1. Welkom! *Welcome!*

Welkom by ons gemeenskap in 2026!

As fakulteit ervaar ons fundamentele verskuiwings in ons universiteit en samelewing. Dit is tragies dat sterk rolspelers in ons tyd, leiers in sleutelposisies, dikwels nie baie van die lesse wat geleer is, onthou nie en die foute van die verlede herhaal. Inderdaad, diegene van ons wat antieke tekste, rituele en praktyke bestudeer, en refleksies hieroor deur storievertellers en agente van verandering, herken baie van die geskrifte wat tot tragedie en gruweldade gelei het.

Ons refleksies vertel egter ook stories van hoop, van liefde en spiritualiteit wat 'n duidelike roeping gevorm het om genesing en die florering van die lewe te lei en te bewerkstellig. Dít is die storie van teologie. Jy is deel van hierdie storie!

In jou hand het jy 'n gids vir die werking van die voertuig wat hierdie storie dra – die Fakulteit Teologie van die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US). Ons mag dalk as die kleinste fakulteit by die US beskou word, 'n soort boetiekfakulteit, maar ons ratsheid het sy eie voordele. Ons is 'n fakulteitsgemeenskap wat mekaar ken, as personeel, vennootskapsinstellings en studentegemeenskap. Ons is bewus van die betekenis van die lewe saam, reflekteer daaroor, word daardeur uitgedaag. Dit beteken dat ons ons lewens, ons lyding sowel as ons drome, met mekaar deel. Dit maak saak. Baie keer op die reis van ons lewens val ons vas, struikel ons en misluk ons. Dit is in hierdie oomblikke wanneer ons gemeenskap belangrik is.

Daar is egter 'n dieper geheim aan wie ons is. Ons dra 'n besondere verbintenis – 'n verbintenis tot geregtigheid, transformasie en uitnemendheid. Of ons gegradueerdes nou voor leerders in 'n skool sal staan, of saam met jongmense op 'n kamp of in 'n laboratorium, of hulle nou vir sosiale geregtigheid in 'n raadsaal of in 'n optog betoog, of hulle op 'n preekstoel staan of langs iemand in 'n hospitaalbed sit – ons deel hierdie verbintenis tot geregtigheid, transformasie en uitnemendheid.

Hierdie drie dimensies van ons roeping is nie drie aparte pilare nie, nee, hulle is ten diepste verbind aan mekaar. Ons kan nie een hê en nie die ander nie – die drie bestaan saam in kreatiewe spanning en dit bepaal hoe ons lei.

Maar daar kan ook 'n ander misverstand wees oor hoe ons lei. 'n Paar maande voor sy sluipmoord in 1968 het dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 'n preek by die Ebenezer Baptiste Kerk gelewer met die titel 'The Drum Major Instinct'. Daarin het hy geworstel met die persepsie van leierskap as om altyd daarbo, voorop te wees, "to lead the parade". Hy het dit die "trommeester-effek" genoem. Hy het dit pragtig herformuleer:

> If you want to be important – wonderful. If you want to be recognised – wonderful. But recognise that they who are the greatest among you shall be your servant. That's the new definition of greatness … it means everybody

> can be great, because everybody can serve … you only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant.[1]

Laat ons ook hierdie jaar daarna streef om dienaars van 'n roeping te wees – die roeping tot geregtigheid, transformasie en uitnemendheid.

Prof Reggie Nel

Dekaan/Dean

[1] King, M.L. Jr. 1968, Feb 4. The Drum Major Instinct (Sermon). Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA. https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/drum-major-instinct. Sien ook King, M.L. 1986. *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration from the Great Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr*. Londen: Abacus.

Welcome to our community in 2026!

As faculty, we experience fundamental shifts in our university and society. Tragically, it seems that powerful actors in our time, leaders in key positions, often do not remember many of the lessons learnt, and repeat the mistakes of the past. Indeed, those of us studying ancient texts, rituals and practices, and reflections on these by storytellers and agents of change, recognise many of the scripts that have led to tragedy and horror. However, our reflections also tell stories of hope, of love and spirituality that shaped a distinct calling to lead and effect healing and the flourishing of life. This is the story of theology. You are part of this story !

In your hand you have a guide through the mechanics of the vehicle that carries this story – the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University (SU). We may be considered the smallest of faculties at SU, a boutique faculty if you will, but our nimbleness has its own kind of attraction. We are a faculty community that knows each other, as staff, partner institutions and student community. We are conscious of the meaning of life together, reflecting on it, being challenged by it. This means that we share with each other our lives, our agonies as well as our dreams. This matters. Many times, on our journeys, we get stuck, we stumble and fail. It is in these moments when our community matters.

However, there is a deeper secret to who we are. We carry within us a particular commitment – a commitment to justice, transformation and excellence. Whether our graduates will end up standing amidst learners in a school, or with young people on a camp or in a lab, whether they argue for social justice in a boardroom or in a march, whether they preach on a pulpit or sit beside some-one in a hospital bed – we share this commitment to justice, transformation and excellence.

These three dimensions of our call are not three separate pillars, no, they are deeply related to each other. We cannot have one and not the others – the three exist together in creative tension and this directs how we lead.

But there could also be another misunderstanding in how we lead. A few months before his assassination in 1968, Dr Martin Luther King Jr. preached a sermon at the Ebenezer Baptist Church titled 'The Drum Major Instinct'. In it he grappled with the perception of leadership as always being up there, upfront, "leading the parade". He called it the "drum major effect". He reframed it beautifully:

> *If you want to be important – wonderful. If you want to be recognised – wonderful. But recognise that they who are the greatest among you shall be your servant. That's the new definition of greatness … it means everybody can be great, because everybody can serve … you only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant.*

Let us strive this year also to be servants of a call. And that is the call for justice, transformation and excellence.

Prof Reggie Nel

(Dekaan/*Dean*)