

## The Posture of Hospitality

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In the context of our global community, there is a necessity to practice hospitality. The Bible emphasizes that demonstrating practical kindness to strangers and neighbours is expected of all followers of God. The requirement for believers to demonstrate hospitality is echoed in the New Testament (Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 5:10; 1 Peter 4:9; 3 John 1:8). In fact, Tremper Longman III observes it was expected that hospitality would especially be modelled by the Christian leaders of the churches (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8). Yet, while hospitality toward others within the church was expected, this passage from Genesis also reminds us that hospitality should also be extended to the stranger.<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:1-2 instructs: “Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

The importance of hospitality is emphasised in this final issue of *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* for 2022 due to the diversity of locations, interests and communities reflected in the articles. This current issue of *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* offers various perspectives on pentecostal theology and ministry, and in various ways present ecumenical insights that can enhance pentecostal practice. In the first article, Geoffrey Butler offers a potential way for pentecostals to re-think their hermeneutic beyond the current limited influences of fundamentalism. Butler suggests the reading methods of the Church Fathers are compatible with pentecostal spirituality and therefore offer a suitable model for pentecostals to integrate. A steady diet of historical-critical methods alone is insufficient and unsatisfactory for the pentecostal community as they leave readers impoverished of vital theological and spiritual vitality. As the majority of pentecostal hermeneuts arguably seek to interpret Scripture for both the church and academy, incorporating approaches that emphasise the importance of a theological reading *for* and *with* the church to balance the often over-reliance historical-critical methods is a welcome suggestion.

Butler dedicates his article to the late Dr. Bradley Truman Noel. The Pentecostal academic world was shocked and deeply saddened by the unexpected passing of this excellent scholar. Brad was a gifted theologian but also deeply committed to the church and helping bridge the gap between the church and academy. His popular podcasts, writings, and teachings were greatly appreciated and impacted the community beyond the borders of his native Canada to reach others abroad, even Down Under. I met Brad many years ago through the Society for Pentecostal Studies and found common interest in exploring issues in pentecostal worldview. When my own college was

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<sup>1</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Genesis*. The Story of God Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 250.

developing a core curriculum in worldview to be taught across all disciplines, it was Brad's input that we sought. I am sure this same kind of contribution by Dr Noel was repeated in many other contexts. Butler's dedication is a fitting tribute to a truly gracious and gifted colleague.

Moving from early church exegesis, in the second article, Julia Kuhlin takes us to the cutting edge of digital religion. Kuhlin's study focusses on two congregations in North India, and how digital technology is being incorporated into their community life. Kuhlin adopts three aspects of Hine's E3-model: embedded, embodied and everyday. She demonstrates how the interactions of the congregants in their church WhatsApp reflected these notions. Kuhlin's work has several important implications for pentecostal scholars. First, it highlights the need to take seriously the online spaces and activities of churches in our research and even theology. Secondly, Kuhlin demonstrates that the online experience of congregants reflected their expectations of the offline nature of church, and therefore has theological implications for ecclesiology and practical ministry.

Rob Yule provides insight into the beginnings of the charismatic renewal within the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, Yule highlights the role of pioneers who emerged during the 1960s and 70s, including some from the Brethren assemblies and from within Presbyterianism. The emphasis on lay ministry and the gifts of the Holy Spirit manifest among members in local congregations is an important contribution. However, what stands out in Yule's article is not only the global interaction but the ecumenical connections between the charismatic leaders and communities they represented. Throughout Yule's account, there are numerous interactions between Presbyterians with Brethren, Pentecostals, and parachurch organisations that were facilitated by the charismatic renewal. As Yule notes, the renewal was not just for individuals but for the whole congregations and their mission, and clearly impacted church communities beyond the Presbyterian family. However, as Yule's article concludes, the story of charismatic renewal includes not only glory but also shame, as reflected in the tragic end of the once dynamic Presbyterian Renewal Ministries.

The final article by Adam Dodds continues the focus on the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Dodds provides a foundation for his discussion on church planting practices based on Newbigin's theology of church unity and mission. Dodds then reflects on his own experiences as a pastor, identifying a questionable church-planting practise that he labels as "ecclesiastical cannibalism." Dodds is clear that this practise does not refer to transfer growth but is identified as a particular strategy of promoting and marketing a new church to attract Christians from other churches in the community as a cheap "quick growth" stratagem. This approach capitulates to the consumerist tendencies in our Western culture and leads to distrust among churches. Let this be a prophetic reminder for our pentecostal communities of the tragedy of trusting in marketing techniques rather than trusting in the Lord of the harvest (Matt 9:38).