

Dear IAPT member

In South Africa we had a political party that advertised itself in the early years of democracy as “a home for all” South Africans. That sentiment was built upon notions of diversity and inclusion, so key to nation building at that time. Such calls are not without contestation and ambiguity, as noted when we wrestled with the theme of home for our conference in Canada April 2025 (the finalised title is: *(Be)Coming Home and (Re)Building Community in the Face of Displacement* – further info will be on our website soon) at the closing of our Seoul 2023 conference. The notion of home requires a recognition of past pain and possible exclusion, but is also filled with the hope of new possibilities and horizons – and in our case - the role practical theologians and religious practitioners at grassroots can play in providing alternative vistas of what home could be.

This metaphor could perhaps be appropriate for IAPT as an academic society as whole and while we, nevertheless, acknowledge the fact that it has not always been “home” for everyone, we commit to continuing to wrestle with the many different ways that home is understood and lived out by our diverse members both where they find themselves in context and within the space that is IAPT. As the new president I commit to holding space for contestation, new ideas and hopefully a growing and diverse membership that do not just feel included, but respected and valued for what you bring to the IZIKO (an isiXhosa word for “hearth” in one of our 11 South African official languages). The hearth in amaXhosa culture is traditionally and symbolically the social centre of the home, a place associated with warmth, kinship and has spiritual significance – a place where stories are told, knowledge shared and important cultural traditions take place (rituals, dance, ceremonies). It is also a hub for many activities.

In the run up to our next conference in Nova Scotia, Canada, in 2025, my hope is that IAPT be a hub where warmth, kinship, stories and knowledge is shared across generational, field specific scholarship and geographical borders. As the new executive committee we hope to serve the IAPT community by holding this space. Please read more about our new executive committee members here <https://www.ia-practicaltheology.org/organization/>

Part of this endeavour in the past few months has been to begin to review our communication strategy and website as well as to explore ways to stay connected between conferences by creating a hub/hearth for networking, sharing of ideas and engagement. Please also do let us know if your name is not on the website page or is incorrectly listed by contacting our secretary, Tom Beaudoin, at: tbeaudoin@fordham.edu This is a going exercise for us. Please also inform us if and when you change institutions and email addresses as well as ideas for creating a more inclusive hearth.

As we look towards planning our next gathering as a society, a sincere word of thanks once again to our organising committee of the Korea 2023 conference for welcoming us with warmth and generosity in the ‘land of the tiger’. Please note that the keynote videos from our Korea Conference are on the website for viewing or can be accessed via this link. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLaoEvdsJNfxEXjemrzyARGWavn7Us8IKC> and also on our website.

Finally, congratulations to Annemie Dillen, her team and colleagues who contributed to it—the Leuven publication entitled: *Coping with Crisis: hospitality, security, and the search for faithful connections* is now on our website and can be downloaded at: <https://iaptcs.org/ojs/index.php/iaptcs/issue/view/94/96>

Looking forward to engagement around the hearth (IZIKO),

Nadine Bowers du Toit

President