



Bearing Witness:

2026 Von Hügel Lecture and REDS5

The VHI was honoured to host two powerful events on 12 and 13 May on the theme of ***Bearing Witness***, explored across interconnecting historical, political, and geographical contexts.

On 12 May 2026, **Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela**, recipient of the [2024 Templeton Prize](#) and recently awarded South Africa's national honour of The Order of the Baobab – Bronze, delivered the annual Von Hügel Lecture at St Edmund's College, giving a talk entitled "Bearing Witness: Responsibility, Recognition, and the Quest for Repair". The lecture offered a profound meditation on memory, trauma, solidarity, and the fragile possibilities of repair in societies shaped by violence.

On 13 May 2026, the Research Engagement and Dialogue Series (REDS5), led by **Professor Alain Tschudin** (UNESCO Chair of Education for Peace and Transformative Solidarity) and co-hosted by the VHI and the Centre for Sustainability Transitions at Stellenbosch University, brought together **Professor**

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Professor Ralf Wüstenberg, Dr Zeina Barakat, and Dr Akuch Anyieth for a multidisciplinary dialogue entitled "Bearing Witness Across Histories of Violence: Reckoning with the Past and Present".

[Read the story](#)



The Lattey Lecture

The 2026 Lattey Lecture, hosted by the Von Hügel Institute on 30 April 2026, was delivered by **Sister Damien Marie Savino** and explored the relationship between theology, ecology, technology, and the human person through Catholic social teaching and Pope Francis' vision of *integral ecology*.

A central theme of the lecture was the call to move beyond a purely technocratic approach to the world and towards a more relational understanding of human life. Reflecting on the biblical vocation "to till and keep" creation, Sr. Damien Marie presented the image of the "gardener" as a model for humanity's role within the wider community of life: one of care, stewardship, and participation rather than control.

The lecture concluded with a discussion of contemporary issues ranging from urban ecology to interreligious dialogue, while emphasising the importance of hope and practical action in addressing environmental challenges.

[Read the story](#)



Von Hügel Institute Working Papers

The VHI is pleased to announce the release of the first publication in the re-established ***Von Hügel Institute Working Papers series***.

The series provides a platform for examining global challenges and questions of contemporary relevance, seeking to stimulate interdisciplinary dialogue in and across the humanities, the arts and the sciences, with emphasis on fostering dialogue and encounter for the common good.

The first paper, “***Fragility and Flourishing: AI and Human Enhancement or Diminishment***” (Prof. Maria Burke, Prof. Gill Goulding, Dr Gianmarco Contino, Prof. Jonathan Warner), stems from an interdisciplinary research initiative at the VHI. Drawing on insights from ethical, theological, economic, and healthcare perspectives it offers a wide-ranging examination of the impact of AI on human flourishing, dignity, equality, and social justice.

Completed before the release of Pope Leo XIV’s encyclical Magnifica Humanitas, which addresses the protection of the human person in the age of AI, this paper offers a meaningful contribution to the ongoing discussion concerning the moral responsibilities and ethical challenges emerging from the rapid development of AI technologies.

[View and download here](#)



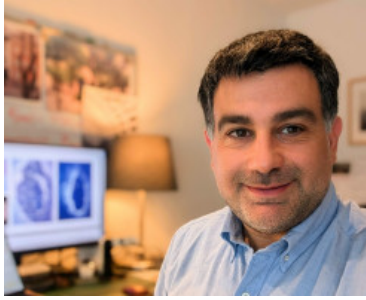
2024–2025 Annual Report

The Von Hügel Institute is pleased to share its **2024–2025 Annual Report**, reflecting on a year of research, public engagement, teaching, and collaboration.

The report highlights the Institute's activities, including lectures, conferences, research initiatives, publications, and partnerships, while showcasing the contributions of our scholars, associates, and wider community.

We invite you to explore the report and learn more about the projects and achievements that have shaped the Institute's work during the 2024–2025 academic year.

[View and download here](#)



Brocher Foundation Residency Award

We are delighted to share that **Dr Gianmarco Contino** has been awarded a prestigious residency at the **Brocher Foundation** for his project *Medicalising Uncertainty: Predictive AI, Anticipatory Patients, and the Ethics of the Open Future*.

The residency, which will take place in July 2027, will provide an opportunity to further develop research on predictive artificial intelligence, clinical uncertainty, and the ethical implications of anticipatory medicine.

[Find out more](#)



In Memoriam: Professor Colin H. Williams (1950–2026)

We are very sorry to share the news that **Professor Colin H. Williams**, Honorary Professor at Cardiff University's School of Welsh, former Senior Research Associate of the Von Hügel Institute and Visiting Fellow of St Edmund's College, has passed away.

Colin was a longstanding and much-valued member of both the VHI and wider College community. He will be remembered warmly by many members and friends of St Edmund's.

An internationally respected scholar, Colin's work focused on sociolinguistics, language policy, bilingual education, minority relations, and political geography. Alongside his academic work, he advised governments and international organisations on minority and language policy issues. Through the VHI, he also contributed to research on post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Most

recently, Colin had been awarded a prestigious Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship to carry out research on *The Transformation of Official Language Regimes*, focusing on minority language policies as an expression of human respect and dignity and as an attempt to reduce structural strains arising from former discriminatory approaches.

We extend our sincere condolences to Colin's family, friends, colleagues, and all who knew him.

Support the VHI

The Von Hügel Institute for Critical Catholic Inquiry of St Edmund's College, Cambridge, celebrates the richness of Catholic thought and culture. Through our programming, research, and engagement in public discourse, we promote mutual enrichment between the best of the secular academy and the Catholic traditions of theology, philosophy, ethics, arts and sciences.

Support the VHI: <https://bit.ly/3D0HdAY>.



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