
International Academy
of Practical Theology



www.ia-pt.org

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President's Newsletter, May 2007

Dear Colleagues

It is with great pleasure that I send you this first newsletter since our conference in Berlin. From March 30 to April 4, many of us met in the historical center of Berlin to discuss Practical Theology in the context of secularization. It is not easy to summarize the many meaningful exchanges, facilitated by the superb way Wilhelm Gräb and his team (especially Lars Charbonnier) had organized our meeting. We had clear and challenging presentations by our keynote speakers Hans Joas, Grace Davie, and our own Jaco Dreyer. Together they critiqued easy understandings of secularization and challenged us to reflect further on the contextual differences. The consequences for practical theology were discussed in several papers in the working group on the conference theme. Parallel to that, we had three working groups on practical theology and ministry formation, practical theology and liberating practice, and practical theology and empirical research. We have started to create room for these diverse discourses in our 2005 conference in Brisbane, and although we should probably not organize an entire conference along these lines, it does seem useful to deepen our conversations. We are considering the most fruitful approaches to stimulate the different discourses and the conversation on practical theology as a whole. Our next conference in Chicago 2009 will be another rich opportunity to meet and exchange. We will meet from July 30 to August 4, hosted by Ed Foley at CTU, and the conference theme will be Religion, Diversity, and Conflict. This theme not only reflects the religious and cultural context of Chicago, it is probably also one of the most pressing issues in our world and one worthy of practical theological reflection. More information of course will come in due time.

The logo on top of this newspaper was crafted by Lars Charbonnier for the conference. It is not an official logo at present, and I invite you to submit an alternative if you have one. I intend to use this one for the time being, because at least it symbolizes the international aspect (the round globe), an intention to expand our influence (the movement), and three directions in which we operate (without defining what these dimensions are).

Let me tell you a little bit more about the executive committee and its plans. The new executive committee will consist of the following people:

Ruard Ganzevoort – president
Claire Wofteich – vice-president
James Nieman – Secretary
Pamela Couture – Treasurer
Ed Foley – Conference host
Elaine Graham – member at large
Yolanda Dreyer – member at large

I can personally say that I am honored to be your president, and I have accepted the nomination in the confidence that this committee is really a strong team and I believe that together we can move the Academy further. In Berlin we expressed our gratitude to the members stepping down from office: Elaine Graham (fortunately staying on as 'past president', supporting the conference host), Eberhard Hauschildt, Abraham Berinyuu, and of course our host Wilhelm Gräb. An Academy as ours can only flourish when its members are willing to dedicate their time and creativity.

The first task of the new executive committee is to improve the internal structures of the Academy. We have grown from 7 founding members to our present size of 160, and that means that we need more formal and professional structures. Until now, members were expected to pay their dues at the conference, but the consequence was that we did not collect all the dues. Our treasurer, Pamela Couture, is working hard to set up a system for electronic payment so that we can start to collect dues even when members are not able to attend at a conference. We will inform you as soon as this is settled and ask you to pay your outstanding dues. We are also scrutinizing our membership list to identify members who have not attended two or more consecutive conferences. Our by-laws state that attendance is required to remain a member (unless one is retired), and we will contact those in default individually to clarify whether they want to remain members. Our intention is to enhance active membership, even if that means a somewhat smaller academy.

Another issue of membership regards the address list. For several members we do not have a proper e-mail address. To solve this, we need your help. Please check this list, and if there is a colleague on it for whom you have a working e-mail address, send it to James Nieman at secretary@ia-pt.org.

Arles, Nalini

Bremer, Margot

Corpas de Posada, Isabel

Greinacher, Norbert

Hastings, Thomas J

Henkys, Jürgen

Higueros, Mario F

Kang, Hee-Chun

Kim, Jae Eun

Nemeth, David

Nontawases, Prakai

Oh, Sung Choon

Park, Keun Won

Ploeger, Albert K

Potente, Antonieta

Preul, Reiner

Rau, Gerhard

Reymond, Bernard

Rössler, Dietrich

Sa, Mi Ja

Schmiedt Streck, Valburga

Tapia, Elizabeth

Tepedino, Ana Maria

Un, Joon Kwan

ZerfaB, Rolf

There are several other issues we are working on. We are developing contacts in Brazil (notably Valburga Schmiedt-Streck) to see if we can organize our 2011 conference there – an old intention to extend the Academy's connection to South and Central America. And we are exploring possibilities of developing regional activities, starting in Africa. This way we want to develop IAPT beyond our biannual meetings. We try to inform you on these issues in the near future.

I have also posted this newsletter on the website www.ia-pt.org under discussion board > newsletters. If there is anything you want to respond to, please do so on the discussion board or by e-mail. If you have any news you want to share with your colleagues, please use the discussion board as well. Your username is your last name and first initial (e.g., ganzevoortr) and the general password is iapt (you can change that if you want, but I don't think we need high security passwords for this discussion board).

For now, let me greet you on behalf of the executive committee and wish you all the best in your personal and professional life.

Sincerely

Ruard Ganzevoort
president