

# PSYCHE AND SPIRIT: connecting psychiatry and spirituality

Newsletter of the Section on Religion, Spirituality & Psychiatry  
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OBITUARY

Editorial Board: Alan Fung, Alexander Moreira-Almeida  
and Peter J. Verhagen

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Remembering our friend and colleague,  
Professor Bernard Janse van Rensburg  
(1960-2020)



Professor Bernard Janse van Rensburg (1960-2020)

It was with shock and sadness that the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) received the tragic news of the sudden passing of **Professor Bernard Janse van Rensburg** on 23 April 2020. We express our sincere condolences to his family and to the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP).

We all recall Bernard - and his work in South Africa and with the international community - with great affection and admiration. He worked closely with Prof Dinesh Bhugra and others from WPA and SASOP to prepare the 2016 WPA International Congress of Psychiatry in Cape Town - a meeting that was pivotal in showcasing South African psychiatry to the world. Bernard played a lead role in its preparation and nothing was ever too much trouble for him; his qualities of dedication, patience, compassion and academic excellence shone through.

Bernard was a leader, a mentor, an academic, a dear friend to many, and a kind and gentle person who was deeply passionate about psychiatry. We mourn his loss to our profession, our community and to all he touched.

*Prof Helen Herrman AO, WPA President, Australia*

*Prof Afzal Javed, WPA President-Elect, UK*

*Prof Roy Abraham Kallivayalil, WPA Secretary General, India*

*Prof Solly Rataemane, Past WPA Board Member, South Africa*

I am shocked to know that our beloved friend Bernard has passed away. We have been friends for years and I've always been impressed by his kindness, friendship, spirituality and commitment for the greater good. As Secretary of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry in the last two terms, he was of immense importance for Section's many works. I'm deeply touched and will keep him in my memory and prayers.

*Alexander Moreira-Almeida,*

*Chair of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry*



It has been very difficult to digest this news. We are still coming to terms with this. However, it is difficult to imagine the section or our group without Bernard in physical form.

Bernard touched everyone in a special way. His humility, honesty, transparency and respect for everyone's opinion is a lesson in living values. The greatest tribute for him is to keep running our section with same set of values and trusteeship that he showed.

Condolences to all of us, his extended family and his family through blood. We will miss YOU Bernard in physical form but Always Remember You.

*Avdesh & Sujatha Sharma,  
Co-chair of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry*

This is a shocking and moving message to hear, such a kind and committed man. We will remember him; we will sympathize with his loved-ones in our prayers.

*Peter J. Verhagen,  
Past chair of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry*

This is most shocking news. Bernard was highly accomplished and contributed so much to our field and psychiatry overall - yet he was so humble, kind and always willing to help. He will be dearly missed by all of us.

*Alan Fung,*

*Member of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry committee*

We are shocked to hear these sad news and so glad that he had a chance to contribute so much and specifically so recently to our meeting in December.

*RH Belmaker, MD | פרופ' חיים בלמקר*

*Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, Ben Gurion University | פרופ' אמריטוס*

*לפסיכיאטריה באוניברסיטת בן גוריון*

Indeed, Bernard was an example of dedication, kindness, and committed to connections.

That he passed away is shocking news. I join your prayers.

*Arjan Braam,*

*Member of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry committee*

So saddened to hear of Bernard's passing. His generosity of spirit when I first met him in Pretoria and his grasp of the importance of spiritual understandings and of the necessary political action was so motivating and far sighted. My indebtedness to him, as to my African/ Ugandan friends, was life enhancing. Furthermore he left his mark on WPA as a whole, the Religion and Spirituality Section and the invigorating 2016 International Congress. He will unmissed. Commemorating his life would be very helpful to many.

*John Cox,*

*Past WPA secretary general and co-chair of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry*

So sorry to hear about his passing.

*Simon Dein,*

*Member of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry committee*

This is such a shock and loss. Deepest condolences to Bernard's family.

*Valerie DeMarinis,*

*Member of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry committee*

I was really shocked receiving this email. He was such a supportive and humble person. He will truly be missed.

*Hussien Elkholy,*

*Member of the WPA Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry committee*

## Rest in Peace Beloved Bernard



SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY  
OF PSYCHIATRISTS

