
“Grace, Space and Race: Towards a theology of place in (South) Africa today”**First Call for Papers****2008 Annual Meeting****Date: Wednesday 18 June – Friday 20 June 2008****Venue: College of Transfiguration, Grahamstown**

The 2008 annual meeting of the **Theological Society of South Africa** will focus on the notion of “place” in the South African context. You are hereby invited to submit a proposal for a paper related to this theme.

Over the last decades an increasing recognition of the significance of one’s particular context for theological reflection has emerged. This is expressed in categories such as “contextual theology”, “local theology”, “theology as biography” and a “theology of place”. The notion of “place” here includes connotations such as home, topography, rootedness, location, safe spaces and environment. A theology of place was probably first articulated in ecumenical literature by the Native American Lutheran scholar George Tinker who emphasised the rootedness of all forms of life as well as the relationship between the issues of ecology (inhabited space) and justice (the control over space). The recognition of the significance of place may also be understood within the context of the recognition of several other factors shaping theological reflection, including history (the “historical turn”), interpretation (the “hermeneutical turn”), language (the “linguistic turn”) and social context in terms of gender, race, class and education (the sociological turn).

The conference theme encourages us to reflect on the significance of the notion of place for doing theology in the South African context – where the control of space has always been highly contested. Clearly issues of space and race are here inseparable from one another. The following suggestions for more specific topics may be of assistance for you:

- How should we respond to the migration of people within the African context – with reference to issues such as the lasting impact of relocation under apartheid, urbanisation, the influx of people from other African countries, the xenophobia associated with that and the African diaspora?
- Where do we stand with a theology of land in the South African context? How can churches contribute to the redistribution of land? What about land owned by the churches? What can Christians contribute to reflection on the proper stewardship of the land? How are we employing categories such as dominion, stewardship, housekeeping, and earthkeeping?
- How can we address the need for safe spaces and a sense of being at home within the context of crime, gangsterism and violence against women and children? What is the role of churches in this regard?
- What contributions can we gather in terms of the role of topography in our theological reflections, for example with reference to holy ground, mission stations, church buildings and cathedrals?
- What role does and should affirmative action play in terms of the control over contested space?

Please note the following:

- Any person is eligible to participate in the programme. You do not need to be a member of the TSSA. Scholars and postgraduate students from other countries in Africa and from other continents are warmly encouraged to submit paper proposals.
- The TSSA cannot support speakers financially, e.g. to cover costs for transport, accommodation or conference fees.
- Please indicate whether you would wish your paper to be considered for a plenary or for a parallel session. Plenary sessions should be presented in English, while parallel sessions may also be presented in other languages.
- Papers on topics other than the conference theme will also be considered for parallel sessions. You are also invited to submit proposals for doing a book review on recent publications by members of the TSSA.

Please send the title of your proposal, together with a short abstract of 100-200 words describing the content of the proposed paper and your personal contact details to the conference secretary at the address mentioned below. A second Call for Papers will go out in January 2008. Please note the following relevant dates in this regard:

- Final date for submission of paper proposals: 28 February 2008
- Confirmation of papers and first draft of the conference programme: 31 March 2008.
- Final conference programme and practical details regarding conference to be distributed by 30 April 2008.

We are looking forward to welcoming you at the 2008 Annual Meeting.

Sincerely,

Ernst Conradie (Conference secretary: Theological Society of South Africa)