

Editorial: Celebrating the Contribution of Pentecostal Women in Australasia

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The theme of this first issue of *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* for 2022 is 'Pentecostal Women in the Asia Pacific.' Few scholars have explored the contributions of Pentecostal women across one of the largest and fastest growing church movements in the world. The focus therefore is on Pentecostal women (past and present) in the region across the fields of leadership, education, ministry, church planting, and denominational movements. This includes the contributions of Pentecostal female academics across the Asia Pacific who are exploring new areas of research. This issue therefore is a celebration and voicing of Pentecostal women in the Asia Pacific.

In the first article, Glenda Hepplewhite explores the contributions of pentecostal women in higher education through a case study of Alphacrucis College, the national college of the Australian Christian Churches (ACC). Women are entering theological colleges more than ever, yet this does not necessarily result in them entering church ministry and leadership positions upon graduation. Hepplewhite focuses on the personal stories of female students (past and present) to give insight into their experiences. She discusses the motivating factor of calling from God to enter ministry. For women students interviewed, they considered their theological studies as part of their preparation and obedience to that call, despite there not being any formal educational requirements for provisional ordination in the ACC. Yet, she also notes that "The most effective way to train students in egalitarian leadership patterns is to model it within the classrooms." Students learn and model what they see in their churches and training institutions. However, Hepplewhite notes the lack of female role models and mentors and suggests this is a key factor for the success of female theological students seeking professional development.

The focus then shifts in the next three articles from examining the contribution of pentecostal women within higher education to the contributions of pentecostal women to new areas of research. In the following article, Sarah Callista and Qianwen Deng present a thought-provoking reading of Mark 5:25-34. They explore issues of racism and marginalisation in Australia that have been exposed by the global pandemic and use this experience in their reading of the story of the woman with the issue of blood. Callista and Deng challenge simplistic interpretations of this narrative that ignore the pain and the suffering of the woman prior to her healing. Like the experience of some Asian immigrant women, the experience of the women in Mark 5 understood in the narrative through an intersectional framework is one of marginalisation, labelling and voicelessness. Yet, amid her diseased identity and marginalisation, the woman seeks Jesus. Callista and Deng also emphasise empathy in their reading as they draw parallels of her experience in the

narrative with their own experiences as Asian women in Australia of being labelled as diseased during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Wendy Manzo explores the role of the Holy Spirit in the creative work of the prophetic artist in pentecostal worshipping communities. A gifted artist herself, Manzo begins by noting that most prophetic artists are women and that generally women are at the forefront of pioneering this type of work in the visual arts. Yet, there has been very little critical reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in the prophetic art as a visual form of prophecy. This is surprising considering the first explicit reference to the empowerment of the Spirit in the biblical canon is in relation to the artisans of the tabernacle (Exodus 28:1-3; 31:1-7). Manzo argues that such Spirit inspired art is not just decorative but indeed inspirational and can be associated with the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1-3). She rejects the separation between secular and sacred art forms and topics. Instead, Manzo draws on both the doctrines of creation and inspiration in allowing the Spirit to inspire creative works. One of the main gifts from Manzo's article is the challenge to not reduce prophetic art and prophetic artists (who are predominantly women) to mere decoration. Instead, as her own journey (using an autoethnographical framework) highlights, to appreciate the transformative work of the prophetic artist who "speaks the language of God in images."

Narelle Coetzee and Emma Austin examine yet another narrative of a woman in desperate circumstances. They investigate Sarai's scheme in Genesis 16.2 to impetuously "build" a family through Hagar as a strategy to circumvent the crisis and shame of her infertility. Utilising the approach intertextuality, they highlight the verbal resonances of the language of building to point to the possible motivations and character of Sarah in her self-appointed strategy of surrogacy. Sarai's actions point to building a family by her own schemes, rather than trusting God. Yet, God ultimately provides a son and builds her family despite her own conflicted attempts. Coetzee and Austin challenge readers to consider their own activities and motivations in ministry.

The final contribution to this celebration of Pentecostal women in the Asia Pacific focuses on Malaysia. Part of the challenge in researching women in this region is that lack of sources detailing the ministry of women. They are often 'hidden figures' despite active and public ministry roles. To this end, Tryphena Law Pek Leng and Andrew Ling Siew Lim have provided dictionary style entries on key Pentecostal women pioneers and leaders of Malaysia. The result is a foundation and new resource to capture the stories and testimonies of these remarkable women.

Overall, this issue showcases some remarkable Pentecostal researchers, emerging scholars, leaders, and pioneers. With such gifted women, the future of Pentecostalism in the Asia Pacific region looks bright.