International Conference 2022

Negotiating good life in times of crisis: voices of theology and religious studies

Protestant Theological University

Inspiring wisdom
Welcome

Dear participants, dear friends and colleagues,

We warmly welcome you to the 2022 PThU International Conference. It is our joy and privilege to host you here in Vrijburg Amsterdam, or to host you in the digital space if you connect online. We hope that, wherever you are, you may feel at home with us and invited to share the best of your knowledge, the sharpest of your questions, and not to forget your unique wit and gift of perception throughout the meetings, both formal and informal.

The theme ‘Negotiating Good Life in Times of Crisis’ was set about one and a half year ago, in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis. We already noticed by then how the pandemic multiplicated existing crises and increased the manifold inequalities in the world. We did not yet know that by the time of our conference a new war on the European continent would severely affect the geopolitical constellation of the world, with a not yet predictable outcome.

Theologians and scholars in religious studies are called to reflect on the good life. Here at this conference we seek to create a platform for reflecting together on (possibilities of) good life in the face of the interrelated crises of today's world. In the days ahead, we will explore together what constitutes a good life and in what way good life is envisioned and promoted in religion. As Protestant Theological University, we are committed to an existential and faithful way of doing theology. We can't stay out of it. Faith communities struggle in the midst of crises. Our fellow humans are waiting, the entire planet is groaning for compassionate engagements with the quest for life. For a good life. Let us join in with the best we can give - intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

We wish you a wonderful and inspiring conference.

Prof. dr. Heleen Zorgdrager
Organising Committee

Prof. dr. Heleen Zorgdrager
Prof. dr. Henk de Roest
Dr. Lieve Teugels
Drs. Albert Nijboer, International officer
Shingirai Masunda, PhD student PThU
Jesse de Bruin, Master student PThU

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the conference organisation: conference2021@pthu.nl
Negotiating good life in times of crisis: voices of theology and religious studies

Crisis situations have an enormous impact on people’s lives. Natural disasters, illness, conflict or violence: they all affect people’s health, mind and social wellbeing. It is during such times that people reconsider what it means to live a ‘good’ life. How can they flourish when they are confronted with economic or environmental collapse? How do they give meaning to their lives when their job is on the line? And what makes their lives worth living when they’ve contracted a fatal illness?

Theologians and religious scholars are called to reflect on good life

Our international conference seeks to create a platform for theologians and religious studies scholars to reflect on what constitutes a ‘good life’. In what way is ‘good life’ envisioned and promoted in religion and what place do these views have in society?

What is good life and what is ‘good’ life in times of crisis? Theologians and religious scholars ask questions like:

• Which sources do we use to define what good (and bad) life is? How do people implement those sources?
• What makes a source or an activity that furthers good life in times of crisis ‘religious’?
• What is a Christian understanding and how do Christian practices contribute to good life?
• How do competing views and practices of good life relate and interact?
• Can various ways of looking at what good is and how it is obtained, exist side by side?
• Can we learn from takes on good life that differ from ours?
• And, more importantly, is good life in times of crisis for one compatible with good life for another? Can good life for humans also be good for animals and nature – and the other way around?
# Conference programme 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 April Monday</th>
<th>5 April Tuesday</th>
<th>6 April Wednesday</th>
<th>7 April Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.30 - 14.30</td>
<td>8.30 - 9.00</td>
<td>8.30 - 9.00</td>
<td>8.30 - 9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration on location</td>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Panel 1. Coping with crisis and the negotiation of identity in Jewish antiquity</td>
<td>Worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.30 - 16.00</td>
<td>9.00 - 10.30</td>
<td>Panel 2. Contextuality and the crisis of Biblical studies</td>
<td>9.00 - 10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration online</td>
<td>11.00 - 12.30</td>
<td>11.00 - 12.30</td>
<td>11.00 - 12.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference opening</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.00 - 16.30</td>
<td>13.30 - 15.15</td>
<td>Parallel paper sessions</td>
<td>13.30 - 14.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynote by Aruna Gnanadason: Negotiating the good life</td>
<td>Good life in times of corona</td>
<td>Ecotheology and eschatology</td>
<td>Keynote by Allan Boesak: Belhar at 40: Between the politics of manufactured contentment and the hope of life abundant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.30 - 17.30</td>
<td>15.00 - 16.45</td>
<td>Crisis and suffering</td>
<td>15.00 - 16.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>16.30 - 17.30</td>
<td>Various perspectives</td>
<td>Parallel paper sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.30 - 18.30</td>
<td>17.00 - 17:30</td>
<td>Good life in times of corona</td>
<td>Good life in times of corona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.30 - 20.00</td>
<td>18.00 - 19.30</td>
<td>Theorising the good life</td>
<td>Church in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.00 - 21:30</td>
<td>19.30 - 21:00</td>
<td>Interreligious dialogue</td>
<td>Religious cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>18.30 - 20.00</td>
<td>Festive conference dinner</td>
<td>Religious sources and tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 April Wednesday</td>
<td>The Traveller (Europaplein 2,1078 GZ Amsterdam)</td>
<td>'The Traveller' (Europaplein 2,1078 GZ Amsterdam)</td>
<td>Theorising the good life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30 - 15.15</td>
<td>15:30 - 14:15</td>
<td>Various perspectives</td>
<td>13:30 - 14:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel paper sessions</td>
<td>16.30 - 18.00</td>
<td>Ecotheology</td>
<td>Keynote by Cynthia Rigby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.45 - 17.30</td>
<td>16.30 - 18.00</td>
<td>Good life in times of corona</td>
<td>Bone of bone, flesh of flesh: belongingness and the good life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel paper sessions</td>
<td>18.00 - 19.30</td>
<td>Theorising the good life</td>
<td>Meal for conference participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.30 - 20.00</td>
<td>19.00 - 21:00</td>
<td>Interreligious dialogue</td>
<td>Young Theologians panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>19.30 - 21:00</td>
<td>Festive conference dinner</td>
<td>11.00 - 12.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 April Thursday</td>
<td>8.30 - 9.00</td>
<td>8.30 - 9.00</td>
<td>8.30 - 9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Panel 5. Competing Christianities: religion, ideology and war in Europe and beyond</td>
<td>Panel 6. Obtaining the 'good' in a context of pluralism</td>
<td>Worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00 - 10.30</td>
<td>11.00 - 12.30</td>
<td>11.00 - 12.30</td>
<td>9.00 - 10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00 - 12.30</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>13:30 - 14:30</td>
<td>Keynote by Allan Boesak: Belhar at 40: Between the politics of manufactured contentment and the hope of life abundant</td>
<td>13:30 - 14:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30 - 14.30</td>
<td>15.00 - 16:45</td>
<td>Parallel paper sessions</td>
<td>Keynote by Allan Boesak: Belhar at 40: Between the politics of manufactured contentment and the hope of life abundant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00 - 16:45</td>
<td>16.00 - 16.30</td>
<td>Good life in times of corona</td>
<td>15.00 - 16:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.00 - 16.30</td>
<td>16.30 - 18.00</td>
<td>Church in society</td>
<td>Good life in times of corona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.30 - 18.00</td>
<td>17.00 - 17:30</td>
<td>Religious cultures</td>
<td>Church in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.00 - 17:30</td>
<td>18.00 - 19.30</td>
<td>Religious sources and tradition</td>
<td>Religious cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.00 - 19.30</td>
<td>19.30 - 21:00</td>
<td>Theorising the good life</td>
<td>Religious sources and tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.30 - 21:00</td>
<td>20.00 - 21:30</td>
<td>Closing conference</td>
<td>Theorising the good life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keynote speakers

Dr. Aruna Gnanadason, formerly Director of World Council of Churches Programme on Women in Church and Society, Chennai, India

*Negotiating good life in times of crisis*

I decided to keep the theme of this conference as the title of my presentation because it is so inspirational. Amid tremendous suffering and death that the COVID pandemic has wreaked on the world, and particularly on India which (according to WHO reports) has the second-largest numbers of COVID related deaths in the world. Our conversations have focussed on the challenge to Christians to respond to the context: to find theological answers to the suffering as well as to deal with the impact of the virus in our societies and the world. It has exposed many forms of discrimination and even divides in our society – class, gender, religion, and caste have all been exposed to be at the heart of the injustices that plague our world. It revealed the ineptitude of our government to deal with the impact of the virus, and the brazen disregard of all democratic institutions and the rights of particularly the most vulnerable. Every day exposed a new challenge in the bid to negotiate life itself. I realised we had missed an important dimension which the theme of this conference beckons us to explore. We cannot be content to rebuild what we had in pre-COVID times and pretend that it is okay to go back to that.

We have to negotiate a **good life**! This keynote will explore some of the qualities of a ‘good life’ and some steps to get there.

Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, The Hague, The Netherlands

*To amplify the ‘whisper of truth’. Towards a council of conscience*

A quiet revolution for the benefit of humanity and the whole community of life has taken place as representatives of different spiritual traditions have come to realise that we desperately need each other to reach the common goal of justice and peace. Nevertheless the growing interfaith and interdenominational movement has not yet reached its full potential, falling short of providing the much-needed moral compass in our time of crisis.

Thirty years ago, at the conclusion of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, politicians urged religious leaders to help them take measures that in the short term seem to go against national self-interest, but that in the long run are indispensable to safeguard creation.

As ‘contemporaries of G-d’ in sacred time, we must and can harness the indomitable spirit, in ‘our mouth and our heart’ to buttress life-saving cooperation.
Dr. Cynthia Rigby, the W. C. Brown Professor of Theology, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, USA

Bone of bone, flesh of flesh: belongingness and the good life

Recently, Yale psychologist Laurie Santos commented that people in the US are likely to be happier if they belong to a church, not because of the beliefs the church espouses, but because it provides active social connections. Meanwhile, Willie Jennings argues that the goal of theological education must be ‘to form in us the art of cultivating belonging’. But how might we do this, and what might be the hazards? When does ‘belonging’ help us live good lives and when does it risk subordinating one to another, at the expense of freedom and creativity? I will use as scaffolding for my constructive effort the creation myth of Genesis and themes of re-creation in 1 Corinthians 15, arguing that a sense of belongingness funds the good life when it:

1. is founded in wonder at the glory of others with whom we are in relationship, so different from us and yet of the same stuff, and when it
2. listens to the unfamiliar stories of others with no sympathetic murmur of “I can't imagine”. Instead, it dares bodaciously and empathetically to say: “I will listen until I can imagine”, what particular lives and experiences are like, striving to create possibilities for everyone.

Dr. Allan Boesak, Professor of Black Liberation Theology and Ethics and Dean's Associate for Research, University of Pretoria, South-Africa

Belhar at forty: between the politics of manufactured contentment and the hope of life abundant

The Confession of Belhar was first drafted, debated and adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in 1982. After making the required rounds in presbyteries and congregations, it was formally accepted and the fourth standard of faith at the synod of 1986. For the purposes of this paper, I will take 1982 as the year of conception for Belhar. Here, I will read Belhar as an expression of faith in the hope for the good life amidst calamities and crises. First, the question: what has happened between 1982 and 1986? How did the confession survive those turbulent years? Was there any sign of ‘the good life’ Belhar proclaims as the hope of the church and humanity in those times of chaos and calamity? Now, forty years later, this contribution is asking the question: what does Belhar mean after forty years? Are the burning questions of faith and life, of ethics and action, of love, solidarity and reconciliation still relevant now?

Do the ‘pillars’ of Belhar – the lordship of Jesus Christ, reconciliation, justice, and unity, matter in South Africa, and the world today? Do they make any difference when it seems that every tenet of Belhar is under severe strain if not open attack? How would Belhar answer the question of ‘the good life’ in a world fallen among thieves (John 10), a ‘scandalous world’ (Accra Confession)? Can Belhar claim relevance for humanity struggling to make sense of faith in a world ‘shaken by deadly convulsions’ (Gollwitzer)? The forces of imperial power people are enjoined in struggle with today, are forces of violence and destruction. Our world is governed by systems of violence, injustice, and systems of concealment of violence and injustice. While Christians are called, as Bonhoeffer put it, to not live ‘with our heads in the clouds’, to not be content with an unjust world, to prove that our faith is not opium, but that our protest is to be ‘stubborn’ and ‘purposeful’, our struggle is against what I have come to call ‘the politics of manufactured contentment’. So how do we struggle for ‘the good life’ against these formidable forces? For some answers, I will turn to the Belhar Confession.
Panels

Panel 1. Coping with crisis and the negotiation of identity in Jewish antiquity

Presider: Lieve Teugels, Associate Professor of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, PThU.

Margaretha Folmer, Associate Professor, VU Faculty of Religion and Theology / Leiden University: ‘Crisis and resilience in a fifth century BCE Judean community in Egypt.’

Benjamin Bogerd, PhD candidate, PThU: From Tears to Laughter: ‘Strategic Assimilation as a Code for Survival in the Book of Esther.’

Bärty Hartog, Assistant Professor, Protestant Theological University, and dr. Eelco Glas, Postdoc Fellow, Protestant Theological University: ‘Gaius Caligula’s Attempt to Erect a Statue in Jerusalem (39/40 CE) in First-Century Jewish Historiography: Perspectives from Trauma Literature.’

Albertina Oegema, Postdoc Fellow, Protestant Theological University: ‘Taking Care of One’s Aging Father: “Crisis in the Household in Early Rabbinic Parables.”’

In this panel we will investigate the reaction to various crises in Jewish Antiquity, including fall of the two Jewish temples and the ensuing diasporas, but also timeless crises, such as the effects of ageing. Margaretha Folmer discusses the loss of yet another Jewish temple, that of Elephantine, in the southernmost part of Egypt, in the year 407 BCE, and the reaction and actions of the local community. Benjamin Bogerd reads the book of Esther as a story in which the possibility of good life for the Jews in the Persian Diaspora is outlined. He discusses the use of Esther’s double identity as a form of strategic assimilation to cope with the crisis of living in diaspora. Bärty Hartog and Eelco Glas reflect on the incident in 39/40 CE when the Roman emperor Gaius Caligula ordered that a statue of himself be erected in the Temple of Jerusalem. According to the available sources, this decision caused great uproar among Jews. Although the crisis was quelled prematurely, it sparked the imagination of several Jewish writers shortly after the events, mainly Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus. Hartog and Glas aim to explain the differences between the available accounts in consideration of the literary goals of each work. Albertina Oegema will read rabbinic parables that originated in the wake of the fall of the second temple (third/fourth century CE). She focuses on the tensions in the relationships between fathers and sons when confronted with the latter’s old age as reflected in two parables. How is the good life in such situations is envisioned?

Presider: Klaas Spronk, Professor of Old Testament, PThU

Janneke Stegeman, PhD, theologian specialized in Old Testament: ‘Decolonizing Jeremiah with Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian Christian readers’

Iris Veerbeek, Junior Fellow, VU University: ‘Imagining Good Futures: children’s theology as an approach for intergenerational biblical reflection on sustainable futures’

Kirsten van der Ham, PhD student, VU University: ‘Can Contextual Bible Study and Intercultural Bible Reading with Bible Study groups help overcome racial ideologies engrained in Dutch Christian communities’

Peter-Ben Smit, Professor of Contextual Bible Interpretation, VU University: ‘How can collaborative research methods assist to generate meaning that is helpful in dealing with personal, local and global problems for the individual, the religious community and society?’

In recent decades, the field of biblical studies has seen an increasing amount of studies that take the contextual embeddedness of the researcher into account and often also include a specific reading community into the interpretation of biblical texts. Approaches like contextual, gender and postcolonial biblical studies, childist criticism, autobiographical reading and bibliodrama have in common that they take the hermeneutical insight into the reader’s contribution to the meaning-making process to be asset, not an obstacle to scholarly interpretation. While they were and sometimes still are being looked at with suspicion by mainstream exegesis, those practices of interpretation are well known for their transformative power and their potential to renew the scholarly field. In this panel we want to reflect on methods that integrate the view of nonprofessional recipients into the research design. The overarching question is: how can collaborative research methods assist to generate meaning that is helpful in dealing with personal, local and global problems for the individual, the religious community and society?

Panel 3. Ecological Awareness Arising from Encountering the Bible

Presider: Annette Merz, Professor of New Testament, PThU

Riëtte Beurmanjer, Theologian, Dance therapist: ‘Dancing into ecological awareness’

Annette Merz, Professor of New Testament, PThU: ‘Giving earth a voice in exegesis and bibliodrama’

Trees van Montfort, Theologian and Journalist: ‘Green Theology, an eco-feminist and ecumenical perspective’

Maria Yvonne Băncilă, PhD, University of Bucharest – Romania: ‘The good life in light of ecotheological postulates: the Living Chapel project (Rome 2020)’

The four papers in this panel examine new ways of creating ecological awareness through encountering Bible and Theology in inclusive and holistic ways, combining innovative theories and multi-sensational practices. Trees van Montfort presents an eco-feminist approach that aims at a renewal of theology by deconstructing hierarchical dualisms of God and the earth, spirit and matter, male and female when engaging Bible and Christian tradition. Riëtte Beurmanjer describes, how she uses bibledance, a form of meditative creative dancing inspired by Bible-texts, to put the approach of Trees van Montfort into praxis in a dance retreat. The moving body is the place where creation, source-texts and the life of the dancers meet in a dance that helps them discover what in their situation a good life in an ecological perspective might be. Annette Merz investigates the potential of two methods that help modern readers to surmount anthropocentric readings of the Bible deeply engrained in our tradition. Narrative criticism provides tools to fully appreciate the earth as a biblical character and bibliodrama helps to overcome the dualism between humans and nature by identifying with non-human characters in a playful and deeply meaningful way. Maria Yvonne Băncilă discusses the Living Chapel Sound Installation (Rome 2020), initiated by the composer J. D. Revie, and based on Pope Francis’ 2015 Laudato Si’ encyclical. Underscoring the contribution of the women who collaborated in all stages of its construction, she reflects on the joint effort intended to bring renewed awareness of our moral duty to exert responsible stewardship over God’s creation.
Panel 4. “The earth is the Lord’s.” Renewing Christian theology from the ground up in times of climate and ecological crises

Presider: Mirella Klomp, Associate Professor of Practical Theology, PThU

Gert van Klinken, Assistant Professor of Church History, PThU: ‘The plea for agricultural science as integral part of the theological curriculum in the work of J.A. Uilkens’

Mirella Klomp, Associate Professor of Practical Theology, PThU: ‘In, with and under the ground. Delving into the lived theology of Dutch farmers’

Eward Postma, Lecturer of Spirituality, PThU: ‘Spirituality from the ground’

Ciska Stark, Associate Professor of Practical Theology, PThU: ‘Rural Pastors Growing into the Green Tide’

Respondent: Prof. dr. Thijs Tromp, Professor of Diaconal Studies, PThU

Global warming, as a result of the Anthropocene, is an emergency that threatens ‘the good life’ for all earthlings: its risks extend to food security, human security, water supply, ecosystems, health, livelihoods, etc. (UN, IPCC-report 2021). Humankind is at the crossroads. The question is whether theology is sufficiently up-to-date to provide an answer to our God-given responsibility to care for the earth. Ecotheology doesn’t easily find its way to the actual ground on which people live and work, and seems to resonate only with particular theological spiritualities. In our view, the crisis of planet Earth is a theological crisis as well: we believe in Jesus Christ, but do we have a clear view of the life-changing consequences this should have for our dealings with the earth? This panel explores the soil for a robust ‘grounded theology’ for the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN): one that offers theological answers that respond to the lived faith and responsibilities of Christians and the actual concerns of current life on earth, whilst acknowledging PCN’s theological plurality. We thus aim to contribute both to the transforming identity of the church, ministers, congregations, and faithful, and the renewal of protestant theology in the 21st century.

Panel 5. Competing Christianities – violence, ideology and war in Europe and beyond

Moderator: Alfons Brüning, Professor of Orthodoxy and Peace keeping in Europe, PThU

Heleen Zorgdrager, Professor of Systematic Theology and Gender Studies, PThU: ‘Religion, sacrifice, and civic nationalism in times of war: competing interpretations of John 15:13’

Dorottya Nagy, Professor of Theology and Migration, PThU: ‘Your neighbour in your home - your neighbour’s home: theological reflections on receiving war refugees from Ukraine in neighbouring countries’

Marten van den Toren, PhD student, PThU: ‘Defending the family and the nation?: Pentecostal potentialities for violence and peace across the hispanosphere’

Alfons Brüning, Professor of Orthodoxy and Peace keeping in Europe, PThU: ‘“Brave New Worlds” and the heavenly kingdom – reflections on religion and ideology in times of war (The ‘Russian world’ and orthodoxy in Ukraine)’

The panel consists of a series of papers all devoted to the question of religiously charged ideologies, and fundamentalist versions of Christianity. The war in Ukraine has made us change our initial agenda, making considerations more general: Currently it is not secular totalitarianisms, as in the first half of the 20th century, which provide the ideological legitimation for violent actions, aggressive wars and restrictive politics, but neo-conservative, partly nationalistic ideologies with usually a prominent role reserved for specific readings of Scripture, interpretations of salvation history, and Christian moral tradition. Of course, Christianity cannot be reduced to such versions. However, whereas there is already a philosophical critique of ideology, theology has apparently still a job to do. In the light of current confrontations, Christian tradition once more needs also to be examined for its inherent potential for counter-narratives and opposing concepts, that would offer perspectives to de-escalate conflicts, debunk seducing utopias made up on Christian grounds, and make reconciliation possible, sooner or later. All panellists have chosen particular cases of conflict according to their own experience and background.
Panel 6. Obtaining the ‘good’ in a context of pluralism

Moderator: Margriet Zwart-Westers, Project manager Moral Compass Project, PThU

Dominique Klamer, PhD student, PThU: ‘Human frailty in obtaining the good’

Sophia Höff, PhD student, PThU: ‘The various forms of family and the common good’

Ariën Voogt, PhD student, PThU: ‘The necessity of shared moral ground in pluralistic democracies’

Respondent: Maarten Wisse, Professor of Dogmatics, rector of the PThU, (co-)supervisor of the three PhD candidates

In current pluralistic societies, constructive debates about morality are complex. Can we still have meaningful conversations about morality, if each person decides for themselves what is good? Is there a shared ‘moral compass’ that could guide conversations about morality? How can a shared moral ground be possible in pluralistic contexts?

The Moral Compass Project aims to challenge widespread notions of morality and provide alternatives. The project contributes to strengthening a ‘moral compass’, focused on the good without holding us hostage. PhD candidates Dominique Klamer, Sophia Höff and Ariën Voogt, all part of the MCP research team, discuss from different perspectives the possibility and desirability of moral common ground in a context of pluralism.
Young Theologians Panel

Tabitha van Krimpen
A socially involved theology master student at the Protestant Theological University and former business administration student, Tabitha van Krimpen was voted Young Theologian of the Netherlands in 2021.

Martijn Stoutjesdijk
He studied Theology, Philosophy and International Relations in Leiden and Utrecht. At Tilburg University, he completed a Ph-D studie on slavery in early Christian and early Arabic parables.

Thandi Soko-de Jong
PhD- student at PThU. Her area of interest is exploring, through Intercultural Theology, how Jesus as healer images are understood from the perspective of people/faith communities in light of chronic health conditions.

Almatine Leene
Almatine is a passionate theologian with broad interests. She likes to discuss taboos and is committed to a fairer world. She was Theologian of the Netherlands from 2020 to 2021.

Elsbeth Gruteke
Our young theologians panel moderator is Elsbeth Gruteke, a Dutch radio host, historian, theologian and preacher. She works as a presenter for the Evangelical Broadcasting Company (EO), and currently presents the interview programme Onderweg on NPO Radio 5 and Musica religiosa on NPO Radio 4. She also works as a minister for the protestant church of Zeewolde.

Ruben van Zwieten
Ordained minister and founder of De Nieuwe Poort Zuidas Weena Valencia
Inspiring wisdom
Paper Sessions

Van Hillekamer

Character of Protestant pastors: a focus group study
Ronelle Sonnenberg, Lecturer Youth Ministry, Practical Theology, Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam, NL
Erik Olsman, Ass. Professor, Chaplaincy Studies & Spiritual Care, Practical Theology, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, NL

The objective of our research was to contribute to character development pastors by gaining knowledge about their character. The central question was, “How do Protestant pastors demonstrate character within their highly diverse professional practices?” The analysis of three focus groups with a mix of Protestant pastors (n=16) showed that spirituality played a key role, both within participants’ practices, and within their character. During the presentation, the researchers will show the multiple roles of spirituality, especially when it comes to the character virtue of flexibility. Spirituality appears to be something that both reinforces flexibility and limits it. In conclusion, the findings offer possibilities for character development of pastors and they suggest that pastors searching for the good and negotiating the good need to train their flexibility while nourishing spirituality of themselves and others.

Negotiating good life by interpreting crisis: suffering in Christian tradition and contextual pastoral care
János Simon, PhD Student, Babes Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca/Koloszvar, Rumania

I propose to present what Christian tradition teaches about suffering based on the definitions and examination of David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson and Elizabeth Castelli, and I’ll limit myself to the examination of martyrdom as a special form of suffering. Driving from the Christian tradition on martyrdom, we can recognize some dangers in our societal discourse and dominant ethical values. I will present some aspects of what it means to be closed into the victimary discourse and identity and some possibilities of liberation presented by the theology of Miroslav Volf and contextual pastoral care, the latter based upon Ivan Boszormeny-Nagy.

Modderman zaal

Female leadership in times of crisis in the life of Augustine
Kitty Bouwman, Associated Researcher, Titus Brandsma Institute, Radboud University Nijmegen, NL

In the Confessions Augustine describes several crisis’ in which two women play a role of importance. His mother fell into a crisis when Augustine joined a Gnostic sect: Manichaeism. Augustine’s relation with his life-companion, the mother of his son Adeodatus, falls into crisis when he makes promotion in Milan. In my lecture I will focus on the leadership of these two women in the life of Augustine.

Biblical theological perspectives on deportation and life of deportees
Előd Hodossy-Takács, Professor of Biblical Theology, Debrecen University of Reformed Theology (DRTU), Hungary

The paper deals with human suffering and the long-term consequences of warfare. Migration is a top political-sociological issue within the EU today, especially since the 2015 tragic events in Syria and the related refugee crisis. The aim of the paper is twofold. The author gives a brief review of the development in migration diplomacy (ancient and modern) and evaluates the often confusing and contradictory biblical texts in their Near Eastern context.
The story of a half-Jewish Protestant pastor in Czechoslovakia/Sudetengau between 1936 and 1946

Peter Morée, Senior Lecturer, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Geert Tepperberg (27.7.1909 Suceava – 5.4.1983 Heilbronn) was born in an ethnically mixed area of the Habsburg Empire. After a short study of medicine he studied theology in Halle. When he finished his studies, the Nuremberg laws defined the fate of the Germany's Jewish population. Because of his mixed background he moved to Czechoslovakia to become a pastor in a Protestant Church. Soon he found out that his partly Jewish origin were seen by many in the church to be a problem for his functioning as a pastor. Due to interventions of the leadership of the church he became pastor in one of the historically most important congregations of the church. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia he was forced to move to West-Germany, and worked in the church of Baden-Württemberg till his retirement. His time in Czechoslovakia/Sudetengau, the way he was able to cope with the situation of uncertainty in an often hostile environment and his later reflections on these experiences are well documented thanks to correspondence and unpublished memoires.

Mackenzie

A crisis of health: theopoetics, Covid-19 and bodily imagination

Enrieke Damen, Ph.D. Candidate, Protestant Theological University, NL. Research project ‘Ethics in Post-Theism: Reclaiming the Everyday Life’.

This contribution will argue that the current health crisis of COVID-19 offers a momentum to take the body and the bodily imagination more serious as a source for theological understanding. In moving beyond the ever-present mind-body dualism in theology, I will argue that making-sense of the good life is a matter of body and mind.

Remote advocacy, virtual drag shows, and socially distanced sex work: bodily epistemologies of the goodlife for queer communities in crisis and the saving grace of technology

Jeremy Michael Schulz, STM Graduate Student, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, USA

Taking an ethnographic approach, I will explore how queer community members have used technology platforms such as Twitch and Onlyfans to make a living wage, engage in creative expression, foster community, and continue a decades long history of advocacy and activism in the midst of crisis. Considering this phenomenon through the queer art of survival, I seek to uncover how the limits of theological and philosophical discourse regarding a life well lived exist in tension with the lived experiences of gender and sexually diverse people in challenging times. Juxtaposing the stories of survival during the HIV/AIDS epidemic in America with the stories of surviving Covid-19, I ask the question: In a world where sex work, drag, and advocacy have been largely restricted to the internet, how do gender and sexually diverse people consider their existence in relation to the notion of a ‘good life’, and what can be done to improve the quality of life for queer people whose very life is often debated as being incompatible with the teachings of morality and religion?

Online (Group 1)

A spirituality of compassion as a path to the ‘good life’?

Maike Maria Domsel: Substitute Professor for Practical Theology / Religious Education University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. Postdoctoral Researcher, Seminar for Religious Education, University of Bonn, Germany

Based on the example of empirical research conducted in the form of interviews on the German “Compassion-project” in high schools, I want to present and analyze the paradigm of compassion as a possible path to the ‘good life’. As a pre-theological and non-ideological quality, an empathic and compassionate spirituality is directional for the future and well-being of human beings in general.
Inspiring wisdom

Approach to crisis by the concept of liminality regard to theology
Szilveszter Füsti-Molnár, Rector of the Sárospatak Reformed Theological Academy, Hungary, Advisory Board Member IRTI (International Reformed Theological Institute)

In diverse interpretations, we seek a hermeneutical framework that creates common ground among the social, political, and religious processes that define us in crises. Moreover, this framework can contribute to a better understanding of our time and the role of religion today, especially concerning Christianity. We focus on the British anthropologist Victor Turner's theory of ‘social drama,’ whose defining elements will be the concepts of ritual, liminality (threshold status, being on a threshold), and communitas.

Moderation as good life in the context of Indonesia
Emanuel Gerrit Singgih, Professor Duta Wacana Christian University, Indonesia; Honorary Doctor, Protestant Theological University, NL

After the dissolution of two large radical organizations, the HTI (Hizbut Tahir Indonesia) and FPI (Front Pembela Islam), slowly the situation of identity crisis in Indonesia is coming to an end. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has issued a handbook on Religious Moderation to heal the wounds caused by the two organizations, based on Pancasila as state ideology but more as a way of life. Here Pancasila is related (but not necessarily identified) with the Javanese philosophy of Moderation as Good Life. As long as Religious Moderation is not implanted through indoctrination following the footsteps of the former regime of Soeharto, but through persuasion in public space (through praxis), Christians in Indonesia may participate in this program by creating a dialogue between Pancasila and Good Life in the book of Ecclesiastes (Ec. 7:15-17 on moderation; Ec. 9:7-10 on Good Life) and the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 6:11 on moderation; Matt. 7:12 on the golden rule of Good Life, a text in parallel with Confucius' golden rule).

Online (Group 2)
‘A painting of ultimate anguish and torment’: post-Shoah fiction and the meaning of suffering
Marjorie Corbman, Assistant Professor, Molloy College, Rockville Center, New York, USA

In the wake of the Shoah, Jewish communities faced the challenge of articulating what being Jewish meant after the murder of one-third of the global Jewish population. Numerous Jewish thinkers argued that concepts which traditionally governed Jewish life (the covenant, exile, and messianic redemption) required revision or even abandonment. Animating this assertion was a concern that the horrors of the Shoah not be neutralized through theological rationalization. Another approach to the meaning of suffering, however, can be found in Jewish fiction writers (such as Chaim Potok, Bernard Malamud, Amos Oz, and Michael Chabon), who have drawn upon traditional religious symbols in order to grapple with how to live in the wake of catastrophic suffering. Notably, while a number of the Jewish theologians and thinkers referred to above framed their critiques of redemptive suffering specifically against Christian theology, the fiction writers examined here often juxtaposed Jewish and Christian symbols of suffering, reflecting, as scholars such as Daniel Boyarin and Shaul Magid have argued, the continually mutually informing character of Jewish and Christian theology. Notwithstanding the powerful ethical critiques of theologizing suffering mentioned above, fiction has provided a venue in which redemptive symbols have continued to provide meaning in response to catastrophe.

Drawn into the good life - quality of life, personal flourishing, and the nature of suffering
Daniel Lee Hill, Assistant Professor of Theological Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, USA, Lindsey Johnson Edwards, Th.M. Student, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas USA

This paper explores the intersections between a second-personal account of suffering and how we understand quality of life, which plays a significant role in contemporary medical ethics. In this paper, we will argue that issues pertaining to quality of life must be brought back into dialogue with theological resources regarding the nature of happiness and human flourishing.
Van Hillekamer

**Being in the body: a call for a body-focused theology after trauma**  
*Marie Hansen-Couturier MA, PhD Student, Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam, NL*

This paper explores the role of theology for traumatized people. What does ‘living the good life’ mean after having experienced (a) traumatizing situation(s)? Based on results from participant observation, I demonstrate the importance of a focus on the body.

**The lived religion of bereaved parent of human trafficking victims in East Nusa Tenggara-Indonesia**  
*Liliya Wetangterah, Ph.D. Student, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, NL*

The objective of this study is to explore the experience of bereaved parents, particularly the parent who loses a beloved daughter who works away from home as a domestic worker. This research interviewed four participants (two of parents) of deceased victims of human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara-Indonesia. The bereaved experience challenges their perspective about life, the human limitation, and the assumption about justice. Religion assists the parent in coping and meaning to deal with the bereaved experience.

Modderman zaal

**Radical uncertainty and hope. Negotiating the good life in times of climate change**  
*Jan Jorrit Hasselaar, Economist & Theologian, Faculty of Religion & Theology, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, NL*

Radical uncertainty in the context of climate change is often surrounded by a widespread atmosphere of fear and apocalypse, but I argue in this paper that radical uncertainty does not carry with it its own interpretation. In this paper I investigate an understanding of hope based on the work of the late Jonathan Sacks, leading British intellectual and Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.

**A cross of branches in Extinction Rebellion**  
*Berthe van Soest, Theologian, Climate activist*

In October 2019, the climate movement Extinction Rebellion occupied the Stadhouderskade in front of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. I participated in this protest. Before the start, I attached a cross of branches to the railing of the bridge in front of the Rijksmuseum, as an altar and meeting place. The paper is about this cross as a carrier of well-known meanings and about this cross as a unique object with properties that no other cross has.

**Agnosticism and eschatological hope: Allard Pierson and good life beyond the moment of not-knowing**  
*Sabine Wolsink MA. PhD Student. Junior Fellow, HDC Centre for Religious History, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, NL. Research Fellow, Franckesche Stiftungen, Halle, Germany.*

In my paper, I will discuss Pierson's thought on good life by focusing on agnosticism and eschatological hope. Agnosticism has often been related to indifference or indecisiveness. But what if we consider the moment of not-knowing (a-gnosis) to be the starting point of renewed trust and hope for a better and more humane future? In this regard, I will relate Pierson to contemporary thinkers, like Richard Kearney, who anatheistically discussed the moment of not-knowing in relation to hope beyond hope.
**Online (Group 1)**

**Have a good life, komšija! How to engage interfaith cooperation in local Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Vedran Obućina, Croatian, Political Scientist, Theologian, Priest in the Orthodox Old-Catholic Church. PhD researcher, University of Regensburg (Germany), Ambassador of the Institute for Economics and Peace (Sydney, Australia).

For centuries, Christians (Catholic and Orthodox, but also other denominations), Muslims and Jews lived side-by-side in Bosnia and Herzegovina, employing the essence of komšija/komšiluk as the foundation of a good life in local communities. The basis of komšiluk is trust, and trust was lost in the 1990s war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when komšija turned to fight violently among each other. This paper explores the segments of komšiluk in religion-based peacebuilding and reconciliation through interviews done in a research in local areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2019. It focuses on trust-building and komšija-relations as an effort to live good and bring back positive peace in this land.

**Being a ‘Stoic-Javanese-Christian’ religiously in the crisis. Three intersectional virtues of good life from Stoa, text of “Dewa Ruci” and the letter of James 1:2-4**

Daniel K. Listijabudi, Ph.D, Lecturer, Duta Wacana Christian University, Indonesia

This paper will offer an investigation of (a) Stoic view of “learning from death”, (b) mystical wisdom of “die-in life and live-in death” from the Javanese mystical text of Dewa Ruci; and (c) several verses from letter to James which address to suffering. Hoping by taking these three into the conversation, a beneficial perspective of meaning within this fragile crisis can be offered contextually.

**Online (Group 2)**

**Christian response to ecological crisis: cosmological redemption perspective**

Herry Susanto, Lecturer New Testament, Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Tiranus (Tyrannus Bible Seminary), Indonesia; Ph.D. Student, University of Otago, New Zealand

This paper will elaborate on three elements. First, it will observe the works of two scholars: David Horrell and Vicky Balabanski. The observation will emphasise that the idea of cosmological redemption is helpful for reading Paul’s letters ecologically. Second, this paper will excavate Colossians 1:15-20. The textual investigation will read the passage by applying the intratextual and intertextual approach for illustrating the cosmic impact of God’s redemptive work. In reference to the concept of cosmological redemption, it will appear that earth is valued. Third, this paper will show the ecological ethics based on the investigation of Colossians 1:15-20.

**What would astrotheology say about good life in face of crises?**

Robert Setio, Ph.D., Lecturer, Duta Wacana Christian University, Indonesia

Astrotheology invites us to think that life does not only exist on this earth. Life is vast and involves many planets, many galaxies and maybe even a multiverse. What will happen if the multi-dimensional crisis on earth is placed in the context of the many planets, many galaxies and the multiverse? This paper will consider this possibility. In astrotheology, the subjects that will be considered in depth are creation, redemption and eschatology. These three points will be discussed in this presentation by taking the Bible as the main source of knowledge. As a branch of theology that is multi-disciplinary, astrotheology will also consult with science, especially astrobiology and philosophy, especially those that meditate on relationality of life.
Online (Group 1)

The role of Debata Tiga Batu Tungku doctrine in Pitu Ulunna Salu tribe to overcome the crisis
Abialtar Pappalan, Lecturer Sekolah Teologika Tinggi INTIM, Makassar, Indonesia

I observed one of the local wisdoms of the PUS tribe, namely their belief in the Debata Tiga Batu Tungku (God is present as a symbol of the three stoves) which consists of God as the Creator (Debata to Metampa), God the Inheritance or Savior (Debata To Manana or To Mepasalama), and God as Counselor (Debata To Meolaam). The Three Furnaces debate teaches ma'sara, anna mantila’ as the basis for accepting foreigners and also sharing deacons with other people who are affected by economic and social crises. Each of the Gods in these beliefs makes various contributions but with the same vision, namely working together to overcome crises. This tribal God is very creative in dealing with crises in their context.

Christian theodicy in the time of Covid – an enestological exploration
Patrick Gnanapragasam, Professor & Head, Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras, India

Classical Christian theodicy, for long, has dwelt upon, as pointed out to by A. K. Anderson, on ‘protology’ (on questions of origin), ‘eschatology’ (on questions of end), and ‘Christology’ (on questions of redemption through Christ). However, as he reflects in an article entitled, ‘From Zurich to Todtnauch’, there is an ‘ongoing present’, which is in-between the origin and end, and during this time, human action inspired by God gets focussed. By ‘protesting’ against evil, or resisting evil, humans find themselves experiencing the ‘divine compassion’, the divine grace in the here and now. When understood enestologically, the divine is working through the deeds of humanity.

Pandemic, church practices and the quality of the religious community as a source for the good life
Handi Hadiwitanto, Lecturer, Faculty of Theology, Duta Wacana Christian University, Indonesia

Since the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in early 2020, church practices in various places, including almost 300 congregations of Indonesian Christian Church, were held online. There is a kind of distrust that online church practices will still be able to provide a quality of religious community. The question that arises is: can the online method of church practices simply nullify the quality of the church as religious community? Does this opinion actually trap the church to lose its adaptive capacity?

Online (Group 2)

The role of interreligious dialogue and cooperation in negotiating responses to crises and establishing criteria for good life – in the context of Myanmar
Tjeerd de Boer, Honorary Research Fellow Institute of Sino-Christian Studies, Hongkong. Associate Professor Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hongkong (2013-2018)

In this paper I will present two doctoral theses, written under my supervision and defended at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hongkong. These theses which refer to “theology of friendship” and “Buddhist-Christian dialogue” will be commented as valuable responses to Myanmar’s deepening crises in establishing criteria for good life.

The role of academic and interreligious theology when reflecting on crisis
Daniel Ross Goodman, PhD candidate, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York NY, USA

This paper will examine Jewish responses to suffering and crisis, particularly in light of the worst national crisis the Jewish people (and the Jewish religion) has ever faced—the Holocaust. It will examine the debates held amongst some of the most consequential Jewish theologians of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries over how to respond to the enormity of the calamity, and assess what role (if any) academic theology should have in response to tragedy.

Inspiring wisdom
Reconstructing the image of others as a foundation of interreligious good life in Indonesia: learn from Pondok Pesantren Maulana Rumi Yogyakarta
Wahyu Nugroho, Lecturer, Duta Wacana Christian University, Indonesia

Today, there are still tensions found in Christian-Islamic relations in Indonesia. The causes are quite complex, from the trauma of their past encounters to theological understanding derived from sacred texts that are exclusive and polemical towards other. Texts are used by some Islamic and Christian groups to build an image of the other that tends to be negative. This situation makes the effort to build harmonious relationships as a marker of the good life complicated. Therefore, the reconstruction of the positive image of others becomes an inevitability. This paper demonstrates the efforts of Pondok Pesantren Maulana Rumi in Yogyakara to build a hospitable image of the other which is derived from the teachings of Sufis. What can be learned from their praxis, which can be used as a foundation of the interreligious good life in Indonesia?

Online (Group 3)
The nudity which provoked a crisis. A ‘good life’ imaginary within Christians’ religio-cultural anxieties in the light of the ‘national habitus’ theory by Norbert Elias
Agnieszka Laddach PhD, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Academia Artium Humaniorum, Poland

On the 8th of March, 2019, there was a great opening of The Cleaner Retrospective of Marina Abramović’s works in the Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń (Poland). On the same day, the representatives of conservative Christian environments were protesting at the door of the Centre. They opposed showing archival materials and performances with nudity as they were convinced that the exhibition promotes satanism, and fights with traditional Catholic culture in Poland. Thus, the paper's purpose is to present religio-cultural anxieties of the protesters and to discuss their ‘good life’ imaginary.

Transformation of women’s educational role among Christian families in Ambon: Christian religious education perspective
Nancy Novitra Souisa, Faculty of Theology, Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku, Ambon Indonesia

This paper seeks to explore the challenges and transformation of Ambonese-Christian women’s roles during the crisis period by the pandemic Covid-19 through the perspective of Christian Religious Education which is manifested through the Church Formal Education by the Protestant Church of Maluku (Gereja Protestan Maluku – GPM).

Van Hillekamer
The Jain ritual of Sallekhanā: opportunity in the face of crisis
Gregory M. Clines, Assistant Professor of Religion, Trinity University, USA

Sallekhanā, it is argued, is a potent method of whittling away negative karma and one's attachments to ephemeral pleasures, including the body itself. Times of crisis are thus opportunities to undertake such an efficacious practice. This paper examines the rhetorical strategies that Jain authors have used to depict crisis events as opportunities to perform sallekhanā and thus achieve future karmic benefits.

Openness, commitment and confidence: an epistemological exploration in the nature of Christian commitment amidst alternative visions of the good life
Benno van den Toren, Professor Intercultural Theology, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, NL

Life in a religiously pluralist society invites Christians to openness to other renderings of the good life because of an awareness of the limitation of particular stances, a desire to be enriched, and a respect for others. This leads to a tension in interreligious encounter that is often explored as the relationship between ‘openness and commitment’ in interreligious dialogue. This tension can be equally applied to the
relationship between religious and non-religious perspectives to the good life. This paper wants to question this construal of the tension and argue that the way the tension between openness and commitment is understood is often unconsciously shaped by modern epistemological presuppositions, which do not do justice to the Christian understanding of the subject-position in relationship to God and God's salvific plan. It will therefore argue for ‘confidence and openness’ as an alternative to the pair ‘commitment and openness’ to guide dialogue between the Christian and alternative visions of the good life.

“He gives me a new name”
Heleen Joziasse, Independent scholar, The Hague, NL, Esther Mombo, Lecturer, Faculty of Theology, St. Paul’s University, Limuru, Kenya

The African Israel Nineveh Church (AINC) in Kenya is a community where church members “do” theology and Christian faith is lived out in everyday life. This paper focuses on how women in the INC frame the notion of ‘good life’ in relation to their everyday experiences and their faith experiences. Women narrate that amidst crises and life threatening circumstances of evil, disease, violence and economic hardships, they hold on to God who promotes and embodies life. The women in the AINC perceive the good life as a consequence of salvation in Jesus Christ, hence, their perception of ‘good life’ is anchored in their lived Christology.

How to discern the good life in religious speech? A digital-homiletical research perspective
Theo Pleizier, Lecturer Practical Theology, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, NL

Reception research demonstrates how in hearing sermons listeners become religiously involved. Yet how can we discern this communication of salvation and representation of the good life in the dimensions of the structure of the sermon or its content? How is salvation discourse related to references to human sin, suffering, misery and crisis? This paper is part of a larger project in computational theology to develop algorithms to study the sermon as religious discourse. Questions that will be addressed include: can we use existing methods like ‘topic modelling’ and ‘sentiment analysis’? Do we need to develop a specific theological specification for annotation? And, how are concepts of salvation and the good life connected to the semantics of crisis? During the paper session the challenges of computational research in theology will be explored.

Mapping experiences of good life in new faith communities
Bert Roor, Lecturer and Researcher, CHE = Christian University of Applied Sciences, Ede, NL, Evelien van Duffelen, Master Student Theological University, Kampen, NL

The focus of the Lectorate Theology of the CHE (Christian University of Applied Sciences in Ede - NL) lies on the understanding and communication of ‘salvation’ in emerging faith communities, which aim at contributing to the good life of their participants. What do participants experience when they get involved? In what ways is their participation meaningful to them? To map the answers, we developed a holistic model of eight dimensions of meaning based on modern perspectives in spiritual healthcare (‘Positive Health’ of Machteld Huber and ‘The Diamant Model’ of Carlo Leget). How does this ‘Compass of Meaning’ help in the hermeneutical challenge to understand the impact of (new) faith communities on the lives of people?

Anybody called to work? Empirically testing and refining the work-as-vocation theology
Jan Scheele-Goedhart, External Ph.D. Student, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, NL; Pastor Protestant Church Vijfhuizen, NL; Senior Researcher RIGO Research en Advies, NL

This paper will advance the debate on the relevance of the concept of vocation in three ways. First, reviewing the existing literature on vocation it will operationalize the different theological arguments for the practice of work and workers. Though in most of the literature the concept of vocation is used in a theoretical manner, the concept definitely implies a number of attitudes or convictions that may be analysed empirically. In order to make such an empirical analysis of the concept of vocation viable, a
necessary first step is the operationalisation of the concept; and besides, operationalisation might elucidate 
the commonalities and differences between the various understandings of ‘vocation’. Second, empirical data 
on the interaction between faith and work will be used to analyse to what extent the different operational 
aspects of the theological concept of vocation can be seen to be operative in practice. For this analysis, 
transcripts of interviews with working Protestant churchgoers will be used. Finally, the empirical data on 
vocational understanding of work will be brought in dialogue with the biblical- and systematic-theological 
discourses on work and vocation in order to advance the theological reflection on work in general and, more 
specifically, the theological understanding of vocation.

Mackenzie

Between conservation and transformation in Zambian religious responses to the pandemic
Johanneke Kroesbergen-Kamps, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Pretoria (until 31 December 2021); 
Lecturer, Radboud University, Nijmegen, NL

Religion can inspire people to make radical changes in their life if the circumstances demand it. In my paper, I will 
look at the response to the pandemic in live-streamed sermons from pastors in the Reformed Church in Zambia.

Diaconal work during the Covid-19 crisis
Erica Meijers, Lecturer Diaconal Studies, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, NL, Thijs Tromp, 
Professor Diaconal Studies for the Rotterdam Foundation, Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam, NL

The covid 19 crisis strongly affected groups who already have a bigger chance to be confronted with poverty 
and exclusion. What did it mean to their ways of survival and their fragile networks as the Covid 19 pandemic 
came along? And how did diaconal organizations reaching out to these groups reacted to this? What can we 
learn from their experiences about the Good Life in our society? This paper explores this question from a 
diaconal theological perspective. It is based on interviews with leading staff members of diaconal organizations 
in the Netherlands during the first, second and fourth wave of Corona.

A missional ecclesiology for discerning the good life
Marten van der Meulen, Lecturer Sociology of Religion, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, NL, 
Jonna Bakker, Specialist Missional Presence Protestant Church in The Netherlands. MA Student Protestant 
Theological University, Groningen, NL

The church should help people to follow Jesus in the radical and unruly life of loving God with your whole 
heart and your neighbour as yourself. However, church as we know it doesn't live up to this calling. Part of 
the problem is the current (Protestant) ecclesiology. Churches are geared toward providing faith, under-
stood as a verbal message, on Sundays by well-trained ministers and musicians. The individual is however 
left on his or her own when it comes to the imitatio Christi in daily life. We researched examples of churches 
that do things differently. These churches are places where the good life with God is practiced. They are 
located at the margins of society, where people experience the crises of our late modern society, such as 
loneliness, poverty and exclusion. We argue that in these places the work of the Spirit can be discerned and 
the beginnings of an ecclesiology that challenges people to follow Jesus can be found.

Online (Group 1)

Enduring the present in hope: the theo-political visions of William Still and Maria Stewart
Daniel Lee Hill, Assistant Professor of Theological Studies Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, USA

In this essay, I retrieve the theo-political visions of 19th century abolitionists William Still and Maria Stewart 
in order to demonstrate how a multivalent approach to the Christian practice of ascesis enables both the 
hopeful endurance of crisis as well as an active preparation for continuing to pursue human flourishing in 
the event of its ultimate end.
New prophecy and New Jerusalem: A Christian eschatology in response to crisis
Gyula Homoki, Ph.D. Student Systematic Theology, Károli Gáspár University, Budapest; Associate Lecturer, Sárospatak Reformed Theological Academy, Hungary

In the second half of the 2nd century CE Christians, no less than their pagan neighbours, experienced a heightened amount of crisis: plagues struck the Mediterranean causing the death of a significant number of the population, earthquakes created upheaval among the people and barbarian invasions threatened the stability of the empire resulting a general lack of discomfort in the society. Moreover, the sporadic persecution of the members of the Church intensified the discomfort of many Christians. In this context was born the Christian prophetic movement called New Prophecy (later: Montanism). One of the major accusations against the founders of the movement was their eschatological novelty by which they named two insignificant towns in Phrygia “New Jerusalem” and gathered their community there.

Juxtaposing Towb and Malu: mother-tongue reading on Genesis 1 and brief exploration on implication for the good life
Risaw Walis, Ph.D. Student, School of Philosophy, Religion and the History of Science, University of Leeds, UK

This presentation will employ a mother-tongue biblical reading approach to read Genesis 1 and discuss the theological meaning of the Towb (good) and Malu. It is hoped to juxtapose the Sediq concept of Malu with the biblical concept of Towb and try to produce a new contextual reflection regarding the meaning of the good life that can provide alternative narratives for the contemporary contextual crises.

Online (Group 2)
Ungrounded life – blackness at the end of the world
Antavius Franklin, Ph.D. Student, Fordham University, USA

Attending to the disentanglement of ‘the good life’ and black life, this essay explores the inability of theological and philosophical categories to define that which is ‘good’ for black life. Following Calvin Warren’s assertion that black life is negated in the utterance of its affirmation and further noting that black life is not secured on any metaphysical grounds, this essay argues alongside Warren’s project of black nihilism that the crisis of the good life exists insofar as black life is always in crisis, meaning that there exist no ontological grounds for black life.

Facing existential crisis, resourcing inclusive spiritualities: a case-study at the confluence of anthropology and philosophy (2 consecutive papers)
Geneviève Souillac, Assistant Professor, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of North Carolina, Greensboro NC, USA, Douglas P. Fry, Professor and Chair, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of North Carolina, Greensboro NC, USA

In these two consecutive papers, we first draw from the theological hermeneutics of French Protestant philosopher Paul Ricoeur, highlighting the possibilities for a hermeneutics of both text and culture in times of crisis, and the enduring relevance of the emphasis placed by Ricoeur on engagement with culture and heritage as forms of civic action. Second, we consider select ethnographic accounts of peace-oriented cosmologies to suggest avenues for deepening an ecumenical dialogue across Christian and indigenous world-views on social resilience. We examine how to bring into conversation indigenous peace-making and cosmologies with phenomenological hermeneutics concerned with engaging a redemptive reading of humanity's place in the world. The aim of this endeavor is to sharpen a post-secular language of spiritual, social and ecological resilience at the crossroads of ecology and peace goals. In this configuration, we conclude, evidence-based anthropological science allows for the diversity of forms of cosmological heritage to dismantle existing borders across modern, premodern and postmodern epistemologies.
How to get to and from Vrijburg Amsterdam

The map below shows the location of our conference venue Vrijburg at Diepenbrockstraat 46 in Amsterdam. Vrijburg is easily accessible by public transport (your exit: Stadionweg bus or tram stop).

**By tram:**
- From Amsterdam Central Station, you can take tram 5 or tram 24.
- From Amsterdam Zuid train station, you can take tram 5.

**By bus:**
- From Amsterdam Amstel train station and from Amsterdam Zuid train station, you can take bus 65.

**On foot:**
- You can reach Vrijburg within fifteen minutes from Amsterdam Zuid train station. The walk to and from Amsterdam Zuid train station will take you through a lovely park nearby.
- You can reach Vrijburg within 10 minutes from Europaplein metro station.

There is a park across from to the Vrijburg venue to enjoy a walk in between sessions.
About the Protestant Theological University

We are the PThU. The Protestant Theological University. In close connection to the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, we investigate what Scripture, Christian traditions and faith practices contribute to finding meaning, justice and salvation.

So inspired, we train people to become theologians in the role of minister, chaplain, academic researcher or theological entrepreneur. People who are, like us, both deeply rooted and broadly oriented, both sharp-minded and rich in spirituality. People able to help others with life’s big questions, like: who am I, where do I come from and how do I lead a good life?

*We have faith. And because we have faith, we want to add knowledge.*

Our nationally and internationally highly qualified research seeks to answer current and timeless questions posed to us by church, academy and society. We work alongside various national and international universities, scientific institutes and churches.

We use our theological knowledge and experience to inspire and renew church, science and society. Our Knowledge Centre guides theologians in daily practice through refresher courses and advice.

*We seek wisdom. We are PThU.*