



Erkenningsboodskappe / Messages of acknowledgement

Bennie and IAPCHE

In the office of the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE) hangs a picture of the delegates to our founding conference in 1975. In the front row, sandwiched between two larger delegates, sits Bennie van der Walt. His back is straight, pose formal, hair dark. Pictures of recent IAPCHE conferences show the same man (with a slightly lighter hair color). To most he still appears formal, but to those who have moved from respect to friendship can detect the warmth of a friend, and perhaps an earthy joke. Such a reflection is likely to befall many, for in the intervening decades, Bennie has championed IAPCHE's efforts to cultivate a community that "serves Jesus as Lord by fostering, worldwide, the development of integral Christian higher education through networking and related academic activity". Through curiosity, respect, friendship and humor Bennie has demonstrated God's grace at IAPCHE events in Canada, Hungary, India, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Russia, the US and throughout his beloved Africa.

Perhaps because these traits sustained him during the painful apartheid struggles, he was able to reflect on sensitive issues in difficult contexts. For example, Bennie investigated the ways in which various cultures approach or avoid God's structured creation, the testimony of Scripture, and the presence of the Spirit. At a time of increasingly centralised cultural power, Bennie highlighted the variety of faithful cultural practices. Bennie reflected not only on the global diversity of faithful Christians, but also on the mutual relationships between thought and action. Academics can neither hide in a tower nor be confined to ghetto. The "mere" (C.S. Lewis) Christians, who benefit from Bennie's efforts in IAPCHE, continue to praise God for his continuing work faithfully conducted among the peoples from all nations as John depicted in Revelation 7.

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