

CONFERENCE DAY TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2022
Faculty of Protestant Theology & Religion Studies (FPTR), Brussels



Church in Transition

Welcome at our conference day on the transition of the church! Open for anyone active, academically or practically, with new forms of church presence or interested in them.

It is organised in the context of our *Brussels City Chaplaincy* project (see below).

Please register at bert.dicou@gmail.com, preferably before November 16, and please indicate the letter of the dialogue table you would like to attend.

We expect you November 22 from 10.30 a.m. (start program at 11), FPTR, Rue des Bollandistes 40, 1040 Etterbeek Brussels

Looking forward to meeting you,

Dr. Bert Dicou (project leader)
Prof. Dr. Johan Temmerman (dean)

Church in transition: Theme

The 21st century is bringing big changes for churches in Belgium, and in fact across north-western Europe. Only migrant churches are still on the rise. Once large and powerful churches have experienced or are experiencing a noticeable decline in interest. Parishes are being merged and churches closed. Smaller denominations are struggling to keep their heads above water. At the same time, society does not lack the search for meaning. This need might even be stronger than ever. Nor has the need for meaningful communities disappeared.

A new task for churches may arise: learning to listen to society's needs and trying to respond to them. The inspiration still comes from the Gospel, but it is clear that an attitude of listening and responding will change the way things are done. 'Church' may start to look very different. This might discourage some, but isn't it a beautiful challenge rather than something to be lamented?

At this seminar, we look at what is emerging and discuss what kind of transition process churches may be in presently. Main lectures by professor Christa Anbeek (Amsterdam, Nijmegen) and Armin Kummer (Leuven, Brussels) and plenty of opportunity for dialogue.

Update Nov. 10: Unfortunately, professor Anbeek had to cancel her contribution due to illness, her subject will be covered by a lecture from her Amsterdam colleague professor Goos Minderman.

Program

10.30-11.00 Coffee and tea (room 0.2)

11.00 Welcome by Prof. Dr. Leendert-Jan Parlevliet (FPTR)

11.05 Prof. Dr. Goos Minderman (Arminius Institute, rector), Church in Transition: Communities-with-a-Heart. How can we contribute to the emerging of meaningful communities in contemporary society

In this presentation, I would like to describe the context of the strategy of the church of the Remonstrants in The Netherlands, the specific focus on target groups outside the regular church members. I will focus especially on one specific programme called 'communities with a heart'. With this I hope you will see that it is not just a scientific interest that brought us together in the project of city chaplaincy but that we are deeply involved in the issues in this field. Indeed, it is at the heart of our strategy: trying to 'be there' as a church in society.

11.50 Prof. Dr. Johan Temmerman (FPTR, dean), First Response

12.00 Drs. Armin Kummer (FWO fellow, KU Leuven), Fresh Practices in Tomorrow's Church

This lecture identifies the "megatrend spirituality" as one of the key cotemporary challenges to the Church in transition and will ask what this could mean for our practices in church life.

12.45 Drs. Edwin Delen (VPKB, FPTR), First Response

13.00 - 14.00 Lunch in the faculty refectory

14.00 Dialogue Tables: Exchanging ideas.

Participants will be divided into four Dialogue Tables, each of which has a more explorative general first round (questions and ideas relating to the morning presentations) and a second round in which certain specific 'Church in Transition' topics will be discussed. Details on the next page

16.00 Plenary closing with an impression of the outcomes

16.30 Refreshments

DIALOGUE TABLES

A. Transition themes - diving deeper into the morning lectures. Prof. dr. Leendert-Jan Parlevliet

This dialogue table will after the first round stay with subjects related to this morning's lectures:

- New target groups in church and in theological education: The unruliness of transition processes.
- What does it mean for churches to become "more spiritual, less religious"? What are "identity temptations" in church contexts, how do they find expression, and how can churches deal with them? Megatrend „migration“ – what does it mean for churches, and what do they make of it.

B. Sacramental legacy of the churches in times of transition. Dr. Bert Dicou and dr. Elza Kuyk (Arminius Institute).

After a general discussion of this morning's lectures, led by dr. Bert Dicou, this dialogue table turns its attention to (post-)transition sacramentality.

In September 2022 Elza Kuyk defended her thesis on four multiple used city churches in the Netherlands. When protestant faith communities can no longer use the church building only by themselves, they need to welcome others to share the building with. The sacramentality of the building is no obvious part of protestant theology. The church space is often ignored or underestimated. But new users often explicitly relate to the sacramentality of the building and show in their practices that they respond to this special environment. There are old, new, altered or newly invented rituals which are performed by both faith communities and others. The power of church authorities does not apply for those outside the faith communities, which has an effect on the performed rituals. Multiple use can be rather challenging!

C. How do migrant churches relate to transition? Prof. Dr. Johan Temmerman and Rebecca Monga (PhD student/Teaching at FUTP)

This dialogue table will discuss how immigrant churches look at cooperation with traditional churches and how they see young people from their churches participating in worldview networks. This conversation is co-led by a representative of one of the immigrant churches.

D. 'Chaplaincy' as a vocation in times of transition. Drs. Edwin Delen.

Chaplaincy is an opportunity to intensively engage church and society. Not focusing on the existing structures and forms. In this way, Chaplaincy does justice to Church on the Move. The chapel also comes up as the place where interfaith encounters are made possible.

BRUSSELS CITY CHAPLAINCY PROJECT

'Brussels City Chaplaincy' is a project of the Faculty of Protestant Theology and Religious Studies (FPTR) developed in cooperation with the Protestant Church Brussels Graanmarktkerk (PKB). It has started in 2022. It is intended to constitute a network on the city-oriented presence of churches, Christian organizations and religious professionals in Brussels. It is ecumenical in intention. One of its main goals is to form a learning/working community on the topic of 'city chaplaincy' – the cultural, social or spiritual presence of the church in the context of the city. It also hopes to serve as a testing ground for new initiatives in the field of 'being there for the city'.