



FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

CALL FOR PAPERS INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE

Encountering Mary, Mother of Jesus, in South Africa
Christian Theological Reflections on Mary: Past and Present

4-6 JUNE 2024

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE - BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS

HOSTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Mary, mother of Jesus, has throughout Christian history played an important role in the formation of Christianity as it is understood today. In the New Testament writings, Mary forms part of the beginning and end of Jesus' life, enclosing his earthly life in the Gospel of Luke and his ministry in the Gospel of John. Mary at the Annunciation becomes the Mother of the Word and the bearer of the body of Christ, whilst in the Fourth Gospel she is traditionally understood to be an integral part to the start of his ministry and witness to Christ's crucifixion. Orthodoxy and Catholicism claim that one cannot fully understand Christ without knowing about Mary, whereas Protestantism and especially Reformed groupings in many contexts - to this day - appear to strongly react or even resist deep engagement with Mary. Aside from her role as virgin mother during the birth of Jesus Christ, it would appear as if Mary has been removed from the right hand of Christ, and subsequently with her the role women have played in the history of Christianity.

Building on Scriptural foundations, the theology of Mary becomes much more complex given the depth of reflection she has inspired; she is traditionally mother and metaphorical bride, yet also visionary, disciple, witness, leader, and comforter. In these various roles Mary has influenced not only early Christian traditions and doctrines; she continues to play a vital role in the lives of millions of Christians around the world up to this day. Despite these varied positions within the Christian tradition, Mary remains an intriguing figure and symbol also outside of the Christian tradition, as popular culture continues to demonstrate.

CURIOUS TO EXPLORE

This conference is particularly interested in Mary's place in the South African Christian landscape. As organisers, we are curious about questions such as:

- When and where does Mary feature in Christian faith communities in South Africa?
- How was and is she portrayed in Christian theologies and doctrines?
- How is she represented in spaces where faith formation takes place (e.g. catechism)?
- What language, imagery and content surrounds Mary - inside and outside of Christian settings?
- How does the collective memory of Mary impact our theologies of gender and sexuality?
- What is the relationship between varied frameworks for biblical interpretation and our understanding of Mary?
- Should Mary matter (more) - and if so, why?

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

We therefore invite papers that explore Mary, mother of Jesus, in varied ways, which may enrich an understanding of her within a South African context. We welcome proposals from a wide range of theological and related disciplines (such as systematic theology, ethics, biblical studies, church history, homiletics, liturgy studies, pastoral care, youth ministry, visual arts, and archaeology) that speak to understandings of Mary in Christianity - past, present, and future. We aim to facilitate discussions between different disciplines and welcome both established and emerging scholars.

The conference will take place from 4 to 6 June 2024 at the Bloemfontein campus of the University of the Free State.

CONFERENCE ORGANISERS

Dr Nina Müller van Velden

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INTERESTED?

Please submit a title and abstract of no more than 250 words, a short biography, institutional affiliation, and contact details to

theologyevents@ufs.ac.za
by 15 February 2024.

Feedback on acceptance will be provided
by 28 February 2024.

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