

For Immediate Release: August 31, 2023

## VST INKS AGREEMENT WITH UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA TO OFFER PHD DEGREE TO NORTH AMERICAN STUDENTS

**VANCOUVER, BC. August 31, 2023.** The Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria (Republic of South Africa) and the Vancouver School of Theology have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to undertake research and research related activities through the offering of post-graduate studies (Ph.D.) in Theology in the various theological fields. This agreement is for an initial period of five years (to 2028).

Students in the program will work toward a University of Pretoria Ph.D., completing the degree on a full-time or part-time basis. Both the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Theology and Religion, as well as VST, will appoint qualified supervisors for students.

This program will be an attractive option for those wishing to expedite their education by focusing on research, distinct from other North American doctoral programs requiring course work. A student can complete this program with full-time study in three years.

One of the most distinguishing features of this joint program is its international range and opportunity to do cross-cultural research on Truth and Reconciliation for Indigenous and other students. This research Ph.D. is world-class yet is affordable by Canadian standards.

This agreement also reflects the leadership and innovation of the Vancouver School of Theology in theological education. VST's primary mandate is the formation of thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian leaders for the church in the 21st century.

This initiative with the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria positions VST as a change agent and an innovator for the church, while also providing the opportunity to enhance its relationship with the University of British Columbia as a research-intense partner institution.

This highly innovative collaboration with the University of Pretoria further responds to a significant need for a research intensive doctoral program in Western Canada.

VST is the only Canadian theological school to collaborate with the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria, and one of only two institutions in North America with this arrangement. World-wide, the University of Pretoria has 15 existing partnerships, prior to this agreement with VST.

VST will assist interested students by directing them to sources of funding that are available for this program.



Prof. Rantsoa Letšosa  
Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion  
University of Pretoria



Dr. Richard Topping  
President & Vice-Chancellor  
Vancouver School of Theology

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### **About the University of Pretoria – Faculty of Theology and Religion**

The University of Pretoria (UP) is located in South Africa. It is recognized globally as an outstanding, innovative school of teaching and research excellence. The UP Faculty of Theology and Religion has received a very high academic reputation score, which showcases the global prominence of its researchers and faculty.

The mission of the UP Faculty of Theology and Religion is to serve the church, community and science, bearing in mind its devotion to the African context and sensitivity to the concerns of different Christian traditions of faith. As John Mbiti once said: “You are because we are, we are because you are.” Hence, they are proud to count people from across the world among students and alumni.

The UP Faculty of Theology facilitates life-affirming values by seeking to teach theologies that are constructive, critical, relevant, contextual and engaging. By studying at UP’s Faculty of Theology and Religion, students will undertake quality, collaborative, inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary research. The UP Faculty of Theology and Religion creates a space for differing epistemologies, inter-religious dialogue and new technologies so students can engage in the critical reading of texts from religious, historical and life experiences.

The Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria history:  
<https://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-theology-and-religion>

### **About VST**

VST’s core mandate is to educate and form thoughtful, engaged, and generous Christian leaders for the church in the 21st century. VST is a leading theological school, viewed as a change agent and innovator for the church.

VST is an affiliated college of the University of British Columbia ranked in the top 100 schools globally and in the top 10 of most improved theological schools. VST has been recognized by *In Trust Magazine* for its realizing transformational change as it renews theological education. A recipient of a prestigious Pathways for Tomorrow grant from the Lilly Endowment, VST is redefining the critical role of theological field education in preparing clergy. VST is accredited by the Government of British Columbia, and in North America by the ATS (Association of Theological Schools).

The Vancouver School of Theology celebrates its foundational relationships with the Anglican Church of Canada, Presbyterian Church in Canada, and United Church of Canada. VST also welcomes students from many Christian communions, other faith traditions, and Indigenous communities. The Indigenous Studies Program at VST is central to the school’s identity and commitments.

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The Vancouver School of Theology recently celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2021. VST, through its predecessor schools, has been teaching theology in Vancouver since 1893.

The Vancouver School of Theology acknowledges that the land on which they are located is the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) People.

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