



SPTSA Conference from 24 to 26 January 2023
Stellenbosch University

PROGRAM

THEME: "The crisis and ethics of War! A Practical Theological response"

Tuesday 24 January

13:00 – 14:00 Registration

14:00-14:30 Opening and welcoming: **Simangaliso Kumalo** (Chair SPTSA)
Len Hansen (Stellenbosch University)
Dawid Mouton (Stellenbosch University)

14:30-15:15 Keynote speaker: **Dion Forster** (Stellenbosch University)
Theme: "Waging peace: On being Christian in times of war and violence."

15:15-15:45 Facilitator of Q&A: **Simangaliso Kumalo** (University of KwaZulu-Natal)

15:45-16:15 Break

16:15-18:15 Paper presentations 1

SESSION 1 Session Chair: Dawid Mouton	SESSION 2 Session Chair: Khamadi Pali
Paper 1: Buffel, Olehile (University of South Africa) Title: <i>Pastoral Care in a context of war with special reference to the suffering of the innocent Ukrainians in the Russian-Ukraine conflict: A Pastoral theological approach</i>	Paper 5: Belcher, Kimberly (University of Notre Dame) Title: <i>War Memorials: Pilgrimage, Dark Tourism, and Social Reconciliation</i>
Paper 2: Penxa-Matholeni, Nobuntu (Stellenbosch University) Title: <i>Endleleni: The South African Christian story as conflict within us and quarrel amongst us</i>	Paper 6: Van Jaarsveld, Mias (University of the Free State) Title: <i>Spiritual care in the situation room: ambiguous loss, radical uncertainty, and hope during a time of war</i>
Paper 3: Meyer, Juanita (University of the Free State) Title: <i>Pastoral Care during the crisis of war: the praxis of a theology of resilience</i>	Paper 7: Beukes, Jacques (University of Pretoria) Title: <i>Towards a practical theology of social transformation through the lens of lived theology, lived religion, lived spirituality and development</i>
Paper 4: Magezi, Vhumani (North-West University) Title: <i>Reflecting back, dealing with today, and positioning self for the future: towards, constructing and doing practical theology that is relevant in Africa</i>	Paper 8: Hoffman, Lyzette (University of the Free State) Title: <i>How war shapes faith</i>
The average time allocated for presentation of papers is 30 minutes (paper 20 min / questions and answers 10 min).	

18:15 Free evening

Wednesday 25 January

08:30-8:45 **Devotion**

09:15-11:15 **Paper presentations 2**

SESSION 1	SESSION 2
Session Chair: Simangaliso Kumalo	Session Chair: Hannelie Yates
Paper 9: Kruger, Ferdi (North-West University) Title: <i>A homiletical-liturgical praxeology dealing with ironic reimagination in addressing the prevalence of cognitive warfare</i>	Paper 13: De Bruin, Dieter (University of Pretoria) Title: <i>Sharing the Peace: a broken liturgical gesture towards a Trinitarian ontology</i>
Paper 10: Wessels, Wessel (University of the Free State) Title: <i>The (Potential) War on Truth? Contemplating the Usage of Statistics by Contextual Theologies and the Implications for Preaching</i>	Paper 14: Pali, Khamadi (University of the Free State) Title: <i>Church split or splintering: A dilemma facing the church today</i>
Paper 11: Louw, Daniel J (Stellenbosch University) Title: <i>Metaverse and the spiritual warfare of cloud computing: Elon Musk versus El Shaddai. Towards a practical theology of diachronic thinking within the pastoral tension: Homo digitalis – homo sympatheticus</i>	Paper 15: Baloyi, Gift (University of South Africa) Title: <i>Practical Theology and responsible citizenship in a time of war</i>
Paper 12: Freeks, Fazel (North-West University) Title: <i>Every war is a war against women and children - Gender-based violence (GBV) is a destructive form of warfare instigated by fathers and husbands against their own families in South Africa: A Practical Theological investigation</i>	Paper 16: Du Plessis, Amanda and Rudy Denton (North-West University) Title: <i>Contextual pastoral care and rituals for peace and healing</i>
The average time allocated for presentation of papers is 30 minutes (paper 20 min / questions and answers 10 min).	

11:15-11:45 **Break**

11:45-13:15 **Paper presentations 3 and Panel discussion 1**

SESSION 1	SESSION 2 and Panel discussion 1
Session Chair: Rudy Denton	Session Chair: Cas Wepener
Paper 17: Botha, Annelie (University of Pretoria) Title: <i>Moral injury not only an injury of war: A feminist pastoral approach</i>	Paper 20: Schoeman, Kobus (University of the Free State) Title: <i>A society in crisis: lived religion and the congregation response – a methodological reflection</i>
Paper 18: Andrew, Daniel (North-West University) Title: <i>War on Women: Pentecostal congregations strengthening agency and resilience to fight against gender-based violence</i>	Panel discussion 1 Panel moderator: Cas Wepener Panellists: Birgit Weyel (Tübingen), Wilhelm Gräb (Berlin), Cas Wepener (Stellenbosch), Simanga Kumalo (Pietermaritzburg), Anita Cloete (Stellenbosch) and Ignatius Swart (Western Cape) Title: <i>International Handbook of Practical Theology</i>
Paper 19: Madigele, Tshenolo Jennifer (University of Botswana) and Gift Baloyi (University of South Africa) Title: <i>Indigenous education and Gender Based Violence: The Botswana Context</i>	
The average time allocated for presentation of papers is 30 minutes (paper 20 min / questions and answers 10 min).	

13:15-14:00 **Break**

14:00-15:30 Paper presentations 4 and Panel discussion 2

Panel discussion 1 Session Chair: Khamadi Pali	SESSION 2 and Panel discussion 2 Session Chair: Anita Cloete
Paper 21: Brunsdon, Alfred (North-West University) Title: <i>Waging the green war: Initial steps towards eco-practical theology and pastoral care in the African context</i>	Paper 24: Bowers Du Toit, Nadine and Stewart, Craig (Stellenbosch University) Title: <i>Faith communities as assets: fighting the war on hunger</i>
Paper 22: Knoetze, Hannes (University of Pretoria) Title: <i>Ecology, new emerging technologies, and ethical challenges</i>	Panel discussion 2 Panel moderator: Anita Cloete Panellists: Nadine Bowers Du Toit, Johan Cilliers, Dawid Mouton, Reggie Nel, Ian Nell, Nobuntu Penxa-Matholeni, Christo Thesnaar, Nioma Venter, Pieter van der Walt, Cas Wepener, Marcel Barnard and Peter White (Stellenbosch University) Title: <i>Moving Methodologies: Doing Practical and Missional Theology in an African context</i>
Paper 23: Tettey, Smith Francis (University of Pretoria) Title: <i>Weapons of faith seeking answers to questions posed by wars from a practical theology standpoint</i>	
The average time allocated for presentation of papers is 30 minutes (paper 20 min / questions and answers 10 min).	

15:30-16:15 Keynote speaker: Marius Nel (North-West University)
Theme: *“Church and war: A change in hermeneutical stance among Pentecostals. Turn the other cheek: Pacifism, passive resistance or nonviolence?”*

16:15-16:45 Facilitator of Q&A: Nadine Bowers Du Toit (Stellenbosch University)

17:00-17:45 Business Meeting (AGM)

18:00 Conference dinner

Thursday 26 January

08:30-8:45 Devotion

9:15-10:00 Keynote speaker: Christina Landman (University of South Africa)
Theme: *“The Ethics of Pastoral Intervention in ‘Township’ wars.”*

10:00-10:30 Facilitator of Q&A: Dawid Mouton (Stellenbosch University)

10:30-11:00 Break

11:00-13:00 Paper presentations 5

SESSION 1 Session Chair: Hannelie Yates	SESSION 2 Session Chair: Rudy Denton
Paper 25: Lombaard, Christo (University of Pretoria) and Geikina, Laima (University of Latvia) Title: <i>In a time of war, a Political-and-Practical Theology</i>	Paper 29: Mouton, Dawid (Stellenbosch University) Title: <i>Facing disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities: a congregational pastoral ministry approach</i>
Paper 26: Mashabane, Maleshoane (University of the Free State) Title: <i>War on life: Youth denied, denying or in denial?</i>	Paper 30: Van den Berg, Jan-Albert (University of the Free State) Title: <i>The crisis and ethics of the info-war: A practical theological exploration of conspiracy theories</i>
Paper 27: Wyngaard, Jeremy (Stellenbosch University) Title: <i>The crisis of gang war in Cape Town: an (Im)Practical Theological Response by society?</i>	Paper 31: Buqa, Wonke (University of Pretoria) Title: <i>Violent protests action during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa: A Practical Theological response</i>
Paper 28: Kagema, Dickson Nkonge (Chuka University, Kenya) Title: <i>The plight of the 2007/08 post-election violence victims in Kenya and what the Church can do</i>	Paper 32: Hove, Rabson (University of KwaZulu-Natal) Title: <i>The quest for healing: Pastoral care before, during and after the war</i>
The average time allocated for presentation of papers is 30 minutes (paper 20 min / questions and answers 10 min).	

13:00-13:15 Closing and acknowledgments - Simangaliso Kumalo (Chair SPTSA)



SPTSA Conference from 24 to 26 January 2023 (Stellenbosch University)

Keynote speakers

Forster, Dion (Stellenbosch University)

Waging peace: On being Christian in times of war and violence

Humanity and non-human creation are grappling with the existential challenges of war and violence. There are wars between nations, as well as ethnic, religious, and cultural conflicts that lead to dehumanisation, destruction, and loss. At the same time we face the 'slow violences' of poverty, systemic racism, sexism, and environmental abuse. What should Christians believe and do in such situations? This paper will engage the notions of violence and peace from the perspectives of Christian faith and practice. In particular, we want to understand what it means to 'be Christian' in a world of war and violence. We will consider some important confessional, historical, and pragmatic understandings of the peaceable witness of Christians and the Church. In essence, we shall see that the high-water-mark of faith in the Abrahamic religions involves the praxis of justice, peace, and love. Our beliefs and practices can serve to enliven a Christian imagination for peace that is shaped by justice and love. In doing so, we may come to understand that waging peace can be as powerful, disruptive, and transformative as waging war. Moreover, as those who bear the name of the Prince of Peace and share in His ministry of Peace, the waging of peace is an important and necessary calling that should inform our public witness, pastoral ministry, and prophetic proclamation.

Nel, Marius (North-West University)

Church and war: A change in hermeneutical stance among Pentecostals. Turn the other cheek: Pacifism, passive resistance or nonviolence?

For the first forty years of its existence, Pentecostalism was mostly a pacifist movement proclaiming that disciples of Christ should support nonviolence and non-retaliation. It changed its stance due to the changes that occurred when its members became socially and economically mobile and the movement strove to be accepted in society. These changes were, however, essentially due to a change in its hermeneutical viewpoint in accordance with Evangelicalist literalist-fundamentalist interpretive strategies. After the 1970s, several theologians within the Pentecostal movement formulated a hermeneutic that concurred to a large degree with the way early Pentecostals viewed and interpreted the Bible, leading *inter alia* to Pentecostals' rethinking their non-pacifist stance. It is argued that the movement should change its ethical stance on and discourse about war and violence due to its renewed hermeneutical viewpoint, making the church more relevant in a society where most Christians seemingly accept the Augustinian just war doctrine. If Pentecostals see themselves as being the contemporary restoration of the New Testament church, it should distance itself from political establishmentarianism.

Landman, Christina (University of South Africa)

The Ethics of Pastoral Intervention in 'Township' Wars

This paper considers the ethics of pastors' intervention in 'township' wars. These wars consist of (often lethal) fights between children and parents, between men and women in intimate spaces, between gangs, and between people who are under the influence of drugs and/or liquor. When and how is the pastor to intervene when a child is holding his parents captive with a dangerous weapon for drug money? When children of church counsel members steal church property? When a drunk man comes and beats his wife during a church council meeting, accusing her of infidelity? When the drug lords threaten the pastor for counselling drug addicts in the congregation? When young boys and girls are forced to have sex for outstanding drug debts? When the community acts with aggression against young people who break into houses for drug money? Is it more ethical to intervene physically in protecting congregants against aggressive children and drug lords, or to engage in advancing the parental skills of congregants, old and young? In short, is prevention more ethical than intervention?

Panel discussions

Panel discussion 1

Panel moderator: Wepener, Cas (Stellenbosch University)

Panellists: Birgit Weyel (Tübingen), Wilhelm Gräb (Berlin), Cas Wepener (Stellenbosch), Simanga Kumalo (Pietermaritzburg), Anita Cloete (Stellenbosch) and Ignatius Swart (Western Cape)

International Handbook of Practical Theology

The *International Handbook of Practical Theology* was published in September 2022. In a globalized world, the perception and description of religion has become a complex challenge. How to talk and think about cultures and religions is a sensitive question. Methodologically, instead of dealing with top-down-definitions, the aim of the *Handbook* was to develop sensitive transcultural concepts of religion and religious matters methodically collected in different cultures and among different religions. The *Handbook* follows a concept of Practical Theology that understands Practical Theology as an empirically founded and hermeneutically reflected theory of “lived religion”. According to this concept, what is understood as “lived religion” depends on the different culturally situated discourses on and about religion. With its transcultural and trans-religious approach or methodology, the *Handbook* intends to promote the praxis of Practical Theology by reflecting and conceptualising the very different challenges of religious practices as they react on and interact with their very different religious and cultural circumstances and conditions. In this regard the methodology can also be described as postcolonial in nature. Three of the editors and three of the contributors to the *Handbook* will by means of a panel discussion present this new resource in the field of Practical Theology. After general background presented by the editors, one author who contributed a chapter to each one of the three parts of the *Handbook* will, based on their contributions, illustrate how they gave form to the concept of the *Handbook*.

Opening – Cas Wepener (chair)

Background – Birgit Weyel & Wilhelm Gräb

Part I – Ignatius Swart

Part II – Simanga Kumalo

Part III – Anita Cloete

Panel discussion 2

Panel moderator: Cloete, Anita (Stellenbosch University)

Panellists: Nadine Bowers Du Toit, Johan Cilliers, Dawid Mouton, Reggie Nel, Ian Nell, Nobuntu Penxa-Matholeni, Christo Thesnaar, Nioma Venter, Pieter van der Walt, Cas Wepener, Marcel Barnard and Peter White (Stellenbosch University)

Moving Methodologies: Doing Practical and Missional Theology in an African context

Practical Theology and Missiology – and their methodologies – have been on the move within African settings, particularly during the past few decades. *Moving Methodologies: Doing Practical and Missional Theology in an African context* represents an effort to map some of these movements of methodologies.

It signifies a collaborative form of doing theology or, to express it in an African (isiXhosa) saying: intaka yakha ngoboya benye. This literally means: The bird builds its nest by using other birds’ feathers. In this book, the intention was to build this nest together so that our offspring can grow wings – by way of speaking.

In the process, it has become clear that Practical Theology and Missiology indeed need a variety of methodologies in order to interact meaningfully with our multi-levelled (South) African context. In Practical Theology and Missiology one finds, and needs, a spacious “circle-house” with many methodological rooms for movement.

The doors and even walls between the many methodological rooms should, however, remain open and porous, allowing reciprocal, enriching, hermeneutical osmoses to take place – being open for epistemological transformation and ontological Africanisation.

Paper presentations

Andrew, Daniel (North-West University)

War on Women: Pentecostal congregations strengthening agency and resilience to fight against gender-based violence

South African men have declared war on women, a statement expressing the fight against gender-based violence (GBV). Some argue that such a statement is unfair towards men who still respects the right to health and safety of women in society while others argue that the roots of this war find its basis in disaster patriarchy. Disaster patriarchy is a process whereby men exploit a crisis to reassert control, dominance and erase women's rights, women lose their safety, economic power, autonomy, education and pushed unprotected to the frontlines. The question is, what does the term war has to do with the fight against GBV, how does it find its roots in patriarchy, what can be done to bring this war to an end and what are the practical theological tools needed to fight and end this war? The study is done from a Classical Pentecostal perspective, focusing specifically on the position of the Apostolic Faith Mission on war, their deliberations on patriarchy and GBV, and what role can Pentecostal congregations play to end this war. The study offers an analysis of patriarchy that serves as a basis for the war on women, engagement with the national GBV plan and its implementation by religious actors, especially Pentecostal congregations, and propose a humanizing pneumatological approach that recognize the human rights of those affected and effected by the war and how to strengthen their agency and resilience. The study follows a comparative literature approach and is done interdisciplinary.

Baloyi, Gift (University of South Africa)

Practical Theology and responsible citizenship in a time of war

The Christian tradition acknowledges the universe and all that lives in it as the creative act of God, with humanity having to care for one another, the environment and to live in freedom and harmony. However, the world is led by diverse political ideologies, which decides how citizens should live in any given society. In recent years, many countries in the African continent have had numerous political tensions which led to ethnic conflicts, invasions, insurrection, economic crisis, and war where innocent civilians lost their lives. Despite God's desire for humanity to live in harmony, political ideologies make it impossible for democracy to be realized. War in its nature, creates psychological and physical suffering which leaves survivors with traumas and uncertainties about the meaning of life. This article will therefore grapple with the relevance and or role of practical theology amid crises of war particularly in Africa. It argues for the need to care and advocate for peace as an endless task for theology and the church on earth.

Belcher, Kimberly Hope (University of Notre Dame)

War Memorials: Pilgrimage, Dark Tourism, and Social Reconciliation

War memorials are often and reasonably treated as pilgrimage shrines, and some studies suggest models for the way they heal veterans and victims of wars that are memorialized. War memorials can also, however, be described as a kind of "dark tourism": that is, travel to disaster sites by those who are not direct survivors of the disaster. Dark tourism is often encouraged by those in charge of a disaster site, as it plays an important role in economic recovery, but both the term and some of the treatments in the literature seem ambivalent about it. The relationship between dark tourism and social reconciliation is not explored. In this essay, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood's economic theory of social belonging in *The World of Goods* will be used to explore how dark tourism relates to social belonging and social reconciliation by means of interaction with war memorials.

Beukes, Jacques (University of Pretoria)

Towards a practical theology of social transformation through the lens of lived theology, lived religion, lived spirituality and development

Lived theology combines significant perspectives from lived religion, ordinary theology, and the four theological voices, namely operant theology, espoused theology, normative theology, and formal theology. This combined way of talking about theology as it is lived in communities needs to be at the heart of any form of practical theology. Practical theology is embodied and lived by individuals and within communities, and it must continue to attend to the realities of African life and society. Because lived theology incorporates significant perspectives from lived religion, religious research can never be simply a discussion of ideas or doctrines. Lived religion requires that time be taken to pay close attention to the experiences and spirituality of ordinary believers and how they live their lives in relation to religion, as well as to bring about change (practices) informed by religious beliefs. If practical theologians want to effectively and accurately reflect on the lived realities (wars of today) of the Christian community and community in general, it is essential that an account be given of theology as it is lived and experienced. Since transformation is about personal or inner change on the one hand and social or outer change on the other, this contribution will analyse Wilhelm Gräb's foci on lived religion and development in support of a practical theology of social transformation within the South African context.

Botha, Annelie (University of Pretoria)

Moral injury not only an injury of war: A feminist pastoral approach

Literature about and research on moral injury most often links moral injury with war. Moral injury is often defined as an act of transgression against moral beliefs in wartime among military personnel. The aim of this paper is to explore moral injury as not only an injury of war, but also as an injury caused by the gender-biased war in our society and homes. Moral injury is inflicted early in life when the gender binary of 'masculine' and 'feminine' are taught. This paper will focus on patriarchy as a deeper root of trauma and moral injury and that in return moral injury becomes a cause for gender-based violence. The feminist pastoral approach will aim to bring awareness to the cultural attitudes and practices that create the contexts where moral injury occurs and will explore ways to transform the patriarchal gender-biased dominant narrative, in order to facilitate freedom and healing from the internal gender identity war.

Bowers Du Toit, Nadine and Stewart, Craig (Stellenbosch University)

Faith communities as assets: fighting the war on hunger

While as a country South Africa produces enough food to feed its population, hunger and food security continue to affect almost half of the population according to studies. Hunger and food security are a result of a number of factors including: low income, low employment rates, the structure of the food industry as well as the rising price of food. Furthermore, during COVID 19 the Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey 2020 reported that 47% of respondents reported that their household had run out of money to buy food in April 2020. While this figure dropped as the pandemic progressed, it was still at least twice as high as 2016. This food insecurity was driven by a loss of income with 3 million jobs lost after February 2020 the vast majority of these losses occurring within already disadvantaged communities. It is also important to note that hunger creates suffering – especially for children in the long term as stunting from malnutrition has long term affects. Nevertheless, faith communities have long been at the forefront of addressing this issue – most popularly through food relief packs and soup kitchens. In this paper we more especially focus on case studies of faith communities as community assets in addressing this issue by exploring new and innovative ways of engaging the war on hunger for the purposes of food security and holistic wellbeing.

Brunsdon, Alfred (North-West University)

Waging the green war: Initial steps towards eco-practical theology and pastoral care in the African context

Global environmental deterioration has drawn conservation efforts into the proverbial warzone. Jargon like "environmental warriors" and the "green war" are indicative of the urgency of concerted efforts to combat environmental crises endangering the life-sustaining earth. This paper is exploratory in nature and will be investigating the notion of the green war and some of the ways in which it challenges practical theology and pastoral care in the African context. The paper will review current issues in the environmental domain and will attempt to draw a preliminary agenda for an imagined eco-practical theology and pastoral care aimed at the African context.

Buffel, Olehile (University of South Africa)

Pastoral Care in a context of war with special reference to the suffering of the innocent Ukrainians in the Russian-Ukraine conflict: A Pastoral theological approach

Regardless of who is at fault or who is the aggressor, any war is bound to cause untold suffering of the innocent citizens of any country. In the context of the Russian/Ukraine conflict millions have been plunged into hardships, millions of people millions have lost their lives and millions have lost their loved ones, millions live in fear of their lives in the Ukraine, millions have been displaced internally and externally, and millions have been separated from their loved ones. The Russian invasion of the Ukraine that started overnight on the 24 February 2022, after months of denials has caused a critical humanitarian crisis that had not been seen since the World War II. This invasion of the Ukraine and the associated untold suffering has serious implications for global stability. The article argues that the pastors have a critical role to play in extending pastoral therapeutic services to the innocent individuals and families that are suffering as a result of the war and its consequences. Pastors have not been trained or prepared to extend pastoral ministry in a context of a war in which the innocent are subjected to atrocities. It is therefore important to reflect and consider as to how to sensitize the church and particularly pastors to respond appropriately to the suffering of the innocent. The paper reflects on the possible practical theological responses to a crisis of war, particularly pastoral theological responses. Furthermore, it is important to consider what pastoral theological models could be useful in a context of war or conflict, that has both local and global implications.

Buqa, Wonke (University of Pretoria)

Violent protests action during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa: A Practical Theological response

South Africa is regarded as the most violent, angry and protesting country in the world, it has been ranked 118 out of 163 countries in the 2022 Global Peace Index (GPI), its best rating in 14 years, despite the 2020 to 2021 July riots, which led to the deaths of more than 300 people. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has been met with strikes and protests in spite of policies against such crowd gatherings. South Africa has been at war with itself. This article argues that the violent protest crisis is traced to colonialism, apartheid and post-apartheid government corruption systems. The article seeks to investigate the phenomenon of violent protests action during the intense COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. The article argues, that political instability, social injustices, economic stress, uncertainty in society and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing toxic social norms and inequality. Furthermore, the research proceeds to a transversal interdisciplinary approach where Practical Theology and Psychology as sciences can share their critical concern and voice through a literature review on violent protests during the intensified period of the pandemic scourge. In this situation, contextually practical theology is required to contribute constructively to people's ethical needs and condones violence cautiously. Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary contributions: This article contributes to a theological and psychological understanding of the violent protests action in South Africa concerning underprivileged people that indlala nomsindo zinamanyala [hunger and anger are obscene]. This research is relevant for practical theology and psychology because both disciplines are concerned with the social welfare and well-being of the people.

De Bruin, Dieter (University of Pretoria)

Sharing the Peace: a broken liturgical gesture towards a Trinitarian ontology

The invitation to share the peace of Christ with one another in the context of the Eucharistic Liturgy is a practice that is well-known to many Christians. For most worshipers in the Dutch Reformed Church, however, this practice is either unknown or, if haltingly introduced to it, stumbled through rather awkwardly. What if this liturgical practice might be an incomplete but meaningful way of receiving and contributing to peace in the crises of war? What might the nature of the "peace" that is shared, one might say participated in when people awkwardly wave to - or enthusiastically embrace one another within a worship service with the words the "peace of Christ be with you?" Could sharing the ritual of the peace of Christ in the liturgy be a way for the Church, and perhaps the Dutch Reformed Church by name, to be shuffled into the embodiment of the Trinitarian ontology of peace? These are some questions we will tentatively reflect on in this paper.

Du Plessis, Amanda and Denton, Rudy (North-West University)

Contextual pastoral care and rituals for peace and healing

War always leaves us with an ethical issue. No one can stand unmoved when the images of war are broadcast on our television screens. Some of these images portray the speechlessness and helplessness of innocent people affected by the war. In pastoral counselling, it is generally accepted that it is not so much the trauma event itself that influences a person, but the person's ability to process the trauma. Ultimately, then, it seems that the inner war is somehow more destructive than the outer war, no matter how destructive war may be. The tragic thing is that many people fight this still inner war on their own. The goal of this article is to propose contextual pastoral care and rituals to guide counselees to inner peace and healing.

Freeks, Fazel (North-West University)

Every war is a war against women and children - Gender-based violence (GBV) is a destructive form of warfare instigated by fathers and husbands against their own families in South Africa: A Practical Theological investigation

Warfare is not only a crisis but an appalling crisis. It is a destroyer of human dignity and lives. Although war was permitted by God in biblical times, it still has calamitous consequences and a ruining factor of all components of life. The current war between Ukraine and Russia is not good for many countries and nations of the world because numerous lives are at stake. For example, more than 14 000 civilian casualties to date with 5767 people killed and 8292 injured due to the conflict between the two countries. Warfare destroys families, and a family per se is an important unit God instituted in society. Consequently, families can also be destroyed by gender-based violence, one of many forms of warfare against women and children. Gender-based violence is a destructive factor, and in fact, the reason for unstable and disrupted family life in society. Numerous families experience emotional, physical, mental, sexual issues and many more due to gender-based violence. This paper will investigate gender-based violence instigated by fathers and husbands against their own families and propose possible ways or solutions to curb this ruined issue against women and children.

Hoffman, Lyzette (University of the Free State)

How war shapes faith

War is a humanitarian crisis that impacts all spheres of life. However, the impact on a deeper level, e.g. a spiritual level, has an even greater influence than sometimes expected. In this paper a short overview will be given of the impact of war on people's religion/spirituality, with special reference to faith formation. Christian undergraduate students from Sydney in the 1930's/40's responded differently regarding the role of Christians and church in a time of war. Some saw repentance and renewed personal devotion as the answer. Others saw the church as an agent of change in society and stressed the social implications of the Gospel (Lake 2010). A study done by Ai et al. (2005) among traumatized Kosovar and Bosnian refugees in the United States, found a positive relation between religiousness and positive coping among the refugees. Katō, a Japanese scholar, refers to war and faith in the following way: A "spirit that transcends life and death" is the basis for fighting bravely. He described this spirit as a "spirit of selflessness" and grounds it in religious belief (Nishimura 2022). The ways faith practices are utilized as coping mechanisms in times of conflict and war, as well as how faith is shaped by the experiences of the believer during challenging times are traced in this exploratory study.

Hove, Rabson (University of KwaZulu-Natal)

The quest for healing: Pastoral care before, during and after the war

The cycle of war and political violence is difficult to break hence there is continuous suffering in the world. War and political violence are caused by greedy, spirit of oppression and domination. Violence and war cause bodily harm, loss of life and property, estranged relationships, and destruction of infrastructure. Pastoral care is an essential pillar of integrated well-being for the faith community and people in general. Since war and political violence cause wounds and scars pastoral care becomes central in providing healing among communities around the world in the context of war. These crises need healing as the function of pastoral care within the discipline of practical theology. This paper seeks to explore the healing function of pastoral during and after the war, and different approaches that the church may use to provide healing in such context. The article begins by exploring the causes of war and its impact in the lives of the people and nations. The article argues that pastoral care for healing is unavoidable due to suffering and wounds caused by war and political violence in the world. It will conclude by discussing the challenges in providing pastoral care for healing during and after the war.

Kagama, Dickson Nkonge (Chuka University, Kenya)

The plight of the 2007/08 post-election violence victims in Kenya and what the Church can do

War, violence and conflicts remain the biggest hiccups to human development. In spite of the numerous calls for justice, reconciliation and peace as prerequisites for a stable society, political, religious and ethnic conflicts continue to hit many parts of the world. Africa is possibly the most affected continent by this anguish as some of her nations and people have not known peace for decades. In Kenya, for example, although there have been many conflicts since independence (1963), it was the 2007/2008 Post-election violence that proved rather challenging as its effects are felt to date. The disputed Presidential election results plunged the country into a serious crisis whose effects continue to wreck the country fifteen years later. Evidently, memories of this conflict where many lives were lost, families displaced, women and girls suffered sexual violence and property destroyed always reappear, and this has seriously affected the development. After the conflict, efforts were made to bring forth reconciliation between Kenyan communities and individuals but what has remained a challenge is the fact that the victims of this violence did not get justice as nobody was held responsible. Many internally displaced persons (IDPs) still live in IDP camps with no hope of being resettled, a situation that has created despair, hopelessness, frustration and resentment among the victims. This study was conducted among 100 IDPs and other victims of this conflict, the majority of whom felt that both government and the Church have neglected them. The Church as the conscience of the society cannot disregard the suffering of the victims of the 2007/2008 if she is serious in her ministry of love, justice, reconciliation and peace.

Knoetze, Hannes (University of Pretoria)

Ecology, new emerging technologies, and ethical challenges

Ecological speaking, we live in a time of disasters like, natural disasters, human made disasters, health disasters. Many of these disasters are caused by new and emerging technologies, but at the same time these disasters are also addressed and managed by the same new and emerging technologies. This article will attend to the ethical questions like, what are the ethical principles with which we engage in the ecological “war”? What are the ethical principles when we use and develop new technologies? Ecology and new emerging technologies influence our quality of life, just as our quality of life influence the ecology. As such this article will focus on the oikodome as a holistic approach to make God’s saving grace visible in this world.

A homiletical-liturgical praxeology dealing with ironic reimagination in addressing the prevalence of cognitive warfare

Conflict usually occurs at three levels: cognitive, emotional and behavioural levels (Love 2014:22). Applied to the conference theme dealing with the crisis and ethics of war, one should acknowledge that war has always involved people's minds (Pappalardo 2022:1). The idea of cognitive warfare, or to put it differently, recognizing the war before the war, the battle for people's minds emerges. This paper links up with the idea of being at war today, identifying the piercing influence of cognition (axis 11). The invasion of Russia in Ukraine was characterized by cyberattacks targeting Ukrainian infrastructure (Zeitsoff 2021:3). In cognitive warfare, each party sees and understands the other as the embodiment of falsehood and itself as the embodiment of the truth (Buber 1990:255). Due to the war's spiral effect, people are exposed to different versions of cognitive warfare. The pitfall of the falling trap of an onlooking attitude as something distant from us should be avoided. Something should be done amidst the prevalence of people asking how they should deal with people suffering in this war and due to the spiral effect thereof. Fear as the antipode of hope stands in the centre of this idea. Brueggemann once reflected on the essential nature of preaching connected to Ricoeur's suggestion that narrative fiction has the power to remake or redescribe a world. Within this framework, mimesis refers to the preunderstanding and the basic competence for a narrative to be understood. Pembroke (2009:91) utilizes the concept of ironic reimagination and understands it as an endeavour that allows a person to approach the world in such a way that the two poles or extremes, in any particular situation, are seen as holding together in creative tension. Psalms could illuminate this idea 13, where a movement from lament, namely, "How long, O Lord?" towards "I will rejoice" emerges. It is a move from lamenting in anger to a cognitive reinterpretation or reframing of perspectives that comes to the fore. A homiletical-liturgical praxeology dealing with hope also deals with a firm cognitive presupposition in the light of the view mentioned above (Lynch: 1996:54). The research problem is as follows: How could a homiletical-liturgical praxeology through ironic reimagination contribute to providing hope to people being confronted by distorted versions of cognitive warfare?

In a time of war, a Political-and-Practical Theology

In this paper, 1) the theological frame will be provided by Christo Lombaard and 2) the reflections from dealing directly with a situation of war will be provided by Laima Geikina. The latter part will constitute the greater part of the presentation and the resultant paper.

1) Given the biblical internally-discursive heritages on war, which is one of the harshest elements of the natural human phenomenon of politics, it is not surprising that we have various views on war and on political theology throughout the Christian centuries. The pacifism of the church of the first Christian centuries, the foundational break with that tradition from Constantine onwards, the later Quaker non-violence, and the still later acceptance of violence by certain strands of liberation theology, are just some of the prominent markers (each of which is highly complex in own right) of the inner-Christian variety of positions on these related matters.

In this contribution, the view that Theology ought to be free of politics, is countered. The version of that view that is most well-known to churches, springs in modern times from i.a. the pietist heritage. However, the broadly cultural view of modernism that has dominated in Western(ised) societies in recent times, mirrors this view: that politics must be free from religion. Drawing on the impulses from currently rising post-secularism, most particularly on the increasing recuperation of jurist-philosopher Carl Schmitt's indication that there is no important topic in Politics that does not have a close parallel in Theology, it is clear that both a politics-free Theology and its inverse are impossible. (In reality, a Theology that tries to be free from politics entails a clear political positioning itself; with, again, the inverse being as valid.)

2) Based on this theological consideration on the relationship between Politics and Theology, a practical illustration of this is given by Laima Geikina. She is professor of Practical Theology (with doctorates in this field and in education) and a city councillor of the Latvian capital of Riga. Immediately since the invasion by Russia of Ukraine, her political role has of necessity dramatically increased. (It is generally accepted that, if the invasion of Ukraine were to be successful, given the political geographies of the Soviet era, the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania would be next in line.) In this, the larger section of this joint presentation, personal reflections are offered on how she has dealt practically with the results of this war. Apart from dealing with the intense political discourses in a country that includes a substantial Russian population, is now a part of NATO and used to be part of the USSR, and is geographically in the vicinity of the current war, she also deals pastorally with refugees from the war. This includes initiating a Silent Room, to assist with the pastoral needs in a refugee centre in Riga. On these matters especially, outlines and insights are offered.

Metaverse and the spiritual warfare of cloud computing: Elon Musk versus El Shaddai. Towards a practical theology of diachronic thinking within the pastoral tension: Homo digitalis – homo sympatheticus

Yuri Gagarin was the first human being to enter space in a spacecraft. It is said that the former head and prime minister of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev (1958-1964), made the following remark at the plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU: "Gagarin flew into space, but didn't see any god there" (Yuri Gagarin. 2022)^[1].



Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin becomes the first human being to travel into space. As his Vostok spacecraft lifted off the ground, he said: "Poyekhali!". The phrase can be translated as either "Let's Go!" or "We're Off!" (Yuri Gagarin 2022). These prophetic words carry the seeds of a new era which has tremendous implications for our being human on planet earth.

Yuri Gagarin did not find any trace of God's existence out there. In fact, from now on astronauts are going to occupy space while digitalised technology will take over divine providence.

The following question surfaces: If the traditional understanding of 'God' as an all-controlling and all-powerful entity, is gradually becoming replaced by 'Cloud Computing', how should orthodox faith be reframed in order to liaise with digitalised paradigms and to safeguard planet earth and the hypersphere against brutal exploitation? What is the impact of digitalisation on our understanding of God?



Left: Cloud Computing within the spatial realm of Azure Space 2022. Online: <https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/solutions/space/#resources>.^[2] Accessed: 7th of April 2022.

Right: A satellite space station called: Azure Space, Space Born Computer 2. 2022. Rendition of EchoStar 24 satellite, which SSL is building for EchoStar/Hughes. Photo: SSL. Russell, K. 2017. Azur Space to Supply Next-Gen Solar Cells for SSL September 8, 2017. Online: <https://www.satellitetoday.com/innovation/2017/09/08/azur-space-supply-next-gen-solar-cells-ssl/>. Accessed: 7 April 2022.

How should practical theology, specifically pastoral theology, respond to the challenge of paradigmatic theological transformation while activist campaigns demanding eco-spirituality and the greening of the Christian faith? Is it possible to expand *cura animarum* (care, cure of human souls) to *cura terrae* (care, cure of the earth) and *cura pro spacio* (care, cure of spaceX)?

From Pleistocene, Holocene and Anthropocene to Metacene

On the 29th of October 2021, Mark Zuckerberg announced that the new trade mark of Facebook will be called 'metaverse'.

"In its current meaning, metaverse generally refers to the concept of a highly immersive virtual world where people gather to socialize, play, and work. Awareness of this term surged on October 29, 2021, when Facebook rebranded itself "Meta" and released a video in which CEO Mark Zuckerberg says, "I believe the metaverse is the next chapter for the internet" (Metaverse Merriam-Webster 2021).

^[1] "After the flight, some sources claimed that Gagarin, during his space flight, had made the comment, "I don't see any God up here." However, no such words appear in the verbatim record of Gagarin's conversations with Earth-based stations during the spaceflight.[17] In a 2006 interview a close friend of Gagarin, Colonel Valentin Petrov, stated that Gagarin never said such words, and that the phrase originated from Nikita Khrushchev's speech at the plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, where the anti-religious propaganda was discussed." Yuri Gagarin. 2022. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Gagarin

^[2] "Spaceborne Computer-2 is powerful enough to do the work of analyzing data at the source of collection — right there in space — with a process called edge computing. It's as if your hand normally sent information to your brain and had to wait for analysis and response before giving the signal to pull back from a hot stove, and then it suddenly got the ability to analyze the temperature right at the fingertip itself and decide to immediately recoil from the heat" (Ray 2021).

The announcement has got tremendous implications for how human beings will orientate themselves in life. To my mind, metaverse introduces a total new approach to cosmology and economy. It is going to influence lifestyles, immensely. It has a direct impact on reflections on the destiny of our being human and its connection to the spirituality of meaning and purposefulness. Within the framework of Artificial Intelligence and the explosion of information (Big Data), metaverse is bringing about a total new interpretation of *meta*-physics and the understanding of transcendence. Thus, the following challenge to humankind: “But think of the metaverse as a fourth era of computing and networking” (Ball 2022:39).

According to Mark Ferguson (2022), the notion of metaverse brings about a total reframing of paradigms. He argues the so-called ‘anthropocenic humans, have created a metacene world in which God’s creatures compete with human creations for limited resources that our planet can offer. The scope of the concept of space gradually turns boundless with the development of virtual reality.

“After the Pleistocene came the Holocene, the current epoch of Anthropocene and when our species is as endangered as the Neanderthal, the Metacene has begun” (Ferguson 2022). For Ferguson, metacene is creating a kind of futuristic scenario. It probes into what he calls the Terra Incognita of our digitalised human existence. According to his website: “This website exists primarily to present my developing universe, set deep in the Metacene of the far future and begun with my first novel, Terra Incognita” (Ferguson 2022).

Madigele, Tshenolo Jennifer (University of Botswana) and **Gift Baloyi** (University of South Africa)

Indigenous education and Gender Based Violence: The Botswana Context

Theological education ought to envision bringing about behaviour patterns of individuals in the society towards a responsible citizenry. This paper regards indigenous education as a major field of theological education. Botswana has been listed as one of the countries in the world with a high prevalence of Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases, especially among women. It is currently rated as number two on rape cases globally with 92.90 rape incidents per 100,000 citizens. Over 67% of women in Botswana, had, in their lifetime experienced some form of gender violence including partner and non-partner violence. Whereas globally, an average of 33% of women has experienced intimate partner violence. The paper develops a theological curriculum structure that should form an integral part of Theological Education towards resuscitating indigenous practices when GBV were at their minimum in Botswana.

Magezi, Vhumani (North-West University)

Reflecting back, dealing with today, and positioning self for the future: towards, constructing and doing practical theology that is relevant in Africa

The need for a relevant practical theology in Africa is urgent. The questions that could be posed to guide this reflection are: What could be the elements of such a theological approach? How can such a theology be developed? This paper grapples with these questions through reflecting on African historical and contemporary challenges to provide insight into positioning oneself to an imagined Africa for the future. In doing so, some pointers on constructing and doing practical theology that is relevant in Africa are suggested.

Mashabane, Maleshoane (University of the Free State)

War on life: Youth denied, denying or in denial?

Young people coming together in ‘one accord’ has been a major engine of social transformation throughout history. On June 16, 1976, South Africa’s black children said ‘no more’ to the limiting education system. We have also witnessed in recent years with the ‘Fees Must Fall Movement’ how young people can overthrow and dismantle systems of oppression. Tsietsi Mashinini, who led the June 16 Movement, was only 16 at the time, very active at his local Methodist Parish and chairperson of the Methodist Wesley Youth Guild. Recent studies continue to provide snapshots that highlight the need to focus on the challenges facing young people in the current context, which have resulted in the Embojeni tavern deaths in the Eastern Cape, and a matric learner stabbing a teacher to death in the Free State among others. South Africa has a rich history and has nurtured some of the greatest leaders who have been – and still are – celebrated the world over; and these heroes are seen as ‘symbols of freedom and ethical activism’. This paper will be a twofold contemplation, firstly since ethics cannot be divorced from context, South Africa’s historical context is employed as a lens through which we can examine our current context. Secondly, theological reflections on and proposed programmes of intervention for our current war on life.

Meyer, Juanita (University of the Free State)

Pastoral Care during the crisis of war: the praxis of a theology of resilience

It is often through story that the experience of trauma lives. By that is meant that trauma naturally embodies the form of story and remains *the* story until it can be owned and claimed as *my* story. *The* story becomes *my* story only through the process of courage and what may be called ‘resilience’. When *the* story remains a story, unclaimed by any author or narrator other than the unconscious, it is inaccessible to consciousness and direct experiences and detached from the sense of self.

War, or warfare in all its forms, is another story that is subjectively experienced and interpreted. Subjective interpretation of the experience of warfare results in the writing of a unique story, which, in combination with embedded lived theologies and other psychosocial factors, results in the experience of trauma. This paper argues that coping with the experience of trauma is much dependent on how the story around the traumatic event is successfully claimed and reframed into the self (meta)-narrative through activities such as reauthoring, plotting and narrating. The paper further argues that a theology of resilience supports the ability of a victim of trauma to survive his/her story in several ways and suggests that these narratological activities happen within the framework of the economy of the Trinity, creating the narrative space in which the story of the trauma can be viewed from the triune God’s acts of salvation in creation.

The extent to which ever-changing, vulnerable, and frail narratives can be constructed and reconstructed in line with the meaning contained in the relatively stable and coherent master narrative of a resilient religion determines resilience in the face of trauma and turbulence and encompasses the power inherent in a theology of resilience. Such a theology of resilience “rests on the hypothesis that the possibility of the good (and God) is experienced in the facts of my life” (Hermans 2022). Through storying and narration, the ‘good’ is connected with events and facts of our life narrative. Resilience is, therefore, to seek a sense of good that has been lost.

Mouton, Dawid (Stellenbosch University)

Facing disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities: a congregational pastoral ministry approach

This article sets out to present a framework for a congregational pastoral care ministry response to issues of trauma and disruption. Within the broader ambit of practical theology and pastoral care, a confessional approach to a collective congregational pastoral care ministry appears to offer opportunities for congregations to integrate their confessional identity and calling into their faith practices and ministries in a way that opens their eyes to and enables them to respond to those in need. Of particular interest to this article are elements of the three formulae of unity of the Dutch Reformed family of churches and the Confession of Belhar of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. The material presented in the article relates to the research and ministry of the author in the community of Krönlein, in Keetmanshoop, Namibia. It will be argued that a confessional approach affirms the missional nature and public pastoral care calling of the local church in contexts of trauma and disruption, and this will be supported with examples of how such an approach may be embodied.

Pali, Khamadi (University of the Free State)

Church split or splintering: A dilemma facing the church today

It is often taken for granted that churches must strive for unity at all costs, but there are times when churches are faced with a situation of either splitting or splintering. Split suggests dividing into two groups and splintering implies going or scattering into variety of directions. Church is understood in variety of ways, for example the concept church can be defined in the context of local congregation, community of believers or denominations. It is expected of the church to maintain visible and invisible unity. Often when unity is broken in whatever way there is a departure from each other which either can be named split or splintering depending on the context. There are causes and consequences of splitting or splintering. The objectives of this paper are as follows: Is the unity of churches an absolute mandate of the scripture? Can churches opt for split or splintering when unity fails? What are the causes of split and splintering? What are the consequences of both split or splintering? The main theory of this paper is critical theory and the study will follow a literature review process.

***Endleleni*¹: The South African Christian story as conflict within us and quarrel amongst us**

Religion is central to Africans and the most important aspect of their lives. Yet, the foundational principles of African worldviews and beliefs were overlooked and looked down upon by some Christian missionaries from Europe. The contempt of European missionaries who brought Christianity to the Eastern Cape in South Africa around the 1820s is a testament to the "othering" and misinterpretation of African customs and worldviews.

On the other hand, the apartheid era brought to South Africans the "divine" discrimination that was supposedly supported by Scripture. This era in South African history gives rise to the religions (Christianities) that are better than others, people who were divinely superior to others and the language that was used to put an emphasis on the above. Both apartheid and colonization left invisible scars on individuals and individuals take those scars to the church, academy, and society.

After 1994, the error was made, when those who were suppressed under apartheid and colonialism were brought in the space that were not deconstructed and the foundation that is internal bleeding.

As mentioned, the above manifest themselves in the church, academy and South African society through internal conflict and quarrel amongst South Africans.

In light of the above it is asked: To what extent do these internal conflicts and external quarrels remain the outcomes of the foundation that was not dislodged after colonization and apartheid?

The above question will be answered by utilizing indigenous storytelling methodology, to unmask these conflicts within us and quarrels amongst us, that spread to the church, academy, and South African societies. Lastly, *endleleni* metaphor loosely translates on the road will be discussed, as an attempt to undermine the hierarchized foundation that was formed to divide and together pave a new foundation that is based on the interconnectedness of humanity. The metaphor will be juxtaposed with the ministry of Jesus "endleleni" to pave the way forward.

A society in crisis: lived religion and the congregation response – a methodological reflection.

Lived religion focus on what people do in their everyday life. Ordinary people's everyday social and cultural practices are influenced and orientated by their religious orientation and belief. Religious practices are culturally embedded and, therefore, also a communal activity. Congregations should focus not only on the ministerial practices of the congregation but also on understanding and advancing its membership's everyday life. Religious practices, both individual and communal, are more than just doing; for example, a ritual, these practices include a normative and theoretical aspect. The motivation for practice and the agency of practice should be included in the reflection on these practices. As an empirical methodology, practice-orientated research could assist in analysing and interpreting a lived religion as an everyday practice. A critical missional framework may help a congregation and its members move to a more desired position. Ordinary members of congregations are important agents and role players in this movement.

Weapons of faith seeking answers to questions posed by wars from a practical theology standpoint

Does God justify war? Meagher, Hauerwas & Shay (2014), say, 'Any serious critique of war, as well any true attempt to understand the profound, invisible wounds it inflicts, will be undermined from the outset by the unthinking and all-but-universal acceptance of just war doctrine'. The question is, what makes a war a just one? Are wars justified in any way? What about the numerous people who are displaced, killed and suffer for someone's decision? How do churches and for that matter theologians respond to the popular rationales for wars and their effect? The paper reflects on how costly wars can be on nations, the church and people. It uses an ethnographic reflection methodology to engage on how practical theology can respond to the effects of war and ways in which its effects can be minimised. More particular plight of Africa from its numerous wars and conflicts.

¹ AmaXhosa metaphor, loosely translates *on the road*

Van den Berg, Jan-Albert (University of the Free State)

The crisis and ethics of the info-war: A practical theological exploration of conspiracy theories

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the role and influence of conspiracy theories were confirmed yet again. Based on a theoretical investigation, the influence of the pandemic and social media are explored to point out how they have, especially recently, been the breeding-ground and crisis for the development and growth of conspiracy theories. Within the meaning of a so-called 'post-truth' period, it is important to take note of the sophisticated functioning and dynamics of these conspiracy theories in creating so-called 'info-wars'. In the workshop, practical examples of some conspiracy theories will illustrate the above dynamics and the ethical dilemma thus caused. Based on this description of conspiracy theories, their influence on, and consequences in various fields, along with examples from praxis, are indicated. In conclusion, the workshop offers a creative space to reflect on a possible practical theological involvement in addressing conspiracy theories on both individual and community levels.

Van Jaarsveld, Mias (University of the Free State)

Spiritual care in the situation room: ambiguous loss, radical uncertainty, and hope during a time of war

As we were gradually returning to a version of "normality" after the Covid-19-pandemic, something abnormal occurred: rumours of a world war after the Russians invaded Ukraine. This invasion led to sanctions against Russia, which in turn influences the "normal" functioning of the entire world today. The impact of these events - along with a never-ending list of harsh realities like the terrible statistics of GBV, the Iranian protests for women's rights, the looming dangers of climate change, mass shootings, corruption, loadshedding, and so on - traumatises us - one can say it has led to a internal war of sense-making, and has plunged us in a time of radical uncertainty (more than one uncertainty that simultaneously influences us) and causes ambiguous loss (persistent loss without the promise of closure). It is for this reason that this paper would focus on Pauline Boss's theory of Ambiguous Loss and Jan Jorrit Hasselaar's theory of radical uncertainty, with the intention to help pastoral counsellors find hope within loss and uncertainty caused by war.

Wessels, Wessel (University of the Free State)

The (Potential) War on Truth? Contemplating the Usage of Statistics by Contextual Theologies and the Implications for Preaching

It is a well-established tradition of Contextual Theologies to underscore their claims of injustices in society by relying on statistics. Some of the most common claims today include "the poor are getting poorer and the rich richer", "women are disproportionately affected by violence", and "Affirmative Action equalises the playing field". I must concede that the consensus amongst theologians, as far as I can discern, is thorough acceptance of these claims. I have, however, not found any research within theological circles which tries to validate or question these claims through independent research. Furthermore, it seems quite suspicious that these claims underscore a narrative deeply entrenched in critical theories, which are by their very nature suspect of any progression in society, culture, and context regarding human interaction and behaviour. Furthermore, critical theories are paradoxically part and parcel of the postmodern movement, which emphasises a post-truth era, even as they work with metanarratives which underscore injustices especially grounded on an understanding of power as the vital flaw of society. Are the claims made by Contextual Theologies indeed truth, a potential war on truth, or an outright war on truth which entrenches the moral and theological superiority of theologies claiming to be contextual? In this paper, I will contemplate the validity of the usage of statistics by Contextual Theologies regarding the previously mentioned claims. Regarding my findings, I will contemplate the implications of truth, anti-truth, and post-truth for preaching as a calling towards speaking truth.

Wyngaard, Jeremy (Stellenbosch University)

The crisis of gang war in Cape Town: an (Im)Practical Theological Response by society?

Ever since the legalised enforcement of the ethnically-based, theological ideology of apartheid in South Africa in 1948, gang warfare has become synonymous with Cape Town. This city, described as the "best" tourist destination in Africa, is also the same city that was recently described as the murder capital of the world. It is also called the "Mother City" while its administration has a mantra, "the city that works for all". This article will therefore address the root causes of the phenomenon of generational gang warfare in Cape Town and will also consider a meaningful Practical Theological response in addressing this existential crisis.