Presidential Newsletter December

Dear colleagues,

When I look out of my Norwegian window, white snow now lies in the garden and on the smaller roads nearby. It is cold, but also quiet. Christmas will be here in a few weeks in the richest part of the North. I see the winter landscape and think that practical theology is about nature as well as about what winter means for homeless people, very different than what people like me call home.

The IAPT Executive Committee has now completed its 6 months as a working community. The new by-laws (opening up application for membership instead of having to be recommended) and the concrete planning process for the next conference in Brazil are among the two main issues on the table. Together, these two will greatly impact the IAPT profile as we go South and invite new and younger colleagues to become members of our organization.

I welcome this development. In the first 6 months after the Oslo conference, we have received and accepted 10 new members. The criterion for full membership remains participation in the first conference, but the Executive Committee is thankful for the variety and the quality of the new members, a very good sign that the change of by-laws was a good decision. We will continue to promote membership and to make it known that application is now the new policy. There are also plans for disseminating more electronic information, such as sending mails to all nonmember participants in Oslo and other activities. I urge all IAPT members to disseminate and promote the new membership policy to other colleagues in their local context and as well as at any seminars and conferences you may visit. There is a simple form on the IAPT webpage to be used for applicants.

The Brazilian conference, entitled *(De)Coloniality and Religious Practices: Liberating Hope,* will surely be a very inspiring and important event. Our colleagues Valburga Schmiedt Streck and Julio Cezar Adam at the EST in Sao Leopoldo are proceeding very well in the planning process together with other colleagues from their institution and from other Brazilian and Latin-American institutions. In order to involve as many Latin American colleagues as possible and to strengthen the program, Valburga and Julio will host a smaller preconference seminar in Sao Leopoldo in April 2018. I and (probably) Tito Cruz (recently appointed as Dean and Professor of Practical Theology at Fordham, congratulations!) will be joining the seminar. There will also be meetings with the EST leaders and colleagues. I look forward to going and to experiencing the landscape and the context so very different from what is outside my Oslo window today.

I am certain that the experience and impact of IAPT South will be important and inspiring to all members. Therefore, please start the planning to join and also to convince fellow members to be there as well. The conference will offer a very good possibility for new members to have their first IAPT experience. We will keep you updated on the planning during the coming months.

At our last business meeting in Oslo, we decided to publish our conference volume with open access. The Executive Committee is working on implementing this decision. At the time of our meeting, we thought that LIT-Verlag would be able to offer us open access in addition to the traditional printed volumes. However, it soon became clear that the proposal by LIT-Verlag would not meet the licensing standards allowing the use of the contributions in our volume to have open access. After carefully considering all arguments, we decided that it is in our best interest to end our cooperation with LIT-Verlag and instead switch to a native open-access system, i.e., an Open Journal System (OJS). We think it is in the interest of all IAPT members that our conference volumes be easily accessible, and that using the texts for research and teaching purposes internationally under no circumstances infringe upon licensing rights. I am looking forward to providing more details about this decision in my next presidential letter. Our colleague Birgit Weyel is chairing this work in EC.

The system we selected provides all formal standards necessary for high-quality academic publications such as ISSN, a peer-review procedure ensuring and documenting the academic quality of each individual contribution, interfaces for transmitting metadata into library catalogues (e.g. IxTheo, ATLA Religion Database) and much more. Also, by utilizing printing on demand, this system still provides the possibility of having a printed volume.

The Editorial Committee for the Oslo conference volume is also keeping to its schedule. We received 26 papers before the deadline some weeks ago. I am sure this will be an interesting volume, which this time is being published as high-quality open access.

Some weeks ago I visited the AAR in Boston together with thousands of other colleagues. It was nice to visit some of the sessions with IAPT members and many other good practical theologians. Such meeting and sharing is always joyful and also academically important. Thanks to all of you for your comments, coffees and small-talk.

And finally: Christmas is soon upon us, both in the South and in the North. I wish you a blessed celebration and time for peace and family.

Warm wishes,

Trygve Wyller