and South Africa, and holds degrees from Viterbo University (La Crosse, Wisconsin), Luther Seminary (St. Paul, Minnesota), and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa).
**Baloyi, Elijah (UNISA)**

**The paradox of the reopening of schools under the lockdown, an exposure of the continued inequalities within the South African educational sector – A theological decolonial view**

The arrival of Coronavirus in South Africa was responded to by a lockdown, which barred people from moving out of their homes unless for serious and stipulated reasons by government. Amongst other things, one of the most remarkable repercussions of the lockdown was the closing of the educational system. The call to reopen the public schools by the Minister of Basic Education after almost two months brought contestations from different sectors of life, for instance, labour unions, parents and SGB representatives. Mistrust and suspicions developed between parents, SGB’s unions and the Department of Basic Education as a result. This has seen certain political parties and unions lodging court cases against the reopening decision. This was likely to be a protracted battle since the issue is between life and education. The aim of this research is to discover if these contestations are for the good of the school children or if there is another underlying issue.

**Barnes, Jonathan (Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, USA)**

**Missional Learnings from a Time of Pandemic**

Throughout history, those of faith have sought to participate in the *Missio Dei* in many different contexts. Today, in a world where a global pandemic marks a context shared by all, Christians are called to respond in new and innovative ways. First, we are challenged to realize our common humanity. While words like partnership, mutuality and accompaniment have been used in mission discourse for decades, rarely have we realized the quality of relationships to which these terms aspire. Mission in a time of pandemic serves to remind us of our interconnectedness as a human family. Secondly, however, despite our common humanity, this pandemic has exposed deep disparities among us, both within the U.S. and around the world; it seems our interconnectedness has rarely led to community. Finally, mission in a time of pandemic demands at least three mission motifs: mission as lament as we recognize the deep suffering and social dislocation a pandemic causes; mission as dialogue as we understand that all peoples are affected and all have gifts to share; and mission as a witness to life as this “great pause” offers the chance to rethink how we structure our lives and societies to be in harmony with God’s economy.

**Baron, Eugene and Pali, Joseph KJ (University of the Free State)**

**Theological reflection on the missional challenges created by the pandemic Covid 19 virus**

Mission consists of proclaiming the gospel and responsible involvement in the society. Before lockdown many churches preferred to preach the gospel within their own assemblies and immediate context like funerals, and in the streets. But during lockdown many churches were seen going online to proclaim the gospel whilst others preferred to close down and wait until the spread of the Covid 19 virus has subsided. Moreover, during lockdown many South Africans were faced with various challenges like the spread of the Covid 19 virus, corruption, gender based violence and lack of food. Members of the churches were involved either for the purpose to assist or be assisted. In light of the above, the main research question that the paper will answer is: What does the response of the township congregations of the Mangaung Metro Municipality during the COVID-19 pandemic tells us about their movement or non-movement towards being, or becoming missional congregations? The aim of the article is to analyse the response of the township congregations of the Mangaung Metro Municipality during the COVID-19 pandemic concerning their movement or non-movement towards being, or becoming missional congregations.
Bowers Du Toit, Nadine (Stellenbosch University)

Discerning Race, Place and Research in Practical Theology: The Stellenbosch Youth and Inequality Project

In 2018, the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University was awarded a grant by the Nagel Centre for World Christianity for the project entitled: “Born free? An investigation into the lived theologies and political agency of young Christians in Stellenbosch”. The project focused on Christian young adults in Stellenbosch and sought to explore whether so called “Born Frees” are indeed “free” of the socio and economic constraints of the past and raises questions as to the ways in which ongoing inequality affects notions of reconciliation and restitution 25 years later. During the course of the project the significance of place – both the town and the university – in terms of research of this nature became clear and resulted in the research team adapting and adopting their research methodology and research dissemination to address the intersections of race, class and place within the study. This process, its positioning within the field of Practical Theology at this time in history and its positioning within an university which has a history of race-based research, will be explored in this chapter.

Buqa, Wonke (Military Psychological Institute)

Sociocultural narrative aspect of gender-based violence during COVID-19 pandemic

The pervasiveness of gender-based violence constitutes the most severe expression of discrimination and dehumanisation of women and children in South Africa. Even before COVID-19 existed, domestic violence was already one of the greatest human rights violations. Fundiswa Kobo posits that women have for centuries suffered different forms of oppression and arguably continue to suffer in subtle forms in the 21st century. Congruent with that, this article endeavours to examine the sociocultural theories, narrative reflections and COVID-19 pandemic challenges associated with the prevalence of gender-based violence in democratic South Africa. The article argues that patriarchal culture, socioeconomic disparities, religion, gender norms, lockdown and history of fragmentation and violence in South Africa perpetuate the gender-based abuse. The article presents serious challenges amid global pandemic in South Africa that abafazi nabantwana baphefumla ngenxeba (women and children are breathing through the wound). On the other hand, the article argues that discerning the times is the first act of doing theology. The study will consist of in-depth qualitative interviews with five co-researchers to investigate the sociocultural narratives aspect that perpetuates gender-based violence in South Africa in COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Sociocultural, narratives, gender, COVID-19 pandemic, qualitative, theology

De Beer, Stephan (University of Pretoria)

Change agency and urban vulnerability: diaconate, theological praxis and the paralysis of church and theological education

Globally, cities responded to their most vulnerable populations and places differently, in the face of Covid-19. In this paper, urban vulnerability is framed as a theological challenge. Drawing from Harvey Cox's notion of the church as the urban diakonos, and Daniel Pilario's theological praxis during Covid-19, this article provides a critical reflection on the (general) paralysis of church and theological education (in the City of Tshwane), in the face of the pandemic. It also traces glimmers of hope, sometimes from rare spaces, as prophetic injunctions for the liberation of church and theological education. It suggests that change agency is to be found, not necessarily in traditional institutional expressions, but in innovative social formations and arrangements, not considered before. It asks how these can become sources to reinvigorate an urban diaconate and theological praxis, potent enough to make change. It concludes with broad recommendations for practical theological formation amidst pandemics.
Freeks, Fazel and Alard, John Arthur (North-West University)

The imperative leadership role of the Christian man in a post-pandemic era: Practical solutions recommended for Christian men in context of family and church

The leadership role of the Christian man has significant impact on the wellbeing of the family and church, which in turn has a significant impact on society. This does not mean that women do not have a significant impact on society. It is imperative for Christian men to study the Bible adequately and appreciate the authority of Scripture and what it says about their leadership role in the family and church. Having a sound biblical theology about the leadership role of the Christian man in context of the family and church can potentially help him to lead his family and church toward a more biblical model of leadership in a post-pandemic era. The purpose of this article is to highlight the imperative leadership role of the Christian man, where challenges may be identified, and practical solutions be recommended for equipping them to be effective leaders in the mentioned contexts. Structured interviews were conducted with fifteen female participants from selected evangelical churches within Johannesburg, South Africa. The verbatim responses from the participants shed light on how Christian women in the selected evangelical churches perceive the leadership role of the Christian man in context of the church and family.

Hoffman, Lyzette (University of the Free State)

Doing Practical Theology reflectively in a post-pandemic world

“The unexamined life is not worth living” – says Socrates. How can reflective practice help practical theology in a post-pandemic world? There are various philosophical approaches to reflective practice, e.g. the pragmatist perspective, the critical perspective, the hermeneutical perspective and the phenomenological perspective. Reflecting means to elucidate the epistemic acts developed in the midst of the inquiry process. Some scholars see reflective practice in research as a narcissistic act. However, others come to the conclusion that mindfulness “on one’s own practices gives value to any kind of inquiry”. Reflective practice is taught in teacher training and is also effectively used in the health professions. It is hypothesized that a post-pandemic world is the kind of world where reflective practice can be helpful in doing practical theology.

Knoetze, Hannes (University of Pretoria)

African youth, African faith, African environment and sustainable development: A missional diaconal calling

It is well known that Africa is a youth continent, where 20% of the population is between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age. African people are also well known for their religiosity and spirituality although not much attention is given to these aspects when thinking and planning for development. Speaking from the African traditional believes, Africans live close to nature and the environment, traditionally Africans were farmers. As such the sustainability of development especially in the form of urbanisation and the fourth industrial revolution - that hit Africa as a reality with COVID 19, remain in question, where so many seemingly valuable developments have failed in the past. This paper will attend to the precious religiosity and spirituality of Africans to argue for a missional diaconal ministry from the churches in Africa to sustain the African environment and important African believes through sustainable youth development.
Practical theological perspectives on preaching to listeners experiencing angst or nothingness within a post-pandemic world - a time to forget and also to remember

The global Covid-19 pandemic could probably be considered as the mere springboard of poignant challenges that awaits people in the years to come. Uncertainty about the exact outcomes in all spheres of life is although evident. The philosopher, Marten Heidegger, once emphasized the notion of angst that relates to an all-pervasive feeling or mood (Gefühl) as indication of an encounter with nothing or nothingness (Pembroke 2013:12). In and through the experience of angst, a person loses her world. An all-pervasive feeling of dread or anxiety arises when the world that is usually experienced as familiar and comfortable begins to feel strange, alien and uncanny. This idea is providing some kind of picture of what people are currently experiencing in their lives. Heidegger also continues in debating that the persons gripped by angst, feels, disconnected or estranged from the world they are living in. Dorothee Sölle has continued in this vein in enabling us to realize that theology in arduous times should rather not try to explain away the contours of human suffering that eventually produces a kind of numbness. The challenge is rather to find venues for meaningfulness within a post pandemic world in which the feelings of meaninglessness are prominent.

This paper is interested in elucidating the problematic praxis of preaching to listeners that should guide people to embrace God’s new normal while they are struggling to come to grips with what the normal would like after the coronavirus. It deals with the creative tension between the feeling of meaningfulness of angst (nothingness) and being pressed to go back to the basics of profound meaning. This paper shows further interest in Brueggemann’s interpretation of Isaiah 43:18-19 with the emphasis on to not remember the former things and not to consider things of the old but rather to realize that God is indeed doing a new thing in a hidden manner. Preaching within the context should concomitantly deal with the role of forgetting (cf. Ricoeur) as well as with vivid remembrances in helping listeners to make sense of their feeling of an uncanny life.

Ecumenism and Covid: A critical evaluations of the Local Ecumenical Action Networks (LEANS) as a model of ministry in the context of coronavirus in KZN

The aim of this paper are to provide a reflection on the leans model of ecumenical collaboration, adopted by the churches in response to the Covid pandemic in 2020 in KwaZulu-Natal. The study looks at the fundamental issues, perspectives and role of ecumenical theology in the promotion of public health. It also looks at the practical steps undertaken by churches organized through LEANS in order to maximize the potential faith communities in enhancing the survival of people infected and affected by the pandemic. Faith and theology play a critical role in promoting health and wellbeing of people in society. This is even more critical in the context of the pandemic. The question that begs for an answer is what the impact of the church’s ministry was during the first wave of the coronavirus in KwaZulu-Natal. Did the LEANS improve the work of the church or did it impede it? What were the advantages of using the LEAN model? The paper proposes some practical actions for the intervention of the church in the future in enabling people to manage the pandemic.

Digital mediated communications: Pastoral care to the elderly during and post COVID-19 era

This paper makes use of a hermeneutical methodology to explore how digital platforms can be used to provide pastoral care to the elderly during coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) scourge and post the pandemic. The paper is motivated by the writers’ zeal to reach out to the elderly and provide pastoral care services to them during and post challenging times of COVID-19. The reason being that elderly people are facing the highest risk of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, there is need of computer and tele-mobile applications that will assist pastoral care givers to efficiently deliver services to the elderly people who are mostly affected by the pandemic. The digital platform provides for expedient, sustainable
and comprehensive solutions to human challenges. As communication mediators, they will be explored. The hermeneutical methodology is a framework that will help us understand the hazards, advantages and the benefits of digital communication in providing pastoral care to the elderly congregants.

**Makoa, Moshe (UKZN)**

**Cultural ethnographic public theology: Understanding the pedagogical nature of the church building and experiencing *Domus ecclesiae* in a Post-Pandemic World**

The current emerged novel coronavirus, “severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2)”, caused a highly contagious disease called the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The virus was first reported from Wuhan city in China in December, 2019, which in less than three months spread throughout the globe and was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the 11th of March, 2020. Many restrictions in religious circles have been caused by the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Globally, churches are faced with unprecedented changes to their old traditional forms of worship, theological questions have been asked and liturgical practices have been disrupted. The impact of the virus has forced churches to minister to their members virtually – ordinations, covenant services, and strategic church meetings have been held online. These new forms of worship and communion, have undoubtedly raised practical theology dialogues. This research aims to contribute to the practical theology dialogue. First, I will begin by revisiting the idea of what the church means – the idea that New Testament ecclesiology is metaphysical – and the pedagogical nature of the church. Secondly, I will visit the idea of church house worship as Christianity emerged in Antioch and experiencing *Domus ecclesiae* (house worship) in contemporary South Africa. Finally, I will explore how churches in South Africa can adopt “church houses” as an emerging model.

**Meyer, Juanita (University of the Free State)**

**Responding to a postpandemic world: A pastoral theological exploration of a teleology of reciprocity**

The novel Coronavirus has changed our world in shape and form. At present, it is not novel that people’s health and economic viabilities are threatened. What is novel still, are the effects of this virus on our psyches, or in theological language, on our soul, spirits and minds.

Authors Balswick, et al. (2016) propose a developmental teleology, a theological understanding of becoming a complete human being. They work from the assumption that Christian psychologists are believers in a creation that reflects something of its Creator and Redeemer and as a result propose an understanding of ideal personhood in light of the interrelations of the triune God. This article, therefore, argues that during the abrupt lockdown people were dissociated from not only intimate, gracing and empowering relationships, but also from the essence of our nature. People were dissociated from the reality that humans exist in community and therefore disconnected from their telos. As a response, the researcher proposes a pastoral theology where caregivers actively respond to the imperative inherent in the theological anthropology of the Triune God. This imperative calls us to approach embodied souls with the offer of grace instead of shame, empowerment instead of dominance, and intimacy, instead of dissociation. For the real dangers of this epidemic do not lie in the physical threat to our bodies, but rather in the subtle messages inherent in the neurosis of social distancing and our futile attempts to regain spiritual intimacy through the false promises of a technology void of spirit and soul.

**Moyo, Herbert (UKZN)**

**The Misnomer of being church in COVID-19 Health protocols**

The new normal under COVID-19 lock down protocols are pro-life protection but are highly anti-church ethics of preferential option for the poor. I argue in this paper that the church’s preferential option for the poor versus the COVID-19 safety protocols leans towards favouritism for the rich at the expense of the poor especial in the enactment of virtual pastoral care approaches. The requirement for android gadgets and data to connect to the pastoral care ministry of the church is a misnomer for the historical life-long
ethic of caring for the marginalised by the church. I conclude the paper by saying that the church is now trapped in a system that favours the have and the expense of the have-not. This development that favours the rich must be resisted through formulations of being church that will continue to accommodate the have-not in the new world order after COVID-19.

**Mzondi, Modisa (South African Theological Seminary)**

**Clements Kadalie, the trade unionist, and prophet Shepherd Bushiri: Some post Covid-19theological reflections for South African township Pentecostal praxis.**

The gold rush in South Africa required many unskilled workers to work on the surface and underground in the recently discovered gold deposits within the Witwatersrand. Mining companies ventured to lure such labour across South(ern) Africa. In the past century, trade union leadership and religious leadership in South Africa shared similar objectives. Clement Kadali is one of those workers who reached South Africa to offer cheap labour and ended as a union leader. He addressed socio-economic issues affecting the poor. The post-1994 South African democratic dispensation attracted many people to pursue better economic opportunities. Shepherd Bushiri is one of those. The article engages in some theological reflections on these two leaders regarding their influence among the poor and destitute in South Africa by employing Osmer’s four phases of practical theology to recommend a post-Covid-19 praxis for township Pentecostal pastors.

**Nel, Marius (North-West University)**

**Pentecostal eschatological preaching in a post-pandemic world**

Eschatological speculation receives an inordinate amount of attention among some Pentecostals. The movement was born from an eschatological sentiment, as a realisation of the primitivist urge to receive the same latter rain that the early church experienced, and that would equip and empower believers to take the gospel to the ends of the earth before the imminent second coming of Christ. In fact, they argued that the success of their missionary endeavours would hasten the date of the second coming. The eschatological urgency has largely cooled over the years, with the exception of peak periods of expectation, such as the catastrophe that the Second World War held for Europe, millennial fever during the transition to the new century, the threat of HIV and Aids during the early 2000s, and the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. The article proposes a homiletical response to eschatological expectations in a post-pandemic world that is representative of a pentecostal hermeneutic.

**Nell, Ian (Stellenbosch University)**

**Leadership as a rhetoric of crisis? An empirical probe into ministerial leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic**

Much of the literature on leadership works with the assumptions of a rhetoric of crisis. If the author can manipulate the statistics in such a way that he/she can show that congregations can no longer function in the same way as they did in the past (pre-Covid-19) and that there will be no more members of the denomination left in fifty years, the author immediately attracts attention. If the author furthermore points out that churches that want to succeed must quickly adapt to new technologies and get rid of dated language and practices, he/she is seen as a guru and is invited to speak about the alleged crisis. The fact of the matter is, the rhetoric of crisis is a power play. It draws attention to the speaker and then lends credibility to the speaker's suggestions for reform and renewal. The two central research questions that this study investigates are: Were there signs of a rhetoric of crisis during the pandemic amongst a group of ministers in a specific denomination? And, what are some of the crisis leadership implications looking beyond Covid-19? The empirical part of the study makes use of a combination of appreciative enquiry and interactive qualitative analysis (IQA). The purpose of this type of research is to try to give a "thick description" of some activity of a social or cultural group. Lastly, I also explore some aspects of renewal in the aftermath of Covid-19 crisis looking at opportunities, innovation and reinvention that can be found for ministerial leadership.
Positive Religious Coping and Mental Wellbeing among Christians in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Context: Humankind is presently facing a global pandemic of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) for which there is yet no effective treatment or vaccination that is 100% effective. This has resulted in the world being in turmoil where many of our “habitual” social behaviours have endured major changes. Positive religious coping has frequently been associated with better mental health outcomes when dealing with stressful life events like hospitalizations, sudden deaths, and separation. The COVID-19 pandemic bestows possible mental health challenges, and the church has been particularly affected by the virus. Religious practice, like every other human affair, was altered at the onset of the pandemic.

Methodology: The present study is a review of the literature from 1990 to 2019. The search was done in electronic databases and reputable websites including PubMed, Medline, Springer, Elsevier, Science Direct, Scopus, and SID.

Results: The results indicated that Positive Religious Coping and Mental Health among Christians in Response to the COVID-19 could aid people to have mental relaxation in times of crisis and dangerous diseases. Some of the religious solutions proposed against the COVID-19 prevalence could be helpful.

Conclusion: In the present study, the Christians showed positive religious coping during infectious disease outbreaks and this may help some individuals reduce their risk of depressive illness. National pandemic preparedness plans may benefit from including a focus on spirituality and religious coping. It has been suggested that medical staff in hospitals pay more attention to the spiritual and religious beliefs of COVID-19-infected patients to improve their calmness and well-being. Religiosity was a valued sense of belonging to a religious creed, which elicits commitment to related practices—for example, praying, fasting, and reading Holy Scriptures.

Discerning the essence and mission of Church in the midst of COVID-19

This paper reflects on how the corvid 19 pandemic is indicating the centre of God’s mission for the congregation. It will engage on the implications of its reflections for public practical theology and congregational development. Spurred by an electronic survey carried out by author on multiple electronic platforms, the question was put to respondents: “What is that one thing which you missed about church during the lock down period?” Majority of respondents mentioned communal fellowship (Konoinia) as the most missed aspect of congregational life. This paper reflects on suggestions engendered by this observation and how it helps congregations to discern what makes them relevant to their members. Thus helping congregations to envision the future, invoke dreams of a new creation where a return to normality will birth a world in which the church would take a new shape presenting a fresh sense of missional community able to bring God to the people of our day.

Pouring out the virtual blessings - Reflections on the viral stream of musical blessings during lockdown

This paper will be a reflection on experiences during lockdown where music videos became an essential way for many people to process what was happening. The paper will study in more depth two videos in particular which were shared widely: The “Blessing” by John Rutter, which was produced in various virtual choirs, but in a particularly moving version by a Batavian Choir as a tribute to health care workers. The second was the song “Blessing” by Elevation worship, another setting of the same text, produced by a group in Cape Town in April and many other choirs around the world. The paper looks at the emotional effect of participating in a virtual choir, which has already been studied prior to the Corona Crisis, the effect of the words of the Blessing in Numbers 6, and the emotional impact of the visuals in creating a sense of solidarity and community across the barriers of lockdown.
Tsara, Lindah

**Exploring the experiences of the church during Covid 19 Lockdowns and examine the future of the church in post- pandemic world**

The spread of Covid 19 pandemic through many countries and the death of many people led many governments to embark on total National lockdowns. The lockdown entailed the banning of all gatherings for a specific time and the church was not spared. The focus of this study is to explore the experiences of the church during Covid 19 National lock down and examine the future of the church in post Covid 19 pandemic in Zimbabwe. The church is a symbol of hope, family unity and where aspirations and future dreams are prayed for and fulfilled. Without church services for long periods especially considering the length of Covid 19 lockdown, the vulnerability church including ministers and members in finding solace in spirituality is challenged. This study concludes that the whole church has become vulnerable spiritually, socially and economically due to the pandemic. Hence this paper postulates that, the future of the church in post pandemic world is unpredictable for we don't know how many people will be able to go back to church and if we are to go by virtual services, how many people will be able to access that, considering network accessibility, wifi bundle expenses and those who are illiterate.

Wessels, Wessel (University of the Free State)

**Lament and Resilience: Contemplation on Preaching in a (Post)Pandemic World**

Since the inception of a lockdown in South Africa, at least two academic articles have been written on the theme of preaching during the time of COVID19 in the South African context. Both of these publications are empirical and theorises from a grounded theory perspective to develop a theory of preaching from the location of that which has taken place in preaching during COVID19. These contemplations are of extreme importance but leave a lacuna in considering critical reflection on the practice of preaching during COVID19. In this article, I will first critically reflect on the insights gained from a grounded theory approach for preaching during COVID19. Secondly, I will build upon the idea that lament is an appropriate theological posture for preaching in a pandemic context, augmented with the focal image of resilience as important insight for a (post)pandemic world. Finally, I will conclude with hermeneutic keys for preaching in a (post)pandemic context.

Zwane, Sithembiso (UKZN)


The relationship between religion and development is fundamental because of the role of faith communities in socio-economic and political discourse. African people subscribes to redemptive religious practices especially during the time of crisis. Religion remains the most fundamental tenet of African identity. It is inconceivable for Africans not to be religious in the expression of their identity especially during crisis. The unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic invoked the religious discourse that seek to provide solidarity support to the most vulnerable in our communities. First, the paper seek to provide a modest but candid analysis of the socio-economic ‘Reality’ of Covid-19 in South Africa and beyond. Second, the paper seek to propose a ‘Biblical Practical Theology’ in the time of Covid-19 that finds expression in the Christian ‘Faith’ and the African philosophy of Ubuntu. Third, the paper argues that the Ujamaa Centre’s Contextual Bible Study (CBS) provides an appropriate contemporary pragmatic ‘Action’ to the challenges of Covid-19 which includes access to practical theological praxis and much needed food security.