# FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION Control of the co



Issue 2 | 2021

# Welcome from the office of the Dean

Taculty staff, students, stakeholders and alumni, we have reached the mid-year mark of the academic year. Within this short space of time, not much has changed as we are still coming to terms with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. However, we celebrate the fact that much has been completed. The academic programme ran as normal in the new normal. Staff and students did not let anything hold them back; they were resilient, energetic and kept up the pace. I once more congratulate you all. I want to encourage students at the start of the new semester to grab hold of and to maximize all opportunities in order to succeed, and staff to continue the good work and to keep running the race. I pray Philippians 1:3-6 (NKJV) upon you: I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

#### Prof Rantoa Letšosa

Dean, Faculty: Theology and Religion







## **Staff News & Achievements**

Congratulations to all staff as we announce the following internal and external faculty staff news and achievements:

#### **Achievements**



Dr Martin Laubscher, Lecturer in Department: Practical and Missional Theology



Dr Wessel George Prince Wessels, Post-Doctorate Research Fellow in Department: Practical and Missional Theology

On 31 March 2021, **Dr Martin Laubscher** graduated with his **PhD (Systematic Theology & Ethics)**, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Dissertation: Publieke Teologie as Profetiese Teologie? 'n Kritiese beskouing van die sosio-ekklesiologiese implikasies van die drieërlei amp in die teologie van Karl Barth [Public Theology as Prophetic Theology? A critical examination of the socio- ecclesiological implications of the threefold office in the theology of Karl Barth]

**Promotor: Prof Dion Foster** 

On 14 April 2021, **Dr Wessel Wessels** graduated with his **PhD** at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Dissertation: Postcolonial Homiletics? A Practical Theological Engagement with Postcolonial Thought

Promotors: Profs Cas Wepener & Stephan de Beer

## New appointments:



Dr Henco vd Westhuizen, HOD: Historical and Constructive Theology



Dr Lodewyk Sutton, HOD: Old and New Testament



Dr Juanita Meyer, Senior Lecturer: Practical Theology in the Department: Practical and Missional Theology

Dr Henco van der Westhuizen was appointed the new Head of Department: Historical and Constructive Theology with effect from 1 April 2021. Dr Lodewyk Sutton was appointed the new Head of Department: Old and New Testament with effect from 1 July 2021. On 28 July 2021,
Dr Juanita Meyer, Senior
Lecturer: Practical Theology was
elected as the new Research
Committee Chairperson for the
Faculty: Theology and Religion.

On 29 July 2021. **Dr M Laubscher**, Lecturer: Practical Theology, was elected as the new Editor-in-Chief: *Acta Theologica* for the Faculty: Theology and Religion.

#### **External staff news**

During January 2021, **Dr Joseph Pali, Senior Lecturer: Practical Theology** was elected as the **Treasurer of the Society for Practical Theology in South Africa (SPTSA).** 

The Southern African Missiological Society Executive Committee (SAMS Exco) elected **Dr Eugene Baron, Senior Lecturer: Missiology** as the **Online Editor for Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Missiology** after Acting in the position for some time.



# Articles/book chapters published and accepted

#### **Published articles**

Baron, E. 2021. Missiology and the quest for a 'grassroots' narrative to address 'radicalisation and violence' in a post-apartheid South Africa. In: Temmerman, J. (ed.) 2021. *Religious Radicalism. Demarcations and Challenges*. Netherlands: Open Access.

Baron, E. 2021. Church Media and Reconciliation in The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 46(3), p.1–14.

Baron, E. and Pali, K.J. 2021. The shaping and formation of a missional ecclesiology of township congregations in the Mangaung Metro Municipality during Covid-19. HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies.

Baron, E. Towards a deepened Christology in the Cape Flats: the "Spirit of Christ" metaphor in the Neo-Pentecostal church. In Kgatle, M.S., Nel, M. & Banda C. 2020. Paradigm shifts in Christology: Jesus in various lenses of South African Pentecostalism. Routledge New

Baron, E. and Letšosa, R.S. 2021. Liturgy as an anti-racist praxis for Reformed Churches in South Africa. *In die Skriflig*.

Baron, E. 2021. Protecting our Environment: The Need for South African Youth with a Mission and Black Consciousness. *HTS Theological Studies*.

#### Critical Thinking in Religion.

Letŝosa,R. 2021. What has the beast's mark to do with the Covid-19 vaccination, and what is the role of the church and answering to the Christians? *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 77(4), a6 480https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6480.

Mokhutso, J. 2021. The impact of African indigenous knowledge system on health care system in South Africa: The Covid-19 perspective. *Gender and Behaviour Journal*, Vol. 19.

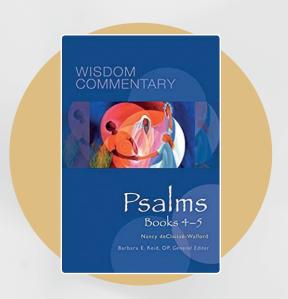
Pali, K.J. 2021. Pastoral leadership in the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) Free State: Challenges and Opportunities. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol 168:77–96.

Pietersen, C.D. & Human, D.J. 2021. YHWH's mouthpiece to the exiles: a Jeremianic turn of hope. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 7(1): 1–24. https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2021.v7n1.a06.

Tolmie, D.F. 2021: Elected and a devil? The characterisation of Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel. In: J. Frey & C.R. Koester (eds), Signs and discourses in John 5 and 6. Historical, literary, and theological readings from the Colloquium Ioanneum 2019 in Eisenach (Tübingen: Mohr & Siebeck; WUNT 463), pp. 289–310.

#### **Book contributions**

A student, an administrative staff member and an academic staff member in one international project



In 2018 Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford visited South Africa for a new feminist-critical commentary on Books 4 and 5 on the Psalms. Liturgical Press in Minnesota asked her to write a "broadly feminist" commentary on Books 4 and 5 of the Psalter. By mentioning broadly feminist, the Press is interested in reading the psalms from the viewpoint of the voices that tend to be "less heard" in biblical scholarship – addressing issues of feminist readings of and images in the psalms, creation care, economic disparity, children's rights, political oppression, etc.

It was her task to write only 75% of the commentary. The other 25% was to be contributions of "less-heard voices" reflecting on the psalms. She came to South Africa to hear from first-generation college students, pastors, housekeepers and day workers, young first-generation professionals, etc. – the whole range of folks in post-apartheid South Africa.

The result was *Volume 22 of Wisdom Commentary Series*, *Psalms*, *Books 4–5*, published at the end of 2020 (Publisher: Liturgical Press, 2020; ISBN 0814681468, 9780814681466). The description of the commentary is at <a href="https://books.google.co.za/books?id=tFyKzQEACAAJ&dq=nancy+declaiss%C3%A9-walford&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiOvJysqajvAhWyQhUIHfqRC3kQ6AEwBHoECAAQAq">books?id=tFyKzQEACAAJ&dq=nancy+declaiss%C3%A9-walford&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiOvJysqajvAhWyQhUIHfqRC3kQ6AEwBHoECAAQAq</a>.

In this close reading of Psalms 90–150, Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford discovers meanings in the Psalms that were "there all along" but hidden beneath layers of interpretation built up over the centuries. Approaching the canonical storyline of the Psalter with a feminist-critical lens, she reads against the dominant mind-set, refuses to accept the givens, and seeks to uncover a hidden/alternate/parallel

set of societal norms. DeClaissé-Walford attends to how context affects the way hearers appropriate the Psalter's words: women, for the most part, hear differently than men; women of privilege differently than women living in poverty. Her interchanges with students and scholars in post-apartheid South Africa bring the biblical text alive in new ways for today's believers.

The Department of Old and New Testament at UFS also participated in this project by assisting Prof deClaissé-Walford with voices "less-heard." In the end, one student, **Ms Gweneth Ntamo**, one administrative staff member from the University, **Ms Siphokazi Dlwati**, and one academic staff member, **Dr Lodewyk Sutton**, participated in the project. It is not every day that a student, support staff and academic staff can collaborate in a book project. Ms Gweneth Ntamo later joined the faculty as the Academic Advisor.

#### Training qualifications awarded

**Dr Joel Mokhoathi, Senior Lecturer: Religious Studies,** was awarded the **Leadership Engagement Programme Certificate** from HR: Leadership and Development Division.



# **Teaching and Learning report:**

## No student left behind 2021

As predicted, 2021 has been nothing short of complex, complicated and extremely challenging. At the beginning of the year, the academic calendar was delayed by several external factors. From NSFAS and an extended registration period, to student protests on campus, the academic calendar took a knock and had to be adjusted to accommodate the endless disruptions. As if this was not enough, in the second quarter, the Free State province experienced a surge in the numbers of COVID19 cases and the faculty was faced with the decision of having to adjust its blended approach by moving all faceto-face classes online. Despite all this, both staff and students showed an incredible level of resilience, and by the end of the academic semester, we had 1173 staff logins and 24 815 student logins on Blackboard:

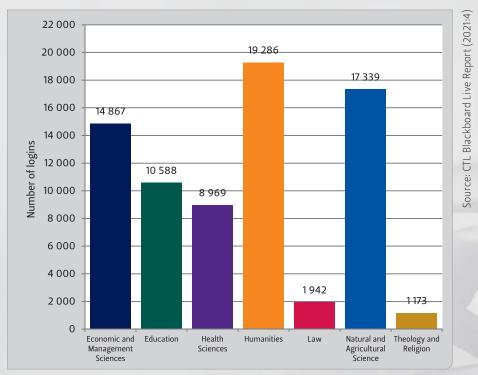


Figure 1: Instructors' cumulative course logins on Blackboard Learn per faculty in 2021.

#### Table 1

	HCert Theology		BDiv 1st Year		BDiv 2nd Year	
	Mod. Code	% Average	Mod. Code	% Average	Mod. code	% Average
Historical and Constructive Theology			THIS1512 (111/144)	77%	THIS2612 (29/39)	80%
			TIST1512 (95/138)	69%		
Practical and Missional Theology	TPCL1514 (165/171)	97%			TMIS2614 (39/44)	89%
	TPIP1513 (135/177)	76%				
	TPPM1514 (162/172)	94%				
Old and New Testament Studies	TBIB1514 (159/172)	92%	TOTT1513 (127/141)	90%	TOTT2613 (31/40)	78%
Religion Studies			TRRS1414 (1/1)	100%		
Total %	90%		84%		82%	

Source: http://iinfo.ufs.ac.za/PowerHEDA/dashboard.aspx

## First semester

Though the success rate was not as high as that of 2020 around the same time, we managed to complete semester one successfully, with the lowest average module mark being 69% for the undergraduate programmes, and we have managed to retain a remarkably consistent 100% in many of the postgraduate modules. Below please find a detailed summary of the undergraduate progress:

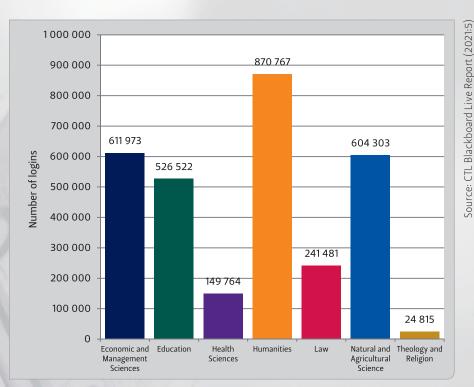


Figure 2: Students' cumulative course logins on Blackboard Learn per faculty in 2021.

			7/5			
BDiv 3rd Year		BDiv 4th Year		AdvDip Theology		
Mod. code	% Average	Mod. code	% Average	Mod. code	% Average	
THIS3712 (14/18)	78%	THIS4812 (8/8)	100%	TELG1714 (11/11)	100%	
THIS3732 (10/12)	83%	THIS4832 (8/8)	100%	TRES1714 (5/7)	71%	
TALT3712 (9/12)	75%					
TLIT3712	76%	THOM4812 (8/8)	100%			
TMIS3712 (14/17)	82%					
TOTT3714/34 (13/13)	100%	TOTT4814/34 (9/9)	100%	TOTT1734 (11/11)	100%	
TRPH3712	79%			TRLS1714	88%	
(15/19)				(7/8)	00 /0	
82%		100%		89%		

A warm congratulations to THIS1512, which improved from 64.5% in 2020 to 77% in 2021. We wish to see more positive improvements as we conclude the academic programme. Our second semester is currently underway and will be ending on 26 November 2021. We would like to wish all our staff and students a successful completion of the remainder of the year, and we hope that we will continue to hold hands during these difficult times, until we see the finish line together.

### **Shepherd Centre**



The Shepherd Centre has gone through tremendous changes and we are proud of all the baby steps we have managed to take, given how the pandemic has affected us. We successfully presented one of our new SLP's Christian Leadership in Contemporary Context, where we achieved 100% pass rate for our group of participants and an astounding 84% class average. We are very proud of our participants and wish to welcome more to this experience with us.

Our discussions with the ACRP (Association of Christian Religious Practitioners) with regard to a partnership that





will benefit our SLP participants towards a designation within the professional body, have been successful and our short course now carries CPD points, which is a huge achievement for us given the short space of time we had to accomplish this. At the moment we have three active programmes, with our latest addition being "Introduction to the Bible". We plan to develop more short learning programmes that will empower the market and fill the need for theological training of pastors and religious leaders in our community. We are looking forward to ending this year on a great note as the Shepherd Centre.

## Student news

aculty of Theology & Religion 2021 Prize giving (2020 Academic Year)

## Bachelor of Divinity (1st Year)

#### TNTT1523

Visser, Sarah Victor (2016271773) 86%

#### TOTT1513

Visser, Sarah Victor (2016271773) 97%

#### **TPMT1522**

Phejane, Tumisang Nigel (2017215159) 84%

#### THIS1512

Mlota, Sigcobile (2018695102) 83%

#### **TIST1522**

Minnaar, Johannes Christian (2013018664) 95%

#### **TSYS1522**

Visser, Sarah Victor (2016271773) 88%

**Best Student Overall** 

Ms Visser, Sarah Victor (2016271773)

#### Bachelor of Divinity (2nd Year)

#### **TNTT2623**

Nkhahle, Phomolo (2017143997) 90%

#### TOTT2613

Boesak, Samuel Aubrey (2008133205) 87%

Motaung, Khotso Malefetsane (2014161877) 87%

#### TMIS2614

Boesak, Samuel Aubrey (2008133205) 81%

#### **TPFF2622**

Boesak, Samuel Aubrey (2008133205) 84%

#### **THIS2612**

Nkhahle, Phomolo (2017143997) 89%

#### **TETH2622**

Lesia, Omolemo Sechaba (2017234697) 82%

#### **TSYS2622**

Boesak, Samuel Aubrey (2008133205) 84%

#### **Best Student Overall**

Mr Boesak, Samuel Aubrey (2008133205)

## Bachelor of Divinity (3rd Year)

#### TNTT3724/44

De Wet, Pieter Jacobus (2017447067) 89%

#### TOTT3714/34

Opperman, Melissa (2017088028) 85%

#### TLIT3712

Bookholane, Thabang (2015139377) 75%

#### TCON3722

Kekana, Neo Lesiba (2017371309) 79%

#### **TPAS3722**

Kekana, Neo Lesiba (2015139377) 85%

#### TMIS3712

Opperman, Melissa (2017088028) 75%

Eastes, SJ (2017080736) 75%

#### THIS3712

Opperman, Melissa (2017088028) 75%

#### THIS3732

Kekana, Neo Lesiba (2015139377) 89%

#### **TALT3712**

Victor, John Douglas (2016211167) 78%

#### **TGAC3722**

De Wet, Pieter Jacobus 2017447067 (75%)

#### **TETH3722**

Kekana, Neo Lesiba (2017371309) 82%

#### **TSYS3722**

Kekana, Neo Lesiba (2015139377) 83%

#### **TRPH3712**

Swart, Stephanus Hendrik (2017078300) 86%

#### **TRWR3722**

Opperman, Melissa (2017088028) 93%

#### Best Student Overall

Ms Opperman, Melissa (2017088028)

#### Bachelor of Divinity (4th Year)

#### TNTT4824/44

Hurter, Janke Charlise (2016384915) 92%

#### TOTT4814/34

Hurter, Janke Charlise (2016384915) 98%

#### TMIS4814

Muller, Niel (2016147486) 76%

#### **TMIS4834**

Muller, Niel (2016147486) 86%

#### **TPTH4804**

Hurter, Janke Charlise (2016384915) 77%

#### **TELG4814**

Hurter, Janke Charlise (2016384915) 78%

#### **TSYS4824**

Hurter, Janke Charlise (2016384915) 87%

#### **TRES4804**

Hurter, Janke Charlise (2016384915) 81%

#### Best Student Overall

Ms Hurter, Janke Charlise (2016384915)

## Higher Certificate in Theology

#### **Best Student Overall**

Ms Martins, Phillips Gabriella (2016173896)

## Advanced Diploma in Theology

Best Student Overall Mrs Letšosa, Sylvia (2019814967)

## Postgraduate Diploma in Theology

Best Student Overall

Ms Els, Adrie (2014043240)

#### Master of Divinity

Best Student Overall

Ms Kassier, Ingrid (2014054593)

#### Master of Theology Dissertation

Best Student Overall

Ms Setshase, Matau Eunice (2002070932)

# Acta Theologica

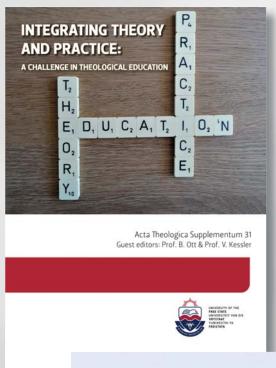
Two new issues of Acta Theologica were published during the first 6 months of 2021. In the first Supplementum issue titled, "Integrating theory and practice: a challenge in theological education" (freely available at <a href="https://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at/issue/view/455">https://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at/issue/view/455</a>), guest editors Bernhard Ott and Volker Kessler, with the help of other authors, provided valuable perspectives on the dynamic interaction between practice and theory with far-reaching implications for theological education. The first issue of the year (freely available at <a href="https://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at/issue/view/458">https://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at/issue/view/458</a>) consists of an interview with the well-known Prof Nico Koopman, and is a collection of eight articles reflecting some new research as well as some interesting book reviews.

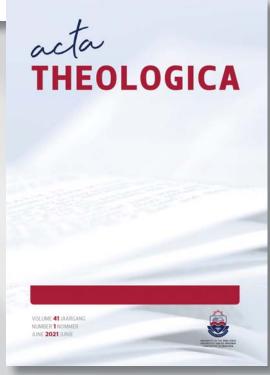
Prof Jan-Albert van den Berg

## Special edition on theory and practice and theological education

Integrating theory and practice in theological education is a challenging endeavour. A conference on this theme was held from 25-26 August 2020. Some of the papers delivered at this event were published in a Supplementum edition of Acta Theologica. Guest editors were Profs Bernhard Ott (European School of Culture and Theology, Germany) and Volker Kessler (GBFE – Gesellschaft für Bildung und Forshcung in Europa). A total of fifteen articles with authors from five different countries were published, covering themes like distance education, church music education, leadership, missiology and ecumenical perspectives. An interview was conducted with the guest editors about this project and published on the journal website. It can be watched at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ-XvJfxp6.

**Dr Lyzette Hoffman** 







The biennial conference of the International Academy for Practical Theology took place from 8 to 10 July 2021. This prestige meeting was held digitally, the new way to hold conferences during the COVID pandemic. The Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, hosted the conference on the topic "Coping with crisis: Hospitality, security and the search for faithful connections", against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 130 practical theologians from around the globe participated in so-called Keynote and Paper Sessions over a period of three days. Two colleagues from the Department: Practical and Missional Theology at the Faculty of Theology and Religion also presented papers at the conference.

In her focus on the challenges associated with the development of faith of adolescents, Dr Lyzette Hoffman offered important markers in her presentation titled "The Response of a Congregation to the Sense of Crisis – Engaging Teenagers through Reflection, Content and Outreach". Dr Hoffman's presentation included the following important perspectives: COVID-19 posed different kinds of challenges to society and churches. With various 'normal ministry practices' not permitted under lockdown regulations, as well as people starting to fear the effects of COVID-19, a sense of crisis can easily prevail.

However, a small congregation in Bloemfontein, South Africa, responded by engaging their teenagers through reflection, content and outreach. Various methods, including virtual and face-to-face methods, were utilised to minister to and with the teenagers. Rather than being

victims of a crisis, teenagers can be agents of change and hope in a time of crisis.

In their address titled "Congregational leadership in a time of crisis - a South African perspective", Prof Kobus Schoeman, together with Prof Ian Nell, of Stellenbosch University, suggested important perspectives on congregational leadership. This presentation proposed the following perspective to colleagues: In the Corona period, the issue of the task and role of the church and congregations has become more urgent. They pointed out that congregations and their leadership play a pivotal role in understanding and reacting to a crisis or challenge in any community. The COVID pandemic and its consequences are no exception in this regard. Congregational leaders have exhibited a wide range of different and creative ways of dealing with the crisis. Profs Schoeman and Nell's address provided important critical reflection on leadership practices in congregations during a pandemic.

Heartfelt congratulations to both Dr Hoffman and Prof Schoeman on their important contributions at this authoritative conference. Conference attendees agreed that the both the organisation and the presentation of the conference were excellent. Contributors and participants were given room for enriching and intellectual conversations by means of short video recordings, which were available on official website, as well as interactive Zoom presentations and conversations.

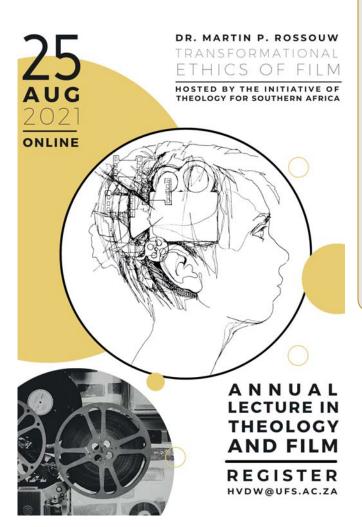
Prof Jan-Albert van den Berg

### **Departmental events**

- The Faculty: Theology and Religion hosted a Book Fair 2021 at the university on 31 March 2021 exhibiting all the books produced by academics during the year 2020.
- On Tuesday 20 April, from 12:00 to13:00, The Department of Religion Studies hosted a colloquium with the Department of Religion Studies of the University of Pretoria, led by Prof Maniraj Sukdaven and Prof Jaco Beyers, on the theme "The effects of Covid 19 and its influences on Religious Societies".

#### • Visit to Justo Mwale University

Two colleagues of the Department: Practical and Missional Theology, Drs Juanita Meyer and Nico Mostert, visited Justo Mwale University on behalf of the Department and Faculty during May. During their visit, the long-standing collaboration between our Faculty and Justo Mwale University was further strengthened. During the visit, currently enrolled PhD students were guided regarding aspects of research methodology as well as the ethical clearance application process required for empirical research. Drs Meyer and Mostert are very positive about their visit as well as about the on-going collaboration between the two institutions.



#### Virtual Career week

What can you do with a degree in Theology? This burning question was answered in surprising ways during the Virtual Career Week of the Faculty of Theology and Religion from 3-5 August. You cannot only become a pastor or minister in a congregation, there are also other career opportunities. Alumni from the Faculty - Bongani Ngesi, Thania Botha and Gwen Ntamo - shared their different journeys of studying theology and the career paths it took them on. Siphokazi Dlwati (Teaching and Learning Manager, Faculty of Theology and Religion) discussed the different programmes and subjects in studying Theology. Having a degree in Theology opens different career possibilities, e.g. pastoring, counselling, lecturing, teaching at a school, youth coaching, etc. To be prepared for the world of work one also needs important skills like CV-writing, interview skills and personal branding, and Belinda Janeke, of the UFS Career Office, gave some important tips in this regard. The recordings of the Virtual Career Week can be retrieved from Blackboard.

#### **UFS Virtual Career Week 2021**

Faculty of **Theology and Religion** 3-5 August 2021

#### Tuesday, 3 August

Career paths and options 12:00-13:00

#### Wednesday, 4 August

Alumni panel discussion 12:00-13:00 Aluni break away sessions 13:00-13:30

Join the **Alumni panel discussion** in order to be part of the Alunni break away session

#### Thursday, 5 August

Work readiness crash course 12:00-13:30

Including: CV Writing | Interview skills | LinkedIn Personal brandig | Skills development

Career Services: +27 51 401 7393 / Career@ufs.ac.za

- The Department: Old and New Testament is hosting the Southern African Society for Near Eastern Studies (SASNES), LXXSA and Old Testament Society of South Africa (OTSSA) annual meetings from 30 August 3 September 2021 (virtual meeting).
- The Department: Old and New Testament is scheduled to undertake an EDUCATIONAL TOUR TO EGYPT, 5-12 December 2021. For more details contact Dr Lodewyk Sutton on SuttonL@ufs.ac.za.



### ANNUAL LECTURE IN REFORMING THEOLOGY

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF REFORMED THEOLOGY AND JUSTICE

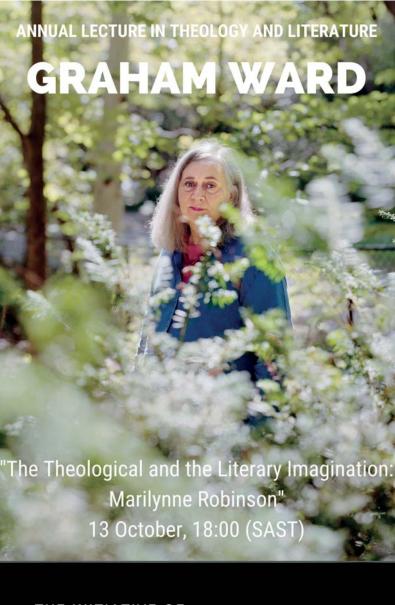
15 September 2021 18:00 (SAST) register at hvdw@ufs.ac.za

# ANNUAL LECTURE IN THEOLOGY & THE ARTS



THE
INITIATIVE
OF THEOLOGY
FOR
SOUTHERN AFRICA

GESA THIESSEN 20 OCTOBER '21 18:00 (SAST) ONLINE HVDW@UFS.AC.ZA



THE INITIATIVE OF THEOLOGY FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA PRESENTS

## ANNUAL LECTURES IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

EPHRAIM RADNER, RICHARD KEARNEY, CHRISTIAN DANZ, ANNE CLAAR THOMASSON, LUKAS OHLY, AMOS YONG, MICHAEL WELKER, JÜRGEN MOLTMANN

Time:

1-5 November 2021 6 pm - 8 pm (SAST)

Registration:

hvdw@ufs.ac.za

