

## About this Journal

### Editorial

As I said in Issue 7, we are privileged to be presenting two issues of *Journal of Contemporary Ministry* this year. This Issue 8 retains more of our “standard” structure, including four peer-reviewed articles, a pastoral reflection, a student essay and fifteen stimulating book reviews.

It may prove to be one of our most controversial, or at least stimulating, issues. The articles address such current topics as child abuse, LGBTI and the church, divorce, domestic violence and debates about contemporary worship.

They reflect something of the changing culture that Christians are now operating in. Many of the values and beliefs we “took for granted” are being challenged and even rejected outright by the wider society we live in, at least in the Western world. Hopefully the *Journal of Contemporary Ministry* will help us think through our responses to these changes and challenges. It is also notable that the majority of our contributors are female and nearly all are currently working on doctoral projects, implying that this journal may have given them a starting voice to express their research conclusions. That’s something I take pride in as editor.

Let me introduce the contributions in this issue to you.

**Rob Hornby** opens with a re-examination of the thorny issue of divorce between Christians. Hornby demonstrates the impasse debates on this topic have reached, especially among evangelicals who hold to the Bible as their final authority. He suggests that new insights might emerge by studying not just the teaching of Jesus but also how he acted towards people in troubled situations. This opens up a stimulating exegetical study.

**Julie Gardiner** undertakes her reflection on the famous “Good Samaritan” parable in the context of her research into discussions between Christians and LGBTI people within the Baptist church in South Australia. She avoids some of the current arguments and dogmatic conclusions, offering instead a pathway towards respectful dialogue based on acceptance of the ‘other.’

**Nadia Pavich** discusses a new form of therapy to help bring healing to those abused as children. She explains and illustrates (including with drawings) a new form of spiritual discipline called “Tractio Divina”, which combines some older spiritual practices and therapy through art in a stimulating way.

I’m always encouraged when I find that people are actually reading the journal and responding to its contents. So I was pleased to include **Sarah Bacaller**’s response to the article in Issue 6 by Clayton Coombs on worship and the mega church. Bacaller finds fault with Coombs’ conclusions but even more with his logic. Her analysis of the philosopher Immanuel Kant is stimulating and informative. We were then pleased to offer **Clayton Coombs** a “right of reply” in his Rejoinder. I’ll leave it to you to decide who had the better case but it’s very gratifying to have such a debate in this journal.

All these articles were subject to “double blind” peer review and went through several revisions prior to publication.

In our standard issues, we always try to include a **Pastoral Reflection** of a less academic, but still serious, nature. **Kevin Muriithi**’s contribution fits this requirement superbly and also gives readers insight into the thinking and changing attitudes of African young people, especially in key areas of sexuality, and suggests ways that youth workers can operate in this environment.

Next we have an outstanding **Student Essay** from **Wendy Hayes**. Wendy provides a fresh perspective on domestic violence and challenges conservative churches to come up with more positive and helpful responses, rather than just repeating tired and one-sided lines on submission and commitment.

We also have some 15 **book reviews** of interesting and challenging new material that will contribute to our thinking about ministry today. Thanks to Stephen Parker for editing this section.

Each of these contributions is worthy of your attention and reflection.

Finally, it is with mixed feelings that I announce **my retirement** as Editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Ministry*. It has been an honour to serve in this way and hopefully to lay a solid foundation for a great future. The journal began life in 2015 as an outlet for students, faculty and friends of Harvest Bible College. It nearly died when Harvest was merged with the larger Alphacrucis University College at the end of 2017. I am grateful

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to Professor Philip Hughes and the Christian Research Association for giving it a new lease of life. I am also thankful to all those who have contributed peer-reviewed articles, student essays, pastoral reflections, research notes and book reviews over the last 8 years. The editorial board has been incredible supportive through all this time and I have enjoyed working with a number of great colleagues and volunteers who have made the production of each issue possible. The journal managers, initially Kerrie Stevens and recently Ashley Manly, have done a lot of the hard detail work to produce each issue. Thank you so much.

As I pass the baton to a successor (still to be appointed), let me encourage you to read this journal, tell others about it and hopefully contribute material to future issues. If you have never considered contributing to an academic journal, start with a review of a recent book in the broad field of Christian ministry.

Jon Newton