SEXUAL REFORMATION?
THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL REFLECTION ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

6-7 MAY 2019
HOFMEYR LECTURE ROOM (2003), FACULTY OF THEOLOGY,
STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

MONDAY, 6 MAY 2019

08:00 – 08:45  Registration
08:45 – 09:00  Welcome and arrangements (Nina Müller van Velden, North-West University)
09:00 – 09:15  Welcome (Reggie Nel, Dean of Faculty of Theology)
09:15 – 10:00  Session 1: Keynote speaker: Nontando Hadebe (St Augustine College)
   ‘Nailing the theses?’ The crisis of the sexual abuse scandal as catalyst for reform in the Catholic Church
   (Chair: Manitza Kotzé)

10:00 – 11:00  Session 2: Ashwin Thyssen (Stellenbosch University)
   Swipe right for love
   Session 3: Ronel Koch (University of the Western Cape)
   We want to be set free, but you hold the key. Girls’ cry for adults’ assistance in sexual emancipation
   (Chair: Selina Palm)
11:00 – 11:15  Refreshments
11:15 – 12:45  Session 4: Gideon Kotzé (North-West University)
   Reproduction and the Responsibility of Royal Representation: A Reading of Genesis 1:26-28
   Session 5: Ntozakhe Cezula (Stellenbosch University)
   Theology on Gender Reformation for the (South) African Reconstruction Process:
   Perceptions from Exodus 21:7 and Deuteronomy 15:12 & 17
   Session 6: Juliana Claassens (Stellenbosch University)
   Voicing Reproductive Loss: Rachel’s Cry in Conversation with The Light Between Two Oceans
   (Chair: Renata van Dijk-Coombes)
12:45 – 14:00  LUNCH
14:00 – 15:30

**Session 7:** Manitza Kotzé (North-West University)

*Mothering as sacred duty and metaphor: The theology of Mercy Oduyoye*

**Session 8:** Koos Vorster (North-West University)

*Theological perspectives on the essentials of human life*

**Session 9:** Tanya van Wyk (University of Pretoria)

*Revisiting the church’s moral authority on sexual ethics: Is it a case for reform or a time to retreat?*

(Chair: Yolanda Dreyer)

15:30 – 15:45

**Refreshments**

15:45 – 17:15

**Session 10:** Sindi Sithole (University of KwaZulu Natal)

*Invisible no longer. In search of the lived experiences of transgender people in African Independent Churches*

**Session 11:** Sarojini Nader and Johnathan Jodamus (University of the Western Cape)

*Sanctifying Sex*: *Exploring ‘Indecent’ Sexual Imagery in Pentecostal Liturgical Practices*

**Session 12:** Mias van Jaarsveld (University of the Free State)

*Exploring the transforming masculinities in the Reformed Church in Zambia*

(Chair: Jeremy Punt)

17:15 – 17:30

**Book introduction:** “Reconceiving Reproductive Health: Theological and Christian Ethical Reflections” (AOSIS)

17:30 – 17:45

Arrangements and closing

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**TUESDAY, 7 MAY 2019**

08:45 – 09:00

Welcome and arrangements

09:00 – 09:45

**Session 13:** Keynote speaker: Charlene van der Walt

(University of KwaZulu Natal)

*"The Bra is wearing a skirt!" Queering Joseph in the quest to enhance contextual ethical gender and sexuality engagements*

(Chair: Nadia Marais)

09:45 – 11:15

**Session 14:** Renata van Dijk-Coombes (North-West University)

*Towards a new understanding of the “curse of eve”: female sexual pain in Genesis 3:16 and other ancient texts*
Session 15: Eben Scheffler (University of South Africa)
On the when and where of sex in Song of Songs

Session 16: Jeremy Punt (Stellenbosch University)
Paul and sex: impossible conundrum, viable proposition, or simply queer?
(Chair: Ntozakhe Cezula)

11:15 – 11:30 Refreshments

11:30 – 13:00 Session 17: Yolanda Dreyer (University of Pretoria)
From the oldest cliché to the oldest creed: What will it take?

Session 18: Jacob Meiring (Stellenbosch University)
On bodies and theologies – the aftermath of the sexual revolution

Session 19: Tayla Minnaar (Stellenbosch University)
Sex education in the age of tinder
(Chair: Juliana Claassens)

13:00 – 14:15 LUNCH

14:15 – 15:45 Session 20: Lauren Jacobs (unaffiliated)
Why we need a Different Narrative about Rape in Marriage

Session 21: Elisabeth le Roux and Selina Palm (Stellenbosch University)
What do men and women really deserve? The tenacious hold of rape myths in local faith communities

Session 22: Selina Palm and Laurie Gaum (Stellenbosch University)
Sexual Reformation or Revolution? A disruptive conversation
(Chair: Tanya van Wyk)

15:45 – 16:15 Way forward and closing
The advent of a democratic dispensation in South Africa in 1994 supposedly ordained a sincere and honest reconstruction of society. Sexual and gender reformation cannot be more relevant than in this phenomenon of social reconstruction. Since theology has played a role that cannot be undermined in pigmenting social relations in the past, it is just as well for it to play a role in informing reconstruction; specifically gender reformation in the discussion in this paper. Against this background, this paper intends to vigorously engage with the nature of the Bible (Old Testament) and some of the theologies that transpire therefrom concerning gender. This paper is completely certain that the Bible advocates both liberative and oppressvie theologies. It therefore argues that there is nothing like biblical theology on gender. What we have are different theological perspectives on gender; both liberative and oppressive. The Bible reader is thus confronted with theologies that can serve reconstruction in (South) Africa either positively or negatively. One must just take responsibility for a choice for oppressive or liberative theological perspectives. To demonstrate the point made, the paper will take a closer look at Exodus 21:7 and Deuteronomy 15:12 & 17b. Dealing with the same issue of women slaves, these two texts differ on the legal status of women slaves. Exodus 21:7 lacks the legal status of women slaves while Deuteronomy 15:12 & 17b extend the legal status to women slaves as well. The Bible reader can pick any of these two positions of these verses to argue for or against the equality of men and women. However, readers must also acknowledge that they prefer one standpoint over the other.

Voicing Reproductive Loss: Rachel’s Cry in Conversation with The Light Between Two Oceans

The topic of reproductive loss for the longest time has been met with an overwhelming silence. Both in contemporary faith communities, but also in the biblical text, the profound grief regarding miscarriage is rarely mentioned – this despite the fact that it is estimated that 1 in 4 pregnancies will end in miscarriage. Moreover, the very few references to miscarriage in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 21:22-23; Num 5:11-31), always are presented from a male point of view.

One exception where we encounter a glimpse of the woman’s voice is in the figure of Rachel who in Gen 30:1 exclaims as follow about her struggles to conceive: “Give me children or I’ll die!” Rachel’s grief regarding reproductive loss has come to represent on a metaphorical level the grief of a nation mourning the loss of its children (Jer 31:15; Matt 2:18). I propose that the figure of Rachel offers readers the opportunity to begin to contemplate the reality and effects of reproductive loss. However, to do so one needs help to imagine that which is not voiced in the biblical text itself.

In conversation with the courageous representation of reproductive loss in the 2012 novel The Light Between Oceans by ML Stedman (cf. the film adaptation in 2016 with director Michael Fassbender), this paper will seek to explore the hidden trauma of reproductive loss. According to Serene Jones, reproductive loss has a distinct effect on a woman’s sense of agency, her hope for the future, her experience of bodily integrity and the depths of her experience of grief. Trauma narratives that voice the pain of reproductive loss, and do not shy away from exploring the complexities associated with dealing with the profound grief associated with infertility, miscarriage and stillbirth are important as they create a safe space for women and men to begin to voice their own experiences of grief and loss. Moreover, trauma narratives, both ancient and contemporary, offer readers the opportunity to imagine as Serene Jones has said so well: “new narratives that enable the return of a future and the possibility of grade to take hold of those traumatized by loss” (Trauma and Grace, p150).
Dreyer, Yolanda – University of Pretoria

From the oldest cliché to the oldest creed: What will it take?

Since time immemorial people have found their own identity, worth and value in comparing themselves to others. The criteria used for this comparison would invariably render the other “worth less” and place the self in a position of superiority and power over the inferior other. Such is the course of history. In his 2018 book, *The forgotten creed: Christianity’s original struggle against bigotry, slavery and sexism*, New Testament scholar Stephen J Patterson calls value distinctions on the grounds of the threesome of ethnicity, class and gender, “the clichés of ancient bigotries”. The book makes a case for Galatians 3:28 being “the oldest Christian creed”, which expressly turns the mentality of division into the confession that “we are all one”. A confession, however, is not primarily about words and formulae. It is about who we are because we believe. It is about how we live and relate because we believe. This creed is not about the attributes of God. It is about being human with others before God. The paper explores this very old Christian struggle between the oldest cliché and the oldest creed. The focus is on the othering of the female against the background of the intersection with class and race.

Hadebe, Nontando – St Augustine College

‘Nailing the theses?’ The crisis of the sexual abuse scandal as catalyst for reform in the Catholic Church

Some church historians in the Catholic Church have described the sexual abuse of minors and the recent exposure of widespread sexual abuse of nuns (#nunstoo) as one of the worst crisis in the history of the Church. The crisis was further exacerbated by responses which included cover up, denials, secrecy, silencing of victims and failure to report these crimes. This has precipitated widespread calls for reforms in the Church to address the underlying causes embedded in the institutional culture and structures such as clericalism and patriarchy. These voices of protest come from all sectors of the church from theologians, ecclesial leaders to laity. What seems to be lacking is a synthesis of these visions for reform. This paper will attempt to pull together these voices and formulate a document of ‘theses’ as a contribution to the call for reform of the Catholic and other churches.

Jacobs, Lauren - unaffiliated

Why we need a Different Narrative about Rape in Marriage

Presenting real life examples from women and men whom I have worked with, who experienced rape within their marriages and been denied the right to exercise authority over their own bodies. Discussing further the reality of rape denial by faith communities and how the dire need to readdress such theology should become a priority within faith communities as rape is and epidemic within the South African context.

Description

I walked in to the room, ready for my job interview. Her eyes were wild and her hair untamed, somehow in between discussing my C.V, I mentioned the fact that my husband was a pastor. Fury rose up in her flushed cheeks. “I hate the church,” she said with her jaw clenched. As a woman abuse therapist, I gently inquired why, creating space for her to share. “My husband raped me multiple times, he was an elder in the church. So I approached the church, told them about what he was doing, uncovering the details of my shame in front of a bunch of men who told me there is no such thing as rape in marriage as my body belongs to my husband. So I needed to go home and submit. That’s why I hate the church and I hate men.” This was my first encounter with this story, but it was not my last. In fact, it was the beginning. Within this conference conversation, I bring to light the stories from real women who have given me permission to share their rape in marriage experiences. I also discuss the present need for a different theology when it comes to understanding 1 Corinthians 7v14, along with the need to readdress the false understanding that rape does not happen in marriage.
“Teachers expect parents to teach you. Parents expect teachers to teach you. So actually you learn nothing and nobody wants to talk about it.” This quote from this research study is an adolescent girls’ cry for liberation from the silence related to sexuality because of adults general reluctance to talk to them about it. Given the growing concerns raised about the sexual- and reproductive health of adolescents in South Africa, the aim of the study was to conduct research with adolescent girls in order for girls' voices to enhance adult researchers' understanding of children's need for support and guidance in the context of sexuality education. The purposively selected sample included 75 participants from three diverse high schools in the Western Cape. A qualitative interpretative research design was applied to collect the data. This article argues that adults cannot help adolescents in their sexual emancipation – to be free – if they themselves are not free. If they were free, they would have been able and willing to engage with adolescents in their full humanity, which includes their sexuality. Challenges and opportunities for theology and church are presented to stimulate the mutual sexual emancipation of both adolescent girls and adults.

Modern critics of the Jewish-Christian tradition see in the divine commands to “be fruitful”, “multiply”, and “subdue” the earth in Gen 1:1-2:4a the intellectual foundations for the present ecological crisis: unlimited reproduction, overpopulation of the earth, and the subjugation of nature. With this in mind, I present, in the proposed paper, interpretive comments on ideas reflected by Gen 1:26-28 that may prove useable to theological reflection on creation, especially as it pertains to human procreation as an ethical issue. I treat Genesis 1 as an ancient artefact and endeavour to make sense of the traditions it preserves in light of the thought-worlds of the culture that produced and transmitted the text. I suggest that the figurative language of verses 26-28 draws on ideas associated with royalty and royal images to express the notion of humans' responsibility for the continued inhabitability of the created environments and the flourishing of all their occupants. I conclude that unchecked growth in human population under the guise of the divine command to “be fruitful and multiply” is not in keeping with the ideas preserved by Gen 1:1-2:4a, because overpopulation does not enhance the liveability of environments, but rather diminishes it.

In this paper, I discuss the theology of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, who is often called the mother of African women's theologies. Oduyoye, who did not have biological children herself, makes a distinction between the concepts of ‘motherhood’ and ‘mothering’. Motherhood, the biological action of bearing and raising children, is seen as a blessing. On the other hand, ‘mothering’ involves the enrichment of life and the nurturing of humanity. Reflecting on mothering rather than motherhood as a sacred duty, as well as engaging with Oduyoye's use of mothering as metaphor, in this paper I bring Oduyoye in conversation with the doctrine of creation in order to posit a doctrine of creation that is concerned with reproductive health and human flourishing. In particular, how this conversation could also assist in dealing with reproductive loss is emphasised in the latter part of the paper.
What do men and women really deserve? The tenacious hold of rape myths in local faith communities

Across the world we increasingly see faith-based efforts to address violence against women and girls (VAWG). With the role of religion and religious actors receiving more recognition within international development spaces, Christian faith-based actors are receiving more recognition – and funding – for the rolling out of faith-based VAWG intervention activities, especially on the African continent. These interventions typically engage with local faith communities in two ways: by promoting non-violence and/or by promoting gender equitable norms.

Increasingly robust evaluations have shown the initially positive impact of many of these faith-based interventions in VAWG prevention and response. However, we also see the tenacious hold that rape myths continue to have within local faith communities. These rape myths persist despite increasingly non-violent norms and (in some settings) increasingly gender equitable attitudes. Two key markers are especially present, and religiously justified, within faith settings. The first is a professed concern with dress codes for women and girls. The second, opinions on whether and when it is seen as acceptable for a wife to refuse her husband sex.

Why do these rape myths persist? How can faith-based intervention efforts engage them effectively? What underlying beliefs about gender and sexuality may urgently need to be surfaced and critically engaged by theological scholars and religious leaders if current faith-based approaches on VAWG are not to re-inscribe the underlying roots that fuel the violence they claim to challenge.

Our paper will draw on empirical fieldwork from a number of African countries, including South Africa, Liberia, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It will point to the need to interrogate the continued gendered beliefs around sexuality that faith can still perpetuate. It will conclude with a few brief reflections on the important role of theological reflection in this task.

On bodies and theologies – the aftermath of the sexual revolution

The sexual revolution of the 1960s/1970s had a deep impact on how the church and theology views the bodies of believers. There were two major reactions in the late 1970s, early 1980s which culminated in two diverse theologies of the body – the one was a theology of the body of the Roman Catholic Church, which developed out of the Wednesday catechesis of the Polish cardinal Karol Józef Wojtyła, who later became Pope John Paul II and which culminated in his book, “Man and Woman He Created Them” (published in English in 2006), based on the principle of Humanae Vitae - reaffirmed the orthodox teaching of the Catholic Church regarding married love, responsible parenthood, and the rejection of artificial contraception. The other reaction was that of James B Nelson, for many decades a sole voice in the desert, with his first book, “Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology” (1978) followed by “Body Theology” (1992). In this presentation, I briefly explore the difference between these two streams of interpretation and the impact.

The dilemma is that both of these reactions to the sexual revolution, were located in Christian Ethics or Moral Theology. Why is that a problem? In my own research, I have relocated the interpretation of bodies in theological anthropology with a very practical exploration through bodymapping, widening the focus on the body and not merely on sexuality or what people do with their genitals. My research centres around the body as the main site of interpretation, resistance and meaning-making and the experiences of the body as the first moment of theology.
The presentation then situates the whole aftermath of the sexual revolution in a very practical way in the life-world of marginalised communities in South Africa, and ask the question: So what now?

**Sex education in the age of tinder**

According to church doctrines and moral ethics, “God’s plan” is for cis-gender, heterosexual Christians to find the love of their life get married and have babies. With the age of techno sexual era, the rise of tinder and grindr there is a great need to reform sex education and sexual ethics within the church.

What happens to the people who are not represented within “God’s plan”, people who are asexual, homosexual, divorced people, people who have sex before marriage, bisexuals, people who masturbate transgenders and people who are non-binary? How does the church’s behavioural codes and teaching about sex and sexuality guide us as Christians?

Through centuries we have been taught that if you do not conform or follow the church’s moral and ethical code, God is not please and will punish you. How do we as Christian redefine ourselves when human sexuality, gender and our entire embodiment is an expression of or identity? Nelson (1978: 20) notes that: “we experience our own concreteness as body-selves occupying space in a concrete world. We experience the world only through our body-selves. My understanding of my body is the key to my understanding of bodies and places beyond me. The body, thus, is always more than just an object. The body is the means by which I can know objects, persons and events.

The body is being interpreted as a marker of its bearer and therefore it forms an integrated part of the identity especially since bodies are important cultural codes in our social reality (Leskinen, 2011, p. 361). How we understand our own sexuality and identify it, should be an important part in sexual reformation within the church especially since the church plays an integrated role in how we frame sex and our own religious understanding of sex, sexuality and sexual behaviour.

**Sanctifying Sex’: Exploring ‘Indecent’ Sexual Imagery in Pentecostal Liturgical Practices**

Pentecostalism, like many other church traditions, is well known for its fixation with doctrinal dualisms which enforce a separation of body and spirit, and a Puritan sexual ethic. These conservative sexual norms have led to the policing of bodies and sexual practices. As a result, instead of encouraging safe sexual practices, the churches have been known to enforce abstinence outside of marriage or sexual restrictions within it, thus marking sex in general as “indecent”. Some of the consequences of this repression of sexuality are young people being forced into early marriages to avoid “living in sin”; teenage pregnancies as a consequence of not wanting to disobey the church’s teaching on sex and contraceptives, as well as more serious consequences of unbridled sexual expression resulting in sexually transmitted viruses. The consequences of a repressed sexuality are indeed serious. But, what if this “repressive hypothesis” can be challenged within Pentecostal spaces. What if, like Foucault suggests, a deeper engagement with the subject matter would show not sexual censorship, but rather a re-channelling of sexuality? Drawing on Foucault’s challenge to the repressive hypothesis, where he suggests that so-called repressed sexuality finds “appropriate” outlets in spaces such as psychiatry and prostitution, this paper suggests a third outlet, namely, Pentecostalism. Proceeding with an “indecent” theological lens, as proposed by Althaus-Reid, we argue that Pentecostalism’s liturgical practices ironically and unconsciously open up possibilities for more embodied, real and sexed experiences of the divine. This consideration not only expands the interpretive possibilities for how we mark relationships with the divine but also how sexual relationships between humans are shaped and possibly destigmatised. In taking a sneak peer “under God’s skirt,” in Althaus Reid’s words, we re-imagine the indecent as sacred. Through an analysis of how bodies and rituals are marked by discursive practices within the songs and performances in these churches, this paper lays bare the critical
spaces available for more embodied theologies – ‘sexual healing’ that perhaps even the worshippers themselves have unconsciously ignored.

Palm, Selina and Gaum, Laurie – Stellenbosch University

Sexual Reformation or Revolution? A disruptive conversation

Using interactive dialogue as our methodology, we use our own sexual experiences as concrete embodied points of departure in an exploration of the expansive, complex territory of human sexuality, and its interaction with notions of the sacred in Christian tradition. In a wide-ranging conversation we navigate a shared journey to occupy “safe enough space”, simultaneously seeking to be sex-positive and excavating the many nuances of consent in the time after the #MeToo movement which has made us all more aware of sexually predatory behaviour.

Are theologically loaded concepts like “Reformation” helpful in faith’s uncomfortable embrace with a world in which the sexual revolution is 50 years old? What are the points of rupture to enable Christian faith to be jolted into contemporary understandings of human sexuality and gender identity and expression? Is there any space for the church here as a discussion partner, or – as an institution with a sordid legacy of bodily denial, the rewarding of hypocrisy, and sexual abuse - simply not? Is a ‘Revolution’ that rejects this legacy a more appropriate approach?

We come at these questions from our lived experiences of dance and work with youth as ways of engaging differently with embodiment and sexuality, and of the recent court case against the Dutch Reformed Church which dealt with the reaffirmation of sexual diversity, but also with how power is wielded in the remains of a volkskerk. In the process we seek to open up new conversations and to stimulate the cultivation of “new language” more at ease with our interiority, which can bring to the fore our needs for human connection, vulnerability and intimacy.

Punt, Jeremy – Stellenbosch University

Paul and sex: impossible conundrum, viable proposition, or simply queer?

Not unlike other aspects of his writings, Paul’s stance on gender and sexuality often meets with lofty praise or harsh criticism. His position on sex, in particular, has elicited criticism to an extent that it is matched only by dogmatic discussions deemed critical for certain Christian groups. In the first letter to the Corinthians, slightly longer than most, Paul’s position on sexuality and sex appears to move from, and eventually oscillate between his unwillingness to accept and affirm human sex on the one hand, and on the other hand, his eagerness to construe sex as self-fulfilling, necessary and unrestricted in contexts such as marriage. Moving away from the conventional dichotomised readings of Paul, and framed with queer inquiry’s non-essentialist, post-conventional, binary-resisting, social constructionist view of gender and sexuality, Paul’s approach to human sexuality can be described as, in a word, queer.

Eben Scheffler - University of South Africa

On the when and where of sex in Song of Songs

Song of Songs can be regarded as the celebration of reality (or God’s creation) in which human beings find themselves. Time and space (or time-space) lie at the essence of this reality of which sexual love forms an integral part. As far as the time aspect is concerned, two questions are reflected upon, namely day or night and before or after marriage. As far as space (or place, location) is concerned, attention will be paid to human buildings and/or nature (also as metaphor). It will be contended that part of sexual beauty as portrayed in the Song is that traditional values, customs and expectations are transcended.
Invisible no longer. In search of the lived experiences of transgender people in African Independent Churches

It is noted that transgender people experience incongruence between their gender identity and sex assigned at birth. In South Africa, the transgender population has remained largely an invisible population until the development of organisations such as Gender Dynamix, who lobby for the rights and the visibility of transgender and intersex people in Africa. In line with this aim of greater visibility and understanding of trans people, in this paper I aim to reflect on research produced as part of a Masters study in Gender and Religion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal that draw from my own experience as a transman and those of other trans people in African Independent churches in the Midlands area of KwaZulu-Natal. Firstly, I aim to reflect on the religio-cultural concepts used to negotiate and engage transgender individuals located within the landscape of African Independent churches. Secondly, and more importantly I will reflect on the experiences of transgender people in the development of their gender identity and how faith features in this process of negotiation. Questions informing this part of the study is among other how the transgender identity is embodied in the Zion churches?, and how transgender individuals respond to an embodiment of their identity in these churches? I will structure my reflection around three key central themes that form an important part in the development of the transgender identity namely; naming, body, and cultural identity. I will draw on the insights of feminist, queer and transgender theorists in order to engage the lived experiences of transgender individuals. As part of my argument I will highlight how transgender participants identified between the gender categories of feminine and masculine, which was different from their sex category assigned to them at birth and in the process challenged the essentialist view of understanding gender in relation to sex. I will further illustrate that the Zion churches lack vocabulary and theories to engage transgender people as the identity of transgender people is often mistaken for those who identify as gay or lesbian and the church consequently adopt Zulu names such as Inkonkoni/Isitabane to refer to transgender people. Central to my argument is however the notion of body and how body relates to identity and gender expressions.

Swipe right for love: Social Media and the Born-Free Generation

Presently the generation of millennials are navigating the complex landscape of adulthood (a process termed ‘adulting’). There can be no doubt that social media is an important contender for this generation’s attention. More pointedly, this generation is the first to experience the digital age as default fact of life. As such, a study is warranted as to how social media (a product of the digital age) impacts millennial’s experience of sexuality and theologising. The world is witnessing the democratisation of information, via the worldwide web. For young millennials it may thus not have been strange to do a Google-search about the LGBTIQ+ community. This access to information has allowed this generation to be rather articulate in their conceptualisation of sexuality. Moreover, the continued rise of dating platforms (the likes of Tinder and Grindr) requires theological interrogation. Creating a space for networking and ‘matching’, these applications have garnered a strong following by the generation of millennials.

Even so, attention should also be focused on the particularity of the South African contexts. The millennial generation also forms part of what has been termed the ‘born-frees’ (or those born post-1994). Their articulation of their sexuality, via social media, also relates to the complexities of what it means to be in South Africa — given its divided history.

This paper, then, attempts to grapple with how social media plays a definitive role in our society. Further, it seeks to consider how millennials (also born-frees) construct their sexuality using social media. Fundamentally
it challenges faith communities and the theological academy to recognise the realities of the digital age and how it is related to sexualities.

Quite importantly, attention will be afforded to positionality. This research is done by a middle-class, black, cis-gender gay man. The reflections offered in the study, thus, echo these identity markers; acknowledging them as informants.

**Van der Walt, Charlene – University of KwaZulu Natal**

"The Bra is wearing a skirt!" Queering Joseph in the quest to enhance contextual ethical gender and sexuality engagements

When considering the role of religion in as it pertains to contextual embodied issues within the landscape of sexual reproductive health and rights the common perception is often that faith speaks with a singular, predominantly negative, voice and that the will of God is clearly deducible from the sacred scriptures. In the pursuit of sexual and reproductive justice, as proposed by Catriona Macleod and others, faith actors are often deemed obstructionist or counter the ideals of a reproductive justice approach, that draws on a social justice framework and emphasises systemic or holistic analyses, seeking to illuminate the complex array of social, economic, cultural and healthcare possibilities and challenges that serve to either enhance or hinder women’s reproductive freedoms and the rights of those identifying within the spectrum of sexual fluidly. Issues within the contextual embodied intersection of gender, sexuality, and religion such as GBV, family planning, abortion, female genital mutilation and sexual diversity often pose great ethical challenges to those within the faith landscape; especially those who primarily draw from the interpretation of sacred scriptures in the process of ethical decision making. At the heart of this paper is a concern for the integrity and soul of the process of Biblical hermeneutics as much of the debate around SRHR issues in general and sexual diversity, in particular, boils down to divergent understandings of the role and nature of Scripture and a violent clash in the epistemological underpinnings foundational to conflicting methods of interpretation. Beyond a general reflection on the role of the Bible in the process of ethical reflection pertaining to contextual issues relating to gender and sexuality, the paper offers a Queer engagement with the character of Joseph as he is embedded within the Genesis narrative. Drawing on insights from Queer Biblical Hermeneutics the paper aims to destabilize the normative notions of gender and sexuality often assumed as stable and unquestionably associated with central Biblical characters and those who are deemed worthy to emulate by contemporary Bible readers in their poses of ethical reflection.

**Van Dijk-Coombes, Renate – North-West University**

Towards a new understanding of the “curse of eve”: female sexual pain in Genesis 3:16 and other ancient texts

The fourth edition of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR), published in 2000, describes two sexual pain disorders, dyspareunia and vaginismus. Dyspareunia can be described as pain during sexual intercourse (specifically genital pain), while vaginismus is the involuntary spasming of the vaginal muscles upon penetration, resulting in pain. Due to the highly comorbid nature of these two disorders, as well as the difficulty in distinguishing between them, in the fifth edition of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), published in 2013, they were merged to represent genito-pelvic pain/penetration disorder (GPPPD).

Whatever the medical term or terms used to define painful sexual intercourse, it is the lived experience of many women. While the exact prevalence is unknown, according to the DSM-5, it affects as much as 15% of American women. For such a common disorder, little research has been done into painful sexual intercourse, and it is seldom discussed, either in private conversations or in the media. This appears true also in ancient society, where few texts mention pain associated with sexual intercourse. Three ancient sources may reference or deal with painful sexual intercourse, although this would depend on the reading or translation of specific words. These are the *Ramesseum Medical Papyrus IV*, dating from the 13th Dynasty of Egypt during the
18th century BCE, *Enki and Ninhursag̲a*, a Sumerian mythical narrative, and Genesis 3:16, the so-called “Curse of Eve”.

This paper will look at these three sources, analysing the translations of specific words and how these affect the understanding of the relevant passages. The type of source each text is must also be taken into consideration to discern what the message or messages which they convey may have been, specifically to women who experienced painful sexual intercourse. The paper will further investigate specifically the message which Genesis 3:16 and related Biblical passages give to women suffering from painful sexual intercourse, and how religious orthodoxy and a strict upbringing can be both a factor in the development of painful sexual intercourse, as well as an inhibiting factor in the treatment thereof.

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**Van Jaarsveld, Mias – University of the Free State**

**Exploring the transforming masculinities in the Reformed Church in Zambia**

The researcher would like to start this paper by positioning himself within this research project. Aware of his subjectivity and bias, the researcher approached this project on African masculinities from the position of a participant-observer, sensitive to the fact that his personal narrative as a white, Afrikaans man will influence the way he listens to, describes and interprets the participants’ (black, Zambian men and women) experiences, dreams and lived faith practices. The classic ethnographic research method was followed in this project and through narrative involvement in the form of in-depth, face-to-face interviews, he collaborated with the respondents as co-researchers in this project. Müller’s African postfoundational approach to practical theology was consulted, as well as Osmer’s four tasks when doing practical theological research.

The proposed presentation could be divided into three main questions:

1. **Why do research in the Reformed Church in Zambia?**
   Despite its humble beginnings, the RCZ is a well-respected and growing church in Zambia with about a million members. The RCZ’s seminary-turned-university, Justo Mwale University, is also currently the producer of renowned and widely recognised African theology. The RCZ was deliberately chosen as a sample group, due to her dedication to gender equality and her contribution to sub-Saharan African theology.

2. **What are the members of the Reformed Church in Zambia saying about masculinity(ies)?**
   The researcher collaborated with male and female respondents in RCZ. During these interviews, the respondents agreed that people in Zambia define masculinity in terms of power, dominance, authority and resourcefulness. Most respondents agreed that men should be responsible and take on their role as provider for the family. Problems ascribed to masculinity includes gender based violence, undermining women, promiscuity and alcohol- and drug abuse. Some roles are automatically ascribed to women, such as domestic chores, and although some of these roles are culturally prescribed, some use (misuse) the Bible to maintain a status quo which supports patriarchy and misogyny.

3. **How do we respond theologically when we listen to these narratives?**
   Men in Zambia cannot associate with the Jesus on the cross. The cross does not symbolise things they consider valuable when thinking in terms of being a man. The cross is associated with suffering, weakness and vulnerability, while African men values strength and power. The question the researcher aims to respond to the question: Would Jesus meet up to their standards when it comes to what it means being a man?
Revisiting the church’s moral authority on sexual ethics: Is it a case for reform or a time to retreat?

For a very long time, the Christian church has regarded and conducted itself as a moral authority, enabling itself to make claims about the ‘right’ and the ‘wrong’ of human sexuality. It had developed an ethic of sexuality, utilising readings of scripture and interpreting these in light of the church’s tradition. In many ways, this was a binary sexual ethics of absolutes and extremes, in which the church utilised Greek philosophy and eschatology (the church’s confession about “the last things”) to provide clear-cut answers, exact instructions and deliver verdicts. For the church, this meant the undisputed right to have a ‘legal’ voice on matters pertaining to the nature of people’s relationships, gender roles, their sexuality and sex itself. During my undergrad studies, my church polity lecturer stated that the church’s law is not supposed to be a stick to hit people with, but a staff to guide you in difficult times. And that is precisely the issue at stake when it comes to revisiting the church’s moral authority on matters of human sexuality: Is it a question of the church’s right or the church’s responsibility to construct a sexual ethics? Barely a week passes without the church (worldwide) being named in news cycles with regard to issues of sexuality and gender and the relationship between the state and the church will again become an issue as congregants of churches turn to legal courts for moral guidance in ‘church matters’. In my contribution I will consider the nature of the church in the 21st century, it’s identity and conduct (ecclesiology) and ask if it is possible and necessary for the church, amidst personal conflicts and cultural controversies, to rethink its ‘sexual ethics’ or if the church has lost the right/ability to be an authoritative voice in this regard. Should the church have had this voice in the first place? The question will be approached from the perspective of political theology.

Theological perspectives on the essentials of human life

Since Bonhoeffer introduced the concept of a “religionless Christianity”, the concept of “human life” has become a prominent point of academic discussion within current theological ethical discourse in public theologies, especially regarding bio-ethics, eco-ethics and social justice. This presentation endeavors to participate in the on-going debate by taking into consideration certain related theological perspectives as found in a reformed paradigm. The presentation is part of a broader study that aims to develop biblical perspectives about the concept human life according to various interpretations of the classic text in the light of the Theology of Creation, Christology and Pneumatology. These perspectives will subsequently be applied to contextual ethical concerns relating to life matters. The central theoretical argument of this research is that theological perspectives on the essentials of life can offer positive and valuable contributions to ethical discourses on the subject of life issues, bio-ethics, ecological concerns and social justice. These essentials include especially the breath, beginning, uniqueness, character and intention of human life. To these can be added the hope for or in human life. The concept "breath of life" in Gen 2:7 will be highlighted and addressed in this presentation.