

“What can we learn from
the book of Acts
about being a Missional Church?”



CONFERENCE 18~20 MAY 2009



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***A joint project of the Faculty of Theology,
Stellenbosch University and Communitas
2009-2011***

Background

At the heart of being church lies the command of Christ: Go then ... And through the ages the church has discovered that if the church reaches out, it lives.

But just like the congregations in Acts, the church is becoming more and more aware of the complexity of the task of being a missional church. On the one hand it entails a responsible knowledge and understanding of the Bible. On the other hand it involves being practice-orientated.

Communitas and the Faculty of Theology are hosting a three-day conference on the theme “*What can we learn from the book of Acts about being a Missional Church?*” from 18-20 May 2009. The conference will launch research groups that will work on seven themes in the Book of Acts over a period of three years. The project aims at bringing together two major discussions within the context of theology and church practice: a) the concern that the reflection on Biblical perspectives regarding church and church practice is often selective; and b) the need to acknowledge the value of thorough research and understanding of the Bible for the church and church practice.

Two internationally recognised New Testament scholars, Proff Beverly Gaventa (Princeton Theological Seminary) and Scot McKnight (North Park University, Chicago) will be the main speakers at the conference. Local New Testament scholars, missiologists and church ministers who are part of the missional church movement, will also participate.

Seven **study groups** will assemble at the conference to explore **seven important themes in Acts**, learning lessons for today from the way in which these issues were dealt with in the book of Acts. The following themes have been identified:

1. What do we learn about congregations and congregational life in *Acts* (cf. *congregational images; editorial remarks in Acts; speeches; turning moments; guidance by the Holy Spirit; organisation; healthy congregations; etc.*)
2. *Church unity and diversity in Acts* (inclusiveness and multiculturalism; diversity; etc.)
3. *Missionary programme and strategies in Acts* (sending out; Paul’s method; plan and intention; Acts as founding document for mission; challenge and change; etc)
4. *Leadership in Acts* (apostolate; discipleship; etc.)
5. *Conversion and salvation in Acts* (identity; conversion; transformation; christening; ethics))
6. “*Empire*” and economic justice in *Acts* (contextualisation; social conventions; relationship with broad culture; faith in post-/contra-cultural set-up; etc.)
7. *Acts of the living God* (Missio Dei; gospel)

Church ministers and academics who wish to participate in this project are invited to join one of the study groups. The groups will have the opportunity to report on and organise their themes during the conference.

Church members and congregations will also be involved in the project. At least two projects are already under way: A group is working on a programme for congregations to read through Acts in the course of one year, including ministries and small groups in the process. A 40 day programme for congregations is also in the first phase of preparation.

You are cordially invited to become involved by:

- Attending the conference in Stellenbosch on 18-20 May 2009.
- Join the study group of your choice for an opportunity to participate in and contribute to the conversations mentioned above.



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Key Note Speakers

Prof Beverly Gaventa is presently at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton NJ, USA.

The title of her first paper is: Power Matters: Leadership and Decision-Making in the Acts of the Apostles

Luke's second volume is often read as an early manual for church leadership, with a focus on the roles of Peter and Paul. Yet Luke is less interested in human leaders than he is in the church's proper acknowledgment of the power of God and the church conforming to God's own will and plan. This presentation will focus on the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and the events that lead up to it in order to understand what Luke has to teach us about leadership and decision-making.

The title of her second paper is: Luke's Story of Paul: Witness and Pastor

For an earlier generation of New Testament scholars, "the Lukan Paul" conjured up the question of how Luke's treatment of Paul conforms to (or fails to conform to) the Paul of the letters. Current interest in the narrative world created by Acts raises a different question, namely, what sort of story does Luke tell? This presentation will consider the recurrent image of Paul as a persecutor of the church, together with the identification of Paul as a "witness" and finally as a "pastor." Attention will be given especially to the Miletus speech in Acts 20 and its interpretation of Paul's work.

Prof Scot McKnight, presently at North Park University, Chicago IL, USA.

The title of his first paper is: The story of Salvation and Kingdom Community in Luke-Acts

This presentation will focus on the narrative arc from Mary's Magnificat and Zechariah's Benedictus and Acts 2 and 4 as framing the nature of communal salvation as kingdom

community in Luke-Acts. It will also trace the trajectory established by Magnificat through Luke's narrative descriptions of Jesus' ministry as shaped by that narrative arc. It will present a theory of "salvation" as "kingdom community" so that salvation is not reduced to personal experience but social reality in this world. This kingdom community of Luke-Acts shapes what "missional" work means today.

The title of his second paper is: The "Gospel Preaching" of the Preachers in Acts

What is the gospel in Luke-Acts? Is it a gospel of personal redemption or is it bigger and broader than what happens to a person? The gospel of preaching of Peter and Paul, esp as seen in Acts 2, 10, 14, and 17, will be sketched as an early depiction of what "gospel preaching" is: the declaration of God's Story of Israel as fulfilled in Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit, and the need to enter into that Story through repentance (from sins) and faith (in Jesus as Messiah). He will suggest that the preaching of Acts is paradigm for gospel preaching today.

Prof JNJ (Klippies) Kritzinger presently at the Department of Missiology, University of South Africa.

The title of his paper is: Zaccheus, Ananias and Barnabas: Profiles of reconciling mission in Luke-Acts

A number of missiological scholars (Schreiter, Longmead, Kim) recently proposed that reconciliation should be a (or the) central theme for Christian mission in the 21st century. Whatever one's judgment on their specific proposals, it is clear that reconciliation is sorely needed in South Africa (and the world) today. It is also clear that reconciliation between people is at the heart of the Christian message, particularly as interpreted in

contextual South African theologies like Black Theology and the Belhar Confession of the URCSA. It is further clear that Luke-Acts presents a number of reconciling figures who can be interpreted in South Africa as paradigmatic for Christians who wish to engage in reconciling mission today. Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10) presents us with reconciliation as restitution, Ananias (Acts 9:10-19) with reconciliation as forgiveness of the former enemy, and Barnabas (Acts 9:26-30) with a proactive initiative to heal broken relationships and build trust among estranged believers. This paper presents a contextual reading of the three passages in the South African context, to develop the three profiles into workable approaches or strategies of reconciliation-with-justice.

Prof Christoph Stenschke, pastor-lecturer at the Missionshaus Bibelschule Wiedenest, Germany and professor extraordinary at the Department of New Testament, University of South Africa .

The title of his paper is: Mission in Acts as the mission of the church.

Mission in early Christianity and in the Book of Acts is often understood to be the mission of the Hellenists, of Peter and obviously of Paul. And surely this is where the author's emphasis lies. Yet upon closer scrutiny it becomes clear that the mission of these protagonists is rooted in the mission of the church(es) to which they belonged. Thus it can be claimed that mission in the Book of Acts is the mission of the Jerusalem community to the ends of the earth. From Israel re-gathered and restored the message of salvation goes forth to the Gentiles. This paper carefully examines this neglected evidence, briefly compares the picture of Acts with other New Testament contributions and suggest its present day significance.

Study Groups

1. What do we learn about congregations and congregational life in Acts (*cf. congregational images; editorial remarks in Acts; speeches; turning moments; guidance by the Holy Spirit; organisation; healthy congregations; etc.*)
Group Leader: Dr. Frederick Marais
Leading proposals: Prof. David Seccombe
2. Church unity and diversity in Acts (*inclusiveness and multiculturalism; diversity; etc.*)
Group Leader: Dr. Johan Botha
Leading proposal: Dr. Francois Wessels
3. Missionary programme and strategies in Acts (*sending out; Paul's method; plan and intention; Acts as founding document for mission; challenge and change; etc*)
Group Leader: Prof. Nelus Niemandt
Leading proposal: Prof. Nelus Niemandt and Mr. Byeong Hei Jun
4. Leadership in Acts (*apostolate; discipleship; etc.*)
Group Leader: Dr. Marius Nel
Leading proposal: Dr. Ian Nell
5. Conversion and salvation in Acts (*identity; conversion; transformation; christg; ethics; etc.*)
Group Leader: Dr Johann du Plessis.
Leading proposal: Prof. Dirk van der Merwe
6. "Empire" and economic justice in Acts (*contextualisation; social conventions; relationship with broad culture; faith in post-/contra-cultural set-up; etc.*)
Group Leader: Prof. Jeremy Punt
Leading proposal: Prof Jeremy Punt
7. Acts of the living God (*Missio Dei; gospel*)
Group Leader: Dr. Coenie Burger
Leading proposal: Dr. Christof Sauer

Accepted Proposals

1) **Dr Christof Sauer**; Cape Town Bureau, International Institute for Religious Freedom Bonn - Cape Town – Colombo

“Missio Dei and Compassio Dei. Minority Christians experiencing God's acts in the face of hostility”

2) **Dr G Francois Wessels**; Minister Cape Peninsula Reformed Congregation (CPRC) and research fellow of the Department of Old and New Testament, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University

“The unity of the local and translocal church in Acts as a missiological strategy in Acts”

3) **Mr Byeong Hei Jun (Ph.D.)**

“Lessons from the Book of Acts for the church missionary work in an Islamic context: An assessment of the commentary on the subject for Christian workers doing pioneer work by Greg Livingstone”

4) **Prof Dirk van der Merwe**, Department of New Testament and Early Christian Studies, University of South Africa

“Understanding the ideological conjunction of ‘magic’, ‘miracle’ and ‘gospel’ in the acts of the apostles to attest to the power of the gospel over evil”

5) **Prof David Seccombe**, Principal of George Whitefield College and affiliate professor of New Testament, North-West University

“Luke’s Missionary In-tensions”

6) **Dr Ian Nell**, Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University

“Leadership in Acts – through the lens of social capital”

7) **Prof Nelus Niemandt**, Department of Missiology, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria

“Input offered by Acts; implications for missional church”

Dr Eddie Germiquet, Ministry Secretary, United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) / NT Research Fellow, Stellenbosch University

“Luke’s Journey Narrative: Gateway to the raising up and empowering of the Followers of the Way”

8) **Prof Jeremy Punt**, Department Old and New Testament, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University

“Countervailing ‘missionary’ forces: Empire and Church in Acts”

Registration and Conference Fees

Any interested person is welcome to attend this conference. You do not need to be a member of any of the participating academic societies. Please complete the attached registration form and send it to the conference organisers. Your registration form and payment of conference fees must be received by 30 April 2009 while late registration will be allowed until 7 May 2009. Conference fees cover various administrative costs as well as daily refreshments (teas), copies of the conference programme and the book of abstracts and the conference dinner, which will be a snoekbraai at Kanonkop. Please note that the conference fees do not include accommodation, meals or transport from and to the airport. Day visitors may register on-site (until 9h30 each day) and will be required to pay a daily registration fee of R100 and R120 for the conference dinner. Please indicate on the registration form.

Accommodation

Registered participants are responsible for arranging their own accommodation. There are numerous options for accommodation in the Stellenbosch region. Please consult the following website for information: www.tourismstellenbosch.co.za. Please note that the organisers will not provide transport to and from the conference venue at 171 Dorp Street.

Persons with Special Needs

You are welcome to contact the conference organisers (see the registration form for details) if you need specific assistance with access, accommodation and transport due to a disability.

Parking

Limited parking is available. Options include the banks of the Eersterivier or the parking area east of the faculty premises in The Avenue.

Transport from and to Cape Town International Airport

The organisers have negotiated a reduced rate for transport between Cape Town International Airport and the conference venue on Monday 18 May and Wednesday 20 May with the company CitiHopper. Please contact them directly at reservations@citihopper.co.za or Tel +27 21 386 0077/8 and use the reference "Acts Conference 2009" in your correspondence to qualify for the reduced rate. You also need to indicate your flight details and your time of arrival. The company will provide you with a quotation and payment details.

Missionary Church in Acts Programme for May 2009 conference

	Monday 18 May		Tuesday 19 May		Wednesday 20 May
9h00-9h45 9h45-10h00	<i>Registration Welcome (Dr CW Burger)</i>	9h00-10h30	Plenary 3: Prof S McKnight	9h00-10h30	Plenary 5: Prof C Stenschke
10h00-11h30	Plenary 1: Prof B Gaventa	10h30-11h00	<i>Tea</i>	10h30-11h00	<i>Tea</i>
11h30-13h00	Plenary 2: Prof K Kritzingner	11h00-12h30	Plenary 4: Prof B Gaventa	11h00-12h30	Plenary 6: Prof S McKnight
13h00-14h00	<i>Lunch</i>	12h30-14h00	<i>Lunch</i>	12h30-1400	<i>Farewell / Lunch</i>
14h00-15h30	Parallel: Groups 1-3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction & Group Leader Presentation (relevance/actuality of theme; input offered by Acts; implications for missional church) • Gr 1 Paper: Dr F Marais (Group leader) • Gr 2 Paper: Dr J Botha (Group leader) • Gr 3 Paper: Prof N Niemandt (Group leader & Paper) Group Discussions	14h00-15h30	Parallel: Groups 4-7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction & Group Leader Presentation (relevance/actuality of theme; input offered by Acts; implications for missional church) • Gr 4 Paper: Dr M Nel (Group leader) • Gr 5 Paper: Dr J du Plessis (Group leader) • Gr 6 Paper: Prof J Punt (Group leader) • Gr 7 Paper: Dr C Burger (Group leader) Group Discussions	DEPARTURE	
15h30-16h00	<i>Tea</i>	15h30-16h00	<i>Tea</i>		
16h00-17h30	Parallel: Groups 1-3 (c'tnd) Group Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gr 1 Paper: Prof D Seccombe • Gr 2 Paper: Dr F Wessels • Gr 3 Paper: Mr B Jun Group Discussions Future planning (groups)	16h00-17h30	Parallel: Groups 4-7 (c'tnd) Group Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gr 4 Paper: Dr I Nell • Gr 5 Paper: Prof D v/d Merwe • Gr 6 Paper: Prof J Punt • Gr 7 Paper: Dr C Sauer Group Discussions Future planning (groups)		
		18h00-21h00	<i>Conference dinner</i>		