

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION Annual Report 2019







UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA



FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION ANNUAL REPORT 2019

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Faculty of Theology and Religion Annual Report 2019 Dean: Prof Rantoa Letšosa

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LETTER FROM THE DEAN

2019 was a challenging, yet exciting year of transition for the Faculty of Theology and Religion. Much has been done and achieved, with great success and support. As newly appointed Dean, I commend the entire staff of the faculty, and in particular the respective Heads of Department (HODs) together with all the teaching and learning staff who have contributed immensely with every single contribution of hard work and dedication to ensure that the academic year is a success, be it through teaching and learning, through robust conference participation, academic citizenship or through student support services. I am also thankful for the immense support of the university in growing the faculty and the understanding that was shown. 2019 was also the year for the establishment of a Faculty Advisory Board, which had a positive impact on our daily activities. We are also continuously grateful for the outstanding contribution of all our stakeholders and donors towards student bursaries. We are also thankful to Sola Gratia – our Faculty Student Council – for the role they have played in addressing student-related matters and making students feel at home away from home. New staff members were appointed, and we also had to bid farewell to our former office manager and one of our professors who is now in a different capacity in our midst.

Highlights of the year included the Annual Theological Day, the Tutu Jonker Prestige Lecture, three inaugural lectures, as well as a very successful educational study tour to Israel. The annual report will give a more detailed glimpse into how the year unfolded.

A special thanks also to Prof Rian Venter for the role he played as Acting Dean for a few months, but also as Secundus Dean. Without his guidance in the process, the route would have been very difficult.

I also thank the Rectorate for the special contribution towards the faculty. Their support made it possible to drive change in the faculty.

Prof Rantoa Letšosa

Dean: Faculty of Theology and Religion University of the Free State

DEPARTMENT OF OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

The normal pattern of undergraduate and postgraduate lectures continued in 2019. At postgraduate level, Dr Lodewyk Sutton and Prof Francois Tolmie were responsible for lecturing on perspectives from the Old and New Testaments as part of the MDiv module on 'Naming and the Divine'; Dr Marius Terblanche and Prof Hermie van Zyl lectured in the Postgraduate Diploma in Theology ('Gemeentejaars').

The department hosted a guest lecturer, Prof Kees Waaijman from the Titus Brandsma Institute for Spirituality in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Prof Waaijman, who is world-renowned for his research on spirituality, gave a guest lecture on the theme '(Re)search for spirituality'. Prof Waaijman is also a research fellow in the department.

Quite a number of papers were read by members of the department: Dr Sutton read papers at the Old Testament Study Group of the Tyndale Fellowship at Tyndale House, Cambridge, UK; the International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament at Aberdeen, Scotland; the Kopanong Spring Conference, University of the Free State; and at Pro Pent 2019, University of Pretoria. Prof Fanie Snyman read papers at the European Association of Biblical Studies in Warsaw, Poland, and at a conference on Job at the University of Tartu, Estonia. Prof Pieter de Villiers read papers at the Titus Brandsma Institute, Radboud University, Nijmegen; the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Diego; and at the annual meeting of the Spirituality Association of South Africa, St Augustine College, Johannesburg. Prof Francois Tolmie read papers at the annual meeting of the New Testament Society of Southern Africa, University of Johannesburg; the *Colloquium Ioanneum*, Eisenach; and at the Kopanong Spring Conference, University of the Free State.

Members of the department also fulfilled various leading roles in academic societies and on editorial boards: Prof De Villiers is the chair of the Spirituality Association of South Africa and editor of LitNet (Religion Studies). Prof Tolmie is editor of *UFS Theological Explorations* and a member of the editorial board of *Acta Theologica*. Dr Sutton is a member of the editorial boards of *UFS Theological Explorations* and *Acta Theologica*.

Researchers in the department published a large number of research outputs in 2019 (for details, see further in this report). The following should be noted in particular: Dr Sutton wrote a chapter on 2 Maccabees 7:1-42 in NPL Allen, PJ Jordaan and J Zsengellér (eds.), *Passion, persecution, and epiphany in Early Jewish literature* (Routledge). He was also the guest editor of a supplement edition of *Acta Theologica*, titled *Unheard voices in the Bible.* Some third-year Old Testament students participated in this publication. Prof Tolmie and other research fellows from the department contributed to a book project on John 2-4, published in the WUNT



series by Mohr Siebeck in Germany. The book is titled *Expressions of the Johannine kerygma in John 2:23–5:18* and was edited by Profs Alan Culpepper and Jörg Frey, who are both research fellows in the department.

Dr Sutton was promoted to Senior Lecturer at the beginning of the year and was elected to be part of the UFS' prestigious Emerging Scholar Accelerator Programme (ESAP). During 2019, he received certificates for courses offered by the UFS on supervision, diversity, and inclusion, and attended a workshop on Blackboard basics at the UFS. Furthermore, he received an MA degree in Ancient Languages and Cultures/Semitic Languages from the University of Pretoria.

In terms of community engagement, all members of the department regularly preach at churches in the Bloemfontein area. Dr Sutton and Prof Tolmie both serve on the DRC's general committee for Bible Translation, and both, as well as Prof Van Zyl, lectured at the Bible School of the DRC Universitas. Prof Van Zyl serves on the regional committee for the central parts of the Bible Society of South Africa. He was also involved in an English Bible translation for the deaf, which was officially launched in November. Furthermore, he was the theological editor for a study Bible published by Struik Publishers. He and Prof Tolmie were both involved in a thematic study Bible published by CUM and officially launched in November.

2019 ended with a very successful educational study tour to Israel, organised by Dr Sutton and Prof Tolmie. The tour members (a total of 34) included students and researchers from the faculty, as well as members of the public.



Profs Tolmie, Letšosa, and Dr Sutton during the study tour in Israel Photo credit: Freelancer



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

The department experienced another busy, exciting, and productive year. There are many changes taking place in the *teaching and learning* aspect that concern students. Three such trends can be mentioned. The demography of the faculty has drastically taken on a new profile with the increase of African students. The university is increasingly emphasising the use of electronic media to support students and to facilitate effective learning. The focus on the decolonisation of the curriculum is another shift that the department had to attend to. The commitment of part-time lecturers such as Drs B Celliers and V Iheanacho, Revs C Hamman, M Louw, J Lubbe, and M Oosthuizen, as well as Mr N Oosthuizen, should be mentioned. The creativity and initiative of Dr Henco van der Westhuizen, especially with reading groups he initiated with students, deserve special mention.

On *postgraduate* level, the number of honours students increased, which made contact and cohort teaching possible. One doctoral student, Rev Moses Zulu from Zambia, completed his thesis on the Social Trinity in Africa, graduating in June with Prof R Venter as his promoter. Four students will complete mini dissertations at the end of the year.

Interesting *staff news* can be highlighted. Dr Henco van der Westhuizen was promoted to the position of senior lecturer. He was also invited to join the three-year Emerging Scholar Accelerator Programme of the university. The department managed to get a UFS grant for a postdoctoral researcher, Dr Valentine Iheanacho, who is a Roman Catholic church historian with a doctorate from Rome.

Research is an important part of a university's mission and is also an area in which the department excels. Dr H van der Westhuizen published three articles (on pneumatology, on Bonhoeffer, and on the Belhar confession). Prof R Venter published two articles (on Schleiermacher and on the Trinitarian Renaissance) and one book contribution (on contingency and God). The department has a number of research fellows contributing to the overall research output. The department expects to publish more than thirty articles this year. The productivity of scholars such as Dr T Resane and Profs J Urbaniak and P Strauss is impressive.

Attending and organising *conferences* are central activities of academic life. Dr H van der Westhuizen attended conferences at the UFS, Stellenbosch, and Amsterdam, reading papers on themes such as *Theology*





Well-known theologian Allan Boesak.





Prof Marilyn Naidoo from UNISA

from below? and The calling of the church in times of polarisation. He also organised two conferences on *Beauty and Justice* and on *Election and Hope*. During a conference on the Fourth Industrial Revolution at the UFS, Prof R Venter presented a paper on a *Theology of technology*.

Sharing academic knowledge with the *public* has become increasingly important for the university. For theologians, this can take many forms. The lecturers in the department preach in various congregations every year. Dr H van der Westhuizen has also published a number of popular essays. Hosting *guest lecturers* is a crucial part of academic life, exposing students and staff to stimulating ideas. Dr Van der Westhuizen





Martin Prozesky visited the faculty to launch his new book Honest to Goodness

succeeded in organising a visit to the faculty by the well-known theologian Allan Boesak, who delivered a well-attended public lecture and afterwards led a seminar for students.

The retired scholar Martin Prozesky, who is now a research fellow in the department, visited the faculty to launch his new book *Honest to Goodness*.

The department also facilitated the visit of Prof Marilyn Naidoo from UNISA, who is the foremost thinker on theological education in the RSA, for a guest lecture in the faculty.



DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL AND MISSIONAL THEOLOGY

Full-time and part-time academic staff in the department take responsibility for the teaching and learning in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Some of the most advanced techniques and technological tools are effectively utilised in teaching through personal contact with students. The four modules in the Higher Certificate programme within the department not only provide unique opportunities, but also some challenges for staff capacity.

Postgraduate programmes on honours, master's, and doctoral level form an important part of the department's activities. Currently, seven international doctoral students are associated with the department: one from Benin; one from Namibia; four from Zambia, and one from Zimbabwe. The high number of students from Zambia is a direct result of an existing memorandum of understanding between the Faculty of Theology and Religion and the Justo Mwale University. The Department of Practical and Missional Theology has a leading share in this agreement. To further develop this collaboration, Profs Letšosa and Van den Berg and Dr Gideon van der Watt visited Justo Mwale University in Lusaka, Zambia, in May 2019. The outcome of this visit was that five PhD students from Zambia and Zimbabwe visited the faculty in November to attend a postgraduate research colloquium. In 2019, three PhD degrees were successfully completed in the department.

Dr Eugene Baron (Missiology) joined the department at the beginning of 2019. Dr Joseph Pali completed his second year of a two-year NRF-awarded research sabbatical at the end of 2019 and will be re-joining the department as from 2020. Rev Martin Laubscher was on PhD research leave from June until December 2019 to complete his doctoral thesis. During this period, part-time lecturer, Mr Wessel Wessels, who is also pursuing his PhD studies, took over the teaching responsibilities of Rev Laubscher. Dr Juanita Meyer will be on maternity leave from December 2019 until March 2020. Profs Jan-Albert van den Berg and Kobus Schoeman delivered their inaugural lectures in March and September, respectively. Prof Pieter Verster, who has served the department, the faculty, and the university for 28 years, retired at the end of 2019. Various part-time lecturers are also adding value to the teaching capacity of the department. In an environment with increasing administrative and managerial demands, Ms Annelize Dreyer has made an invaluable contribution in her role as Departmental Manager.





Prof Kobus Schoeman delivering his inaugural lecture in September 2019

In 2019, colleagues attended and participated in various national and international conferences. This participation as well as various peer-reviewed outputs sprouted from research projects in which colleagues and research fellows were involved.

The department's research capabilities were further strengthened by three NRF C- (Profs Schoeman, Van den Berg, and Verster) and one Y-rated (Dr Meyer) scholars. The department appreciates the fact that a diversity of colleagues and their different research interests make it difficult to identify and formulate a common research focus. Colleagues agree that all the research projects in the department meet the following general criteria: (i) Specific emphasis on the contextual foundation of research; (ii) Relevant research with concrete outcomes for both the individual and society is a priority; (iii) In doing research, there is a specific sensitivity for marginalised individuals and communities; (iv) The nature of the research is strongly defined from the postcolonial discourse, which is further informed by high levels of interdisciplinary collaboration; (v) The facilitation and description of research have a strong empirical character. Various projects associated with an involvement in informal settlements or 'townships' exemplify the type of research based on the above general orientation and focus.

During 2019, colleagues attended and participated in various national conferences, for example, the annual meeting of Practical Theology in South Africa (PTSA) and the Southern African Association of Missions (SAMS),



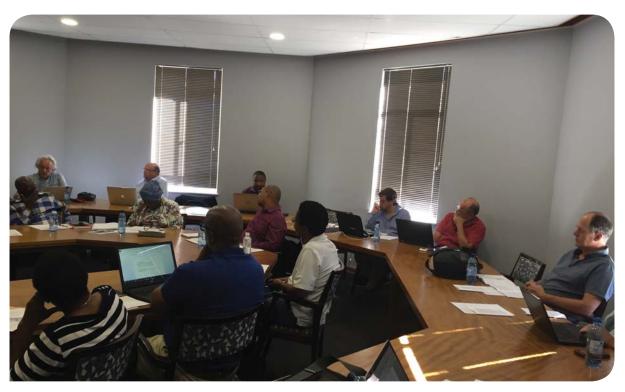
held from 15 to 17 January 2019 at the Faculty of Theology, NWU Potchefstroom Campus. The following colleagues also attended international conferences and colloquiums:

At the 9th International Conference on Religion and Spirituality in Society held at the University of Granada, Spain, in April 2019, Dr Eugene Baron delivered a paper titled, 'A racial experiment between two South African churches'. In August, he presented a paper titled, 'An evaluation of the integration of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC): After the amalgamation in 1994 that led to the establishment of a new church – the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa', at the International Association for Mission Studies Conference in Sankt Augustin, Germany. Dr Baron was also a visiting scholar in the Centre of Lived Religion at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from August to September 2019.

In April 2019, Dr Juanita Meyer attended the conference of the International Academy for Practical Theology in Sao Leopoldo, Brazil, where she delivered a paper related to her research, titled 'Investigating the nature of, and relation between masculinity and religiosity/spirituality (R/S) in a postcolonial and post-apartheid South Africa: A post foundational practical theological exploration'.

Dr Joseph Pali attended the NetACT conference and workshop, held from 1 to 12 July in Limuru, Kenya. From 24 to 27 October, Dr Pali also attended the conference of the International Leadership Association in Ottawa, Canada. At this conference, Dr Pali participated in a workshop where he presented a paper titled, 'Pastoral leadership in the congregations of the DRCA OFS (NGKA OVS): Challenges and opportunities'.

From 9 to 12 June, Prof Kobus Schoeman attended the International Society for the Sociology of Religion Conference in Barcelona, Spain, where he delivered a paper titled, 'Evaluating congregational life in post-apartheid South Africa'.



Prof Chris Hermans' workshop with PhD students.



Prof Jan-Albert van den Berg was invited to teach as guest lecturer at a Doctoral Colloquium in Practical Theology at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, from 21 November to 3 December 2019.

Prof Pieter Verster attended the International Association for Mission Studies Conference in Sankt Augustine, Germany, where he delivered a paper titled, 'The broken Christ in a broken world'.

Several research fellows (also from international universities) are associated with the department. They not only contribute, but also lend further support to the internationalisation drive within the department by means of both their presentations at various international conferences and their publications.

Activities of engaged scholarship are accommodated in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered in the department. The drive for engaged scholarship is directly aligned with the character of Practical and Missional Theology, focusing on local, concrete, and embodied practices. Examples of engaged scholarship activities include undergraduate students facilitating classes for children at the Martie du Plessis School and participating in projects of the Towers of Hope ministries in the city centre of Bloemfontein. Postgraduate students are actively involved in ministerial work across various communities and denominations. For example, students are directly involved in spiritual guidance to clients at the Aurora Rehabilitation Centre in Bloemfontein. This enables them to address some important existential issues.

In February, Prof Chris Hermans from the Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands, paid a research visit to the department, during which he delivered his inaugural lecture as extraordinary professor in the department and faculty. During his visit, a research conference was presented, which resulted in a book titled, *Theology in an age of contingency*, compiled by Profs Chris Hermans and Kobus Schoeman of the department, published by the international publishing house *LIT Verlag* at the end of 2019.



Speakers at the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution, emerging technologies and theology' conference Front: Prof Ruard Ganzevoort; Prof Marilyn Naidoo; Dr Nicolaas Matthee; Prof Anton van Niekerk Back: Prof Rian Venter; Prof Francois Strydom; Mr Heinrich Prinsloo; Prof Johann Rossouw; Prof Jan-Albert van den Berg; Prof Louis Fourie; Prof Rantoa Letšosa; Prof Ian Nell





BOTH PICTURES: Practical and Missional Theology staff members and research fellows with PhD students from South Africa and the Justo Mwale University, Zambia.

Prof Ruard Ganzevoort, Dean of the Faculty Religion and Theology, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, visited the faculty in July. Besides his participation in a conference hosted by the faculty, Prof Ganzevoort – a research fellow in the department – was also actively involved in facilitating workshops and in collegial discussions. This research contribution will be published in 2019 in a volume of the series *UFS Theological Explorations* titled, *The 4th Industrial Revolution, emerging technologies and theology*.





Staff members of the Department and Justo Mwale University, Zambia.



Staff and students of the Department of Practical and Missional Theology during a retreat at the Origins Retreat Centre.

In August, Prof Stephan Joubert, extraordinary professor in Contemporary Ecclesiology, presented a one-day workshop for postgraduate students and congregational leaders on the theme, 'Reading and navigating the signs of the time according to the Gospel of Mark'.



DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION STUDIES

The Department of Religion Studies had a fruitful and challenging year. In terms of *teaching and learning*, many issues were addressed. Dr Joel Mokhoathi has shown great competence in teaching a large number of modules. *Undergraduate modules* were as follows: Religion and Social Milieu (TRRS 1514); The Christian Religion (TRCR 2614); Hindu and Buddhism (TRHB 3714); Judaism and Islam (TRJI 3724); African Indigenous Religions and African Independent Churches (TRAI 2624); A Study of Religion and Spirituality: Ethics in a Post-Modern Secular Society (TRLS 3624); and Introduction to the Study of Religion and Development over the Centuries (TRID 1522).

The following *postgraduate modules* were taught: Research Report in Religion Studies (TRRR 6818/6828); Research Methodology and Theory (TRRM 6814/6824); Advanced Study in the History and Theories of the Origins of Religion (TRHS 6815/6825); Advanced Study of Christianity (TRCR 6815/6825); Advanced Study African Traditional Religion (TRAT 6815/6825); Advanced Study Islam (TRIS 6815); Advanced Study of Buddhism (TRBU 6815/6825); Advanced Study of Judaism (TRJU 6815/6825); Flourishing and the Divine (TFDI 7910); and Advanced Study of Religion.

Dr Mokhoathi is also part of the Emerging Scholar Accelerator Programme (ESAP), a programme instituted to develop the next generation of professors. This programme seeks to identify, develop, and promote the next cohort of the most promising and talented permanent UFS academic staff members who have obtained a doctoral degree within the last five years. These are scholars who have chosen academic careers and who are focused and determined to become senior academics in their respective disciplines. As part of the cohort, he was invited to participate in an intensive academic and professional support programme that includes an advanced residential programme, exposure to leading scholars, concentrated reading and writing programmes, high-level seminar participation and presentation, nuanced publication schedules, and personal mentoring and advice, including participation in the annual ESAP mock NRF-rating exercise, and the development of a postdoctoral intellectual project for funding (such as Thuthuka). The programme will run for a period of three years (2019-2021).

Postgraduate students and research remain very important. Dr Mokhoathi supervised and co-supervised postgraduate students from honours to PhD level. He is currently supervising two PhD, three master's, and three honours students. He supervised one completed master's thesis and also co-supervised two completed master's theses. A further five potential PhD and two master's students are to present their proposals on 19 November 2019.

Regarding *staff news*, it can be highlighted that Dr Mokhoathi celebrated the completion of his PhD at the graduation ceremony on 28 June 2019. The following lecturers and research fellows enhance the teaching and learning in the Department of Religion Studies: Dr Joel Mokhoathi (Lecturer and acting Head of Department); Mr Nicolaas Oosthuizen (Lecturer, part-time basis); Mr Bongani Ngesi (Lecturer, part-time basis). Prof Pieter Verster has been appointed as acting Head of Department.





Dr Joel Mokhoathi receiving his PhD

Research is an important part of the mission of a university. Dr Mokhoathi published two articles (one in an accredited journal) and research fellow, Dr IR Mokotso, also published two articles. Dr ON Mndende published a chapter in an acclaimed book.

Attending and organising *conferences* remain an important part of the academic life of the department. Dr Mokhoathi attended the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Religion in South Africa (ASRSA) on 4 and 5 September 2019. He also presented a research paper at a scholarly conference organised by the Department of Historical and Constructive Theology at the University of the Free State (Bloemfontein Campus). The conference theme was *Beauty and Justice*. The paper was titled, *Finding Beauty in the Eyes of Justice: A Socio-religious Perspective*. The conference was held on 8 August 2019. He also presented a research paper at a research seminar organised by the Department of Governance and Political Transformation at the University of the Free State (Bloemfontein Campus). The paper was titled, *Methodological Implications for Document Analysis: Working with Literature*. The seminar was held on 24 and 25 July 2019.





Dr Joel Mokhoathi from the Department Religion Studies

Academic work must be shared in the *public sphere*. Dr Mokhoathi co-hosted a workshop with Dr Joseph Pali for the Mangaung Ministers' Fraternal. The workshop with the theme, 'Is Prosperity Gospel Still Relevant for Africa?' took place on 18 June 2019. He was also asked to present two themes in a facilitator's workshop organised by Shepherd, under the Faculty of Theology and Religion, at the University of the Free State (South Campus). The following themes were presented: (1) Lecturing Skills: conducting a class for adult learners; connecting with the audience; soft skills of good lecturing; getting learners involved; and what is expected of lecturers. (2) Operational Skills: planning your calendar and life; planning and getting ready for the next class; good classroom administration practices, and how to organise your general administration. The workshop was held from 28 to 30 October 2019.

New initiatives are also very important. Dr Mokhoathi co-hosted an interchange for the Faculty of Theology and Religion, *Theology@lunch*, with Reverend Martin Laubscher. The theme of the interchange was, 'To regulate Religion in South Africa or not: A Crucial Human Rights Issue?' The guest speakers were Dr Gideon van der Watt (from the Free State Council of Churches and member of the DRC), and Prof Shaun de Freitas (from the Faculty of Law, UFS). The interchange was held on 20 March 2019.







2019 was a busy year, full of changes for the Shepherd Centre. It was a year of great heights, but also great losses. A new record total of more than 450 students completed modules in 17 schools across the country. The classes of the South Campus school have grown to more than 25 students per module. New schools include Virginia, Petrusburg, and two (2) in Qwaqwa. The Shepherd Centre has expanded into Africa, with the establishment of a school in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and hopefully our school in Ethiopia will start again early in 2020. Increasing student numbers imposed tedious administrative tasks, such as the complete integration to UFS PeopleSoft. The centre encountered a number of challenges and although there have been many obstacles to overcome and hurdles to jump, we are proud to announce that we will be running completely on PeopleSoft by the beginning of 2020. All Shepherd students will receive UFS student numbers, be fully administered, and all records will be on the UFS database. This in itself was a huge accomplishment.



Dr Botha in Tanzania



SAUCIC Johannesburg School



More than 17 Shepherd schools across the country

Throughout these busy and exciting changes, the Shepherd Centre – with great sadness – said goodbye to its Founding Director, Dr Gerhard Botha. Dr Botha started the centre in 2006 and positioned it to develop, overcome, adapt, and expand into the huge success it has since become. It started as a sideline project, but soon became his full-time commitment. Dr Botha's departure is a great loss to the centre, but luckily, the Shepherd Centre is still within close range, as Dr Botha is now employed in the UFS Short Learning Project Office, with Shepherd under his watchful eye. We will miss Dr Botha's direct input on a daily basis, but we know that we will remain in his heart and 'view'. Thank you, Dr Botha, for your dedication and hard work in the Shepherd Centre. We salute you and wish you God's richest blessing in your new role. Andries Cilliers, who took over the role of Project Coordinator in February 2019, is currently managing the centre's day-to-day activities.

During August 2019, the staff of the Shepherd Centre had the privilege of accompanying Prof Letšosa, Dean of the Faculty Theology and Religion, to Qwaqwa where he first met the Campus Principal, Prof Mandew, and the Qwaqwa tutors. It was a very successful trip, as Prof Letšosa had the opportunity to strengthen ties with the Qwaqwa Campus and interact with Shepherd tutors. From 28 to 30 October 2019, the Shepherd Centre held a tutor workshop for all current and some new tutors. We had the privilege of hosting Dr Joel Mokhoathi, Lecturer: Religion Studies, who equipped the tutors with various skills. Dr Nico Mostert and Rev Bongani Ngesi presented an overview and facilitated discussions on the centre's certificate material. This workshop proved to be a huge success – we are planning two workshops in 2020.



Tutor workshop (October 2019)



Tutor workshop (October 2019)



Attandees at a Faculty workshop 2019



ACTA THEOLOGICA

Acta Theologica once again experienced a productive and rewarding publication year. In addition to the two general issues published in June and December, a supplementary issue titled, 'Unheard voices in the Bible' (Supplementum 27), was published in July under the guest editorship of Dr Lodewyk Sutton. A Festschrift for Prof Pieter Verster (Supplementum 28), who retired from the Department of Practical and Missional Theology, was also published at the end of 2019 under the guest editorship of Dr Gideon van der Watt. All of these issues were proof of high-quality impact articles resulting from the research of internationally renowned scholars. In this regard, *Acta Theologica* remains an important reflection of research associated with the Faculty of Theology and Religion. The electronic OJS platform for the submission of articles, as well as the management of the review and publication process, has also been utilised effectively.

- The high quality of this peer-reviewed journal is emphasised by the prominent scientific indexing of Acta Theologica in various prestige databases. *Acta Theologica's* current indexing is as follows:
- Web of Science Scopus
- ATLA Religion Database SciELO South Africa Elenchus of Biblica
- Internationale Zeitschriftenschau New Testament Abstracts
- Religious and Theological Abstracts Abstracted on AJOL

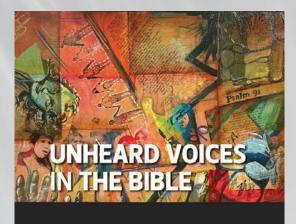
Four Editorial Board meetings are held annually, with members actively contributing to the activities of the journal, for example with assistance in the review process. The editorial board consists of the following 12 members from the Faculty of Theology and Religion: Prof Jan-Albert van den Berg (editor in chief); Dr Lyzette Hoffman (executive editor); Rev Martin Laubscher; Drs Juanita Meyer, Joel Mokhoathi; Joseph Pali, Lodewyk Sutton, Henco van der Westhuizen; Profs Kobus Schoeman, Francois Tolmie, and Rian Venter. Dr Hanneke Meyer continued to serve as editorial secretary for 2019. This appointment was made possible by the financial support of the Directorate: Research Development at the University of the Free State.

The editor in chief and the executive editor of *Acta Theologica* attended the quarterly UFS Editorial Board meetings on a regular basis. During these meetings, important strategic discussions and collaboration with other journal editors of the University of the Free State are facilitated.

A high-level strategic planning work session was held in February 2019. During this work session, prominent and influential role players provided advice on future strategies to further improve the quality and impact of the journal. One of the outcomes of this strategic planning was the full-time appointment of Dr Lyzette Hoffman as Executive Editor with effect from January 2020.

Prof Jan-Albert van den Berg	Editor in Chief	Acta Theologica
Dr Lyzette Hoffman	Executive Editor	Acta Theologica





Acta Theologica Supplementum 27 Guest editor: L. Sutton





Acta Theologica Supplementum 28 Guest editor: Dr. G. van der Watt





FACULTY BIDS FAREWELL TO OFFICE MANAGER, MRS VAN WYK

It is with great sadness that the faculty had to bid farewell to Nathlene van Wyk, who served the faculty as Office Manager to the Dean from 1 January 2012 until 31 December 2019. Nathlene's presence in the faculty will be sorely missed, as she had her own professional, dedicated, and enthusiastic way of welcoming students, staff, and guests to the Office of the Dean.

Her contribution to supporting the Dean's Office over this period was characterised by effectiveness, innovativeness, reliability, and accuracy. She was also committed to the faculty's vision of "practising theology as an academic discipline with scientific credibility as well as compassion for people".

The faculty and colleagues wish Nathlene all the best for her future career, as well as all new endeavours she will undertake and aspire to. In the words of a close colleague, Nathlene will always be remembered as "stylish, effective and a never-ending source of innovative ideas".



Mrs Nathlene Van Wyk



FACULTY BIDS FAREWELL TO MISSIOLOGY PROFESSOR

By Eugene Seegers

27

After 28 years of service, the University of the Free State bid farewell to Prof Pieter Verster.

Prof Pieter Verster of the Department of Practical and Missional Theology delivered his valedictory lecture on 5 December 2019, after a career described by the Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion as "more than 40 years of service to the Lord and being a true slave to Jesus Christ". During his professional career, Prof Verster was rated as a top researcher at the UFS, publishing more than 10 books, 102 articles, and supervising 11 PhD students and numerous honours and master's students at the university.



Prof Pieter and Ernene Verster

The title of Prof Verster's lecture was *The Future of Mission and Missiology in a Radically Changing World* and focused on certain trends in these fields on which the professor elaborated, giving both modern and Pauline scriptural perspectives. He also expounded on the Mission of God and 'Missiology at the Secular University', citing challenges of transformation, decolonisation, and the influence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This led him to the conclusion that the modern university can only have a future by engaging both present and future challenges.

Prof Verster started his theological training at the UFS in 1973 and continued it at the University of Pretoria (UP). He obtained the degrees BA (cum laude) from the UFS in 1976; BAHons (Greek cum laude) from the UP in 1979; MA (Greek) from the UFS in 2000, a BD (cum laude) from the UP in 1979; a Postgraduate Diploma in Theology (cum laude) from the UP in 1980; a DD (Missiology and Religion Studies) from the UP in 1985; and a DD (Dogmatics and Ethics) from the UP in 1989. He was honoured for academic excellence (UFS 1975), overall excellence (UF 1979), and research excellence (UFS 2004).

In addition, he visited universities and institutions in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, China and the USA. His older brother, Basie, said that these overseas trips contributed to Prof Verster's compassion and understanding, and led to his great interest in missionary work. Basie said his 'baby brother' is known for his brotherly love and is an example of faith, hope, and love.

Dr Engela van Staden, Vice-Rector: Academic at the UFS, performed the gown ceremony, speaking of Prof Verster as "a special person in the lives of those in the Faculty of Theology and Religion" and his family.

Prof Verster is currently serving the faculty in a different capacity as Acting Head of Department: Religion Studies.



RESEARCH 2019



RESEARCH 2019

Historical and Constructive Theology

Authored book

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