

IBTSC Newsletter September 2017

It's been a busy time at IBTSC Centre over the past months, so we felt the best way to bring students, supervisors, supporters and friends up to date was to provide a summary in a newsletter. Here's what's been happening.

New Home



The Baptist House, Postjesweg 150, 1061 AX Amsterdam

In July we moved offices to the new Baptist House. Anyone who has visited remarks on the wonderful job the architects have done creating a multipurpose, multifunction building which is finished to a high standard. We love working in the new accommodation and are very grateful to Albrecht Boerrigter, General Secretary of the Dutch Baptist Union, for overseeing the project. Marianne our administrator spent many hours working on design and materials for

the fitting out of the Baptist House and is always happy to give a guided tour of the facilities.

New Challenges

In July we learned that Stuart Blythe would be taking up a new post at Acadia Divinity School in Nova Scotia, Canada by the end of September. He will be greatly missed. As John Weaver, Chair of the IBTSC Board, commented at a farewell presentation to Stuart and Susanne, 'Stuart has achieved a great deal in the three years he held the position of Rector. He has shaped and managed the new institution with the support of only two part-time staff for most of his time as Rector. In that time he has embedded IBTSC within the VU, overseen the growth of the PhD programme, managed the relationship with Manchester and with the Dutch Union and Seminary. Stuart leaves IBTSC in a strong position.'



Stuart and Susanne Blythe

Under Stuart's leadership and direction we have more PhD students than at any time in the history of IBTSC/IBTSC with the biggest intake of students (7 potential PhD and 1 Masters) for some years. We wish Stuart and Susanne well for the years ahead in Canada. The Board of IBTSC are now engaged in the task of finding Stuart's successor.

New Shelves



New library shelves waiting patiently for the books

In August the shelving arrived for the new IBTSC library at the Baptist House. Although the footprint of the library space is less, the specialist shelving company with which we have been working have managed to create more shelf space and with very attractive shelving. We are deeply grateful to Roy van Gestel of Bruynzeel Shelving and to Pieter van Wingerden our librarian for creating an attractive, functional working environment in the new library.

New Students

August 28 was the first day of the intensive teaching period for new students. This year we welcomed seven students on the postgraduate certificate – the preliminary study for progression to the PhD programme – and one Masters student. The group was made up of people from Africa, North America, Spain, England and Scotland. During the first week Stuart Blythe, Toivo Pilli, Rupen Das, David and Dorothy McMillan all shared the teaching. Parush Parushev and Tim Noble taught the second week of the programme. We look forward to seeing these new students joining the existing student body at the annual colloquium in January 2018.

New Start



Albrecht Boerrigter

Friday September 1 was the official opening of the new Baptist House. Albrecht Boerrigter had arranged a programme for the day with the intention of including all of those participating in the life of the House. Discussion groups met, ribbons were cut, speeches made and food provided from a mobile wood-fired pizza unit.

On Saturday September 2 families, friends, contractors and others met in the afternoon to view the completed renovations, for more ribbon cutting and presentations to mark the completion of the building.



John Weaver, Chair of the IBTSC Board cutting one of the ribbons



Freshly made pizzas at the Baptist House



Prof. Henk Bakker

New Chair

A highlight of September 1 celebrations was the signing of an agreement by the partners in the new McClendon Chair. Holder of the Chair, Prof Henk Bakker said:

‘At the onset of the third millennium McClendon’s theology proves even more beneficial and relevant than decades before, because in the present demise of grand narrative of the church, Christian life should be spoken of in terms of diaspora ecclesiology. The church is, and will become, a social-religious minority. Hence, Christianity will not predominantly be studied as a historical and dogmatic reality, but as a lived conviction and a lived religion.’

Professor Ruard R. Ganzevoort, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Theology of Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, one of the signatories, said, ‘With its name, the McClendon Chair refers to a type of theology that is thoroughly academic and profoundly practical, radically baptistic and courageously ecumenical. It will produce scholarship that takes seriously the challenges of our world.’

Stuart Blythe commented that ‘McClendon's work offers an international, ecumenical, yet, distinctly confessional approach to doing theology. IBTSC itself promotes research in this area and sees this Chair as an opportunity to develop further collaborative learning, teaching, and research with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam into this particular expression of the Free Church tradition.’



Manuel and Rosa Martínez

New Doctors

September 5 saw two more successful promotions at the VU, bringing the total to three in 2017 and eight in the three years of IBTSC Amsterdam’s existence. Manuel Martínez ably defended his thesis *Juan de Valdés (c.1490-1541): in Light of his Religious Background* and Andrew Dyck did likewise on his thesis, *Praying Like the Catholics: The Place of Contemplative Practices within Canadian Mennonite Brethren Life*.

We anticipate there will be a fourth PhD defence later in the year and several in 2018.

The total number of students enrolled on the PhD programme and the preregistration PhD postgraduate certificate programme now stands at forty. IBTSC has grown substantially over the past three years and we are hugely grateful to those who partner with us and support us financially.



Andrew Dyck with Prof Ruard Ganzevoort

New Conference

IBTSC International Conference

'Evangelicals and Oppression: Eastern European Perspectives'

18 – 20 April 2018

The conference explores the topic 'Evangelicals and Oppression' in a wide-ranging way and from different angles: oppression that Eastern European Evangelicals have met in their history; elements of oppression that Evangelicals have created themselves in relation to other groups or within their own church life; conflict and community; religious freedom and political pressures; Biblical interpretation and persecution in Evangelical life; spiritual practices in times of persecution and oppression; reception of and reactions to oppression and tensions; practices of forgiveness in historical perspective.

Dr Walter Sawatsky will be a key note speaker at the conference and submissions of papers for consideration (to last no more than 30 minutes in delivery) are welcome. We plan to publish some of the conference papers in a separate volume or in the IBTSC Amsterdam journal *Baptistic Theologies*.

If you are interested in presenting a paper, please send the title and a short description for consideration to: Dr Toivo Pilli (toivo@kolmtalenti.ee) before 15 January 2018. For further information and for registration by 15 March 2018, contact Dr Pilli. You can also register online at: <http://bit.ly/2fl1qnl>

Participants are responsible for their travel and accommodation arrangements. A limited number of travel scholarships are available for participants from Eastern Europe, depending on the number of applications.

New Opportunities

The 2016 Annual Report will be presented at the **IBTSC annual meeting on 21 September 2017**. It will then be available on our website www.ibts.eu providing more details of the life and work of the institution.

IBTSC aspires to deliver high quality theological education and research from a baptistic perspective in an international context developing research, researchers, educators, and leaders who can serve the mission and ministry of churches in Europe, the Middle East and beyond. IBTSC is a collaborative partner within the Faculty of Theology of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

We are grateful to God for all his goodness to us and we value the prayerful and financial support of many organisations and individuals who share our vision for IBTSC of equipping leaders and conducting research that can aid the Christian church in its mission and ministry in Europe and beyond through internationally focused, European based, baptistic theological education. IBTSC's primary areas of research and education lie in Anabaptist/Baptist histories and theologies, Missiology, and Practical Theology – [Identity](#), [Mission](#) and [Practice](#). We think there's much more to come in the IBTSC story.

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