Dear friends and colleagues:

It has been a very busy time at the Nagel Institute since our last newsletter in October 2018. Our current major initiative, “African Theological Advance,” conducted its midcourse workshop in Pretoria, South Africa, this past March. “Matter & Spirit,” the China-US visual arts project, is now planning a traveling exhibit to open at Calvin next January. All the while, visiting scholars in the “The Prophet’s Chamber” program enjoyed productive days of research and writing here at Calvin. Please enjoy this summary of the Institute’s work from October 2018 to June 2019, and don’t hesitate to follow the links to learn more.

The biggest news of the season is that after two consecutive searches, Calvin has found my successor. He is Retief Müller, associate professor of church history at Stellenbosh University. We are delighted here with this news and we hope you will enjoy this welcome development as well.

All the best,
Joel Carpenter

Current Projects

AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL ADVANCE

The project, now two years old, is making excellent progress. Its latest event was the mid-course research workshop, held in Pretoria, South Africa, on March 4-8, 2019. We hosted 48 conference, including 32 grantees (2 from each team), the project advisers, plenary speakers, and several guests from the Langham Partnership. The centerpiece of the meeting was the time for breakout sessions, when the grantees met with their project adviser and got to know each other. Said several,”these opportunities are empowering!”

We learned that about half of the teams are laying plans already for publications. Their energy and initiative are really commendable. In addition, we will collect one research article from each team for edited editions of two selected journals: the International Bulletin of Mission Research, and Revue Théologie Africaine: Eglise et Sociétés, which will co-publish the articles in French. We now are preparing for the culminating conference in Abidjan, March 2-6, 2020.

Visit the project page.

MATTER & SPIRIT

In partnership with the Council for Christian
Artistic Director Rachel Smith envisions a really powerful exhibition by these Chinese and American artists. Their works are aesthetically rich and conceptually profound, reflecting a range of intersecting issues and ideas. The exhibit will include a wide variety of media and styles with, but have a visual coherence where certain colors, textures, and other motifs recur in the exhibit. Smith is planning a 3-4 year exhibition tour in the U.S. before it goes to China. She welcomes ideas about sites for the tour.

For more information, visit the project page.

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**PROPHET’S CHAMBER**

Two scholars are currently with us for summer residencies, May – August 2019. Victor Emma-Adamah is a doctoral student at the University of Cambridge at the Faculty of Divinity. He will spend his residency completing his PhD thesis, “Between Mystery and Manifestation: French Spiritualism and the Possibility of a Renewed Christian Metaphysics.”

Dr. David Zac Niringiye is the retired Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Kampala, Church of Uganda, as well as a Senior Fellow with The Institute of Religion, Faith and Culture in Public Life (INTERFACE), where he leads the Religion in Public Life Project. Bishop Zac will spend his residency as a Nagel Institute visiting scholar to do research and write a book, The Gospel and the Common Good: Repenting Mission.

Please visit the website for further details about this program for visiting scholars in theology, now in its fifth year.

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**ENGAGING INDIA**

During April 2019, we started a new research and planning project for the Templeton Religion Trust (TRT). It includes a consultation between Indian thought leaders and TRT officers to find potential project areas of common interest, and then some focused research on the readiness for more intensive, grant-supported work in these areas. We are preparing for the consultation in Bangalore, September 16-19, 2019.

After the consultation, we will commission some experts to conduct research into the state of inquiry in each of the topical areas identified during the consultation. This project involves

· research and writing,
· making judgments about the “project readiness” of particular topics and fields of inquiry within these broader topical areas,
· making recommendations to grant makers about which of these might take highest priority, and
· what modes of grant making might be best suited for entry into these fields.

The project will run through December 2020.

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**Nagel Publication News**

We Are The Voice of the Grass: Interfaith Peace Activism in Northern Uganda
Dr. David Hoekema, professor of philosophy emeritus at Calvin College, came by recently with great news: his Nagel-supported study of peace-making in conflict-riven Northern Uganda has been published with Oxford University Press. He documents the courageous work of the Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim leaders who constitute the efforts to overcome centuries of mistrust and help bring an end to one of the most horrific conflicts in recent history. Their work, he argues, puts philosophical and theological ideas into practice and in so doing sheds new light on how religion relates to politics, how brutal conflicts can be resolved, and how a community can reclaim its future through locally-initiated initiatives against overwhelming obstacles.

Ordering information

Brazilian Evangelicalism in the Twenty-First Century
An Inside and Outside Look

Editors: Miller, Eric, Morgan, Ronald J. (Eds.)

This month we celebrate the publication of our long-awaited book on Brazil, produced by a Nagel-organized team of Brazilian and American scholars. These partners examine the role of evangelical and Pentecostal movements in a dynamic and volatile nation, where they have grown from five percent to 25 percent of the Brazilian people over the past half-century. What has this growth meant for the life of the nation? Our team uses the tools of history, theology, and social science to provide some answers. Editors Eric Miller and Ronald Morgan bring forward this original and illuminating collection, now available from Palgrave Macmillan.

Palgrave Macmillan

NEW DIRECTOR of NAGEL INSTITUTE NAMED

Retief Müller, the director-elect for the Nagel Institute, comes with a rich fund of experience and expertise for the study of world Christianity. He has taught church history at Stellenbosch University for five years, after serving for two years as a post-doctoral research fellow at Stellenbosch and UNISA. Prior to those assignments, he taught for six years in South Korea, serving two years each at three different universities. He also knows something of the U.S., since he earned a master's degree from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA, and gained his doctorate in church history from Princeton Theological Seminary. He has been a prolific researcher and writer, with publications on African-instituted churches—notably the massive Zion Christian Church—and on the missions movement and its impact among the Afrikaner people. He has been an energetic participant in the Yale-Edinburgh Group, the African Association for the Study of Religions, the Church Historical Society of Southern Africa, and the American Society of Church History. Retief has served as a pastor as well in Dutch Reformed churches in South Africa and in Korean Presbyterian churches. He is married and has two children, ages 4 and 10. Please feel free to view his c.v., https://sun.academia.edu/RMuller/CurriculumVitae and by all means, please send him a hearty welcome.

Nagel Spring Lectures

January 17

WHOSE SIDE IS GOD ON?

Abraham Waigi Ng’ang’a, professor at Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Akropong, Ghana

Today, as embers of tribal, ideological and religious conflicts continue to be fanned through resurgence in group loyalties, the vision of a greater humanity blurs into a mirage. Was God ever a consideration for these and other realms of human existence? Does he take sides?

April 11
A Kenyan scholar, Dr. Damaris Parsitau, who is a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School during 2019, shared her insights on issues of women’s sexuality within East African Pentecostal churches.