

MEET PTS



PROFESSOR EDWIN VAN DRIEL PRESENTS TWO NEW BOOKS: ONE—CONTEMPORARY READINGS OF PAUL, OTHER HONORS PROFESSOR EMERITUS ANDREW PURVES

On sabbatical this year, the Rev. Dr. Edwin van Driel has been writing a new book on contemporary readings of Paul. But he's also been engaged in a different writing project—one honoring emeritus professor Andrew Purves's ministry at PTS. The book, edited by Edwin, bears the title *What Is Jesus Doing? God's Activity in the Life and Work of the Church* (IVP Academic, 2019). "For more than 30 years, Andrew invited new generations of students and pastors to think about their ministries in the light of who Jesus is for us today and what he is doing here and now," Edwin observes.

With chapters contributed by four current PTS professors (and others), "This book seeks to engage pastors in a conversation around God's agency in the pastor's work and the life of the church," notes Edwin.

"Especially in this time when many ministers are nervous about dwindling resources, aging membership, and the sense that deep cultural changes are upon us, we are asking several questions: How do we see God at work on our midst? How may discerning what God is doing point us in new directions for our churches and ministries? and What does it all mean for concrete aspects of ministry, such as preaching, leading worship, and pastoral care, as well as for church administration and denominational work? Further, how can asking these questions change how we see our calling and imagine possibilities for our communities?"

In line with Dr. Purves's teaching at PTS, the book explores how we might discern what God is already up to in our various contexts—and how churches, pastors, and individual Christians can "get in on" that activity. "We believe that God is the very center of church and ministry. The true minister isn't you or I—it is Jesus Christ," Edwin notes. Since four of the contributors belong to the newer cohort of PTS faculty, *What Is Jesus Doing?* not only celebrates Dr. Purves's past teaching but also witnesses to the Seminary's continued commitment to the kinds of conversations he engaged his students in. And with well-known contributors from elsewhere as well, the book connects PTS to a wider circle of scholars and friends.

But back to Edwin's sabbatical and his "theological reading of contemporary readings of Paul"! As background to this project, Edwin explains that, "Over the last 40 years or so, Pauline exegesis has seen some dramatic shifts. Partly driven by a much better understanding of first-century Judaism, New Testament scholars have proposed new, fresh interpretations of key Pauline themes, such as justification, union with Christ, and the church and its mission. Since Protestant theology is traditionally shaped by Paul, new readings of Paul can challenge, and, to my mind, enrich and deepen our theologizing. That's what I'm exploring in this book." In pursuing the interdisciplinary project, Edwin seeks "to model the kind of integration of Bible and theology that we teach our students at PTS and that is expected of pastors every week."

Edwin's work in this area has already drawn wider attention—in 2019, he was invited to lecture on the book's theme in the UK at the universities of Durham, Edinburgh, and Cambridge. "And it's laying the exegetical foundations for future books I have in mind on the church and Christology," he notes. So keep your eyes peeled for *Rethinking Paul: Protestant Theology and Pauline Exegesis*, due out next year from Cambridge University Press.

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