



Editorial

Focusing our Efforts

A few weeks ago, I read an opinion piece about Contemporary Christian Music by Jonathan Aigner (<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/ponderanew/2017/04/28/reasons-dont-listen-christian-music-entertainment>). The author was highly dismissive of contemporary Christian music as not even really contemporary, let alone Christian or theologically valid. It is “mostly unremarkable garbage”, he wrote. I was interested in the reasons he advanced for giving up on listening to CCM for entertainment: it’s a poor derivative of mainstream pop music, Christians should engage positively with secular culture rather than withdrawing into a kind of Christian ghetto (my phrase, not his), buying CCM increases its unhealthy presence and influence in church worship and “it perpetuates lame, bogus, or just bad theology”. Instead, Aigner urges Christians to listen to classical music, other pop music or just no music at all (we don’t need to constantly fill our heads with music just because it’s there).

He has some legitimate points, though I think he probably overstates the case. However, whatever you think of Aigner’s piece, or the so-called “worship warfare” debate that particular engages a lot of American Christians; it raises some broader issues related to contemporary Christian ministry, the focus of this journal. In particular, how much should contemporary ministry (which for this journal is not a “style” of ministry but just ministry of today) be influenced by trends in society at large? It’s not a new issue and ministers tend to oscillate between some form of “spiritual purity” and some kind of contextualisation as we try to engage people “outside” the church world with the gospel. One of the articles in Issue 1 of this journal was critical of the use of visual technology in contemporary church worship. However, if the church only sings eighteenth century hymns to a pipe organ accompaniment, reads from the King James Version and preaches pure biblical exposition to a congregation dressed in their “Sunday best” and sitting in pews, it is danger of dying from lack of engagement with a rapidly changing (western) world. On the other hand, if churches are fully “contemporary” in the sense of “smoke machines”, loud music, casual dress, smart professional presentation, catchy mini-sermons and the like, they may have nothing significant to say to a culture that’s becoming more and more distant from its Christian roots.

The question I want to raise is, how much actual empirical research has been done on such dilemmas? Do we actually know whether contemporary styles of church attract, keep or alienate young people, or indeed anyone? Both sides of such debates are in danger of parading their own preferences, anecdotes or experiences as evidence. And even the Bible doesn't give us precise answers to these questions.

The purpose of a journal like this is to provide a place for scholars and ministers to discuss contemporary ministry and all the issues and questions that impact on that (like the points above) in a way that draws on good research and scholarship. The problem is that there are so many issues that can be discussed and this is reflected in the range of topics that postgraduate students at Harvest Bible College choose to do research projects on as well as the topics of articles submitted to this journal and the papers presented at our annual research conference. When a potential Doctor of Ministry student contacts me, one of my first questions is (obviously), "What do you want to do research about?" As it is a DMin program, I automatically reject topics that are purely theological or biblical in nature, as there are better programs that suit such areas of investigation. But even within that category of ministry, there is such a broad range of possibilities. DMin students at Harvest are investigating such topics as pastoral care of same-sex-attracted people, sacred space, hearing from God, GenY and the church, overseas aid by local faith organisations, relationships between Christians and Jews, Pentecostal churches and people with long-term problems, speaking in tongues, inner healing, local churches and social welfare, integration of Asian migrants into Australian churches - and so on.

For this reason, and to stop our resources being stretched too thin (always a danger with any postgraduate program), at Harvest we have chosen five research domains to focus on, based partly on the research interests of our five leading academics:

1. **Leadership in Local Churches and Society** led by Dr Albert Haddad, Chief Academic Officer at Harvest, whose doctoral research was about leadership and change. He is the author of *Arise to Lead: 5 Fundamentals to Becoming an Effective Leader* (High Bridge Books, 2015).
2. **Ministry and Society**, led by Dr Philip Hughes, Chief Supervisor at Harvest, author of many books and articles in his former role at Christian Research Association.
3. **Intercultural Ministry and Global Christianity** led by Dr Ian Grant, Vice-President Emeritus at Harvest and a leading Pentecostal missiologist. His doctoral research was about leadership in a cross-cultural context, specifically in Papua New Guinea.
4. **Wellbeing and Ministry** led by Dr Nigel Pegram, Postgraduate Fellow at Harvest. Nigel's doctoral research was about the role of emotional intelligence in the prevention of ministry burnout. He is co-author of *Ministry Life Skills Foundations: Key Lessons in Leadership and Discipleship* (Ministry Life Skills Centre, 2010, with Roger Tan).
5. **Issues in Pentecostal Ministry and Local Churches** led by Dr Jon Newton, Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Research at Harvest, Editor of this journal and author of *The Revelation Worldview: Apocalyptic Thinking in a Postmodern World* (Wipf & Stock, 2015). Jon's research interests include Revelation, Christian worldview and Australian Pentecostalism.

These are still very broad categories but we hope they will help Harvest and its associated entities, including this journal, to focus its research efforts. In the future, we may decide to present themed issues of the journal focusing on each of these domains, or at least to classify articles under these five headings.

Let me introduce our authors for this issue and their articles.

We start with a new feature: the keynote addresses at last year's Harvest Research Conference. Our keynote speaker in 2016 was Rev. Professor Mark Cartledge, who serves as Professor of Practical Theology at Regent University in Virginia, USA. He has been a minister in the Church of England (UK) for over twenty-five years and has worked in parish ministry, overseas theological education in an Anglican seminary in Nigeria as well as campus ministry in the UK (Universities of Liverpool and Durham). He has taught in seminary (Durham) and secular University departments (Lampeter and Birmingham) over the last sixteen years. He is the author of several books, including most recently *The Mediation of the Spirit* (Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), which our journal reviewed in 2016 (Issue 2). In his addresses, he spoke to the conference theme "Can theology be practical?" In the first address, Cartledge discussed theory, practice, wisdom, spirituality and context, exploring the whole concept of "practical theology". His second address was entitled "A Reflection on Renewal Methodology and the Practice of Research". Here he seeks to show a renewal (i.e. Pentecostal-charismatic) perspective can contribute to practical theology and empirical research on the church and its mission for the benefit of church, academy and society. These addresses are academic in nature, but they underpin the kind of research that the conference and this journal wish to promote.

The next section of the journal consists of four peer-reviewed articles.

Rev. Dr Philip Hughes is the Chief Supervisor at Harvest Bible College and one of the most experienced researchers on Australian Christianity during his long tenure as chief researcher for the Christian Research Association. He has a string of publications to his name. In this article, "Theology and Social Sciences in Ministry Research", he picks up the debate about how much Christian researchers should draw on the methods and findings of the social sciences. He particularly discusses an empirical research project about youth ministry of local churches in Australia today. Since reaching youth is a central concern of contemporary ministers, this article has some important conclusions.

Professor Bruce Stevens holds the Wicking Chair of Ageing and Practical Theology at Charles Sturt University, Canberra (funded by the J. O. and J. N. Wicking Trust) and author of *Crossfire! How to Survive Giving Expert Evidence as a Psychologist* (Australian Academic Press, 2008), and *Happy ever after?: A Practical Guide to Relationship Counselling for Clinical Psychologists* (Australian Academic Press, 2011, with Dr Malise Arnstein). His article is entitled "Spiritual Learning: A Case Study in Entitlement". In this article, Stevens explores the sense of entitlement people often have as a factor in how people fail to learn and grow spiritually. This article provides a different perspective for the contemporary Christian minister seeking to build emotional and spiritual health in themselves and those they serve.

Dr Nigel Pegram is a Postgraduate Research Fellow at Harvest Bible College. In his article "Appreciative Inquiry - A Strategy for Being a Healthy Church", he explores how Appreciative Inquiry, a strategy originally developed in the business world as a change-management strategy, can help local churches renew themselves by tapping into what God is already doing in their midst. Pastors of local churches, especially those who may

feel their church is somehow “stuck”, will find some stimulating ideas here that have been used successfully in other local churches.

Dr Lewis McMaster is the senior pastor of Emmanuel Christian Outreach in South Australia. Together with a mixed gender leadership team he pioneered the development of two churches and two Christian Schools in rural South Australia and completed doctoral studies on women and church leadership in the Australian church. **Dr Juhani Tuovinen** is an Associate Professor at the Australian Institute of Business, Senior Research Fellow at the Global Centre for Work-Applied Learning and a freelance Education and Research Consultant. In their article, entitled, “Gender and Leadership Issues in the Australian Church: Leadership Effectiveness - Men Versus Women”, they draw on the National Church Life Survey from 2006 to discuss the comparative effectiveness of male and female church leaders. Their analysis of this research and other research on gender and leadership explores new dimensions of these issues.

Our **pastoral reflection** for this issue comes from a pastor who is presently completing a term of thirty-seven years at the same church, Lighthouse Christian Church in Keysborough, a suburb of Melbourne. **Pastor Richard Warner** was born in the UK but migrated to Australia in pursuit of God’s call on his life. Since Richard and his wife, Pauline, accepted the call to what was then Springvale Assembly of God, Lighthouse Church has been a significant participant in the Pentecostal world in Melbourne, spawning a number of church plants and a multi-campus Christian school among other achievements. He reflects on some of the lessons he has learned in ministry over the long period.

Our outstanding **student paper** for this issue has been written by a member of our Doctor of Ministry cohort, **Christopher Cat**. Christopher lives in Sydney and attends Life Church in Parramatta. The original version of this essay was written as part of a DMin course unit in “Theology, Hermeneutics and Research”. Christopher is researching how Pentecostal theology and pastoral care operate with people experiencing long-term suffering. In this essay, he explores four major Pentecostal writers, representing two different approaches to the issue of health and sickness, a key issue for Pentecostal and charismatic ministers.

Two important resources for readers and students in the area of contemporary ministry are the **book reviews** and lists of relevant **theses** from around the globe. Reading these sections of our journal will help you keep abreast of developments in this and related fields of enquiry.

I commend all the contents of this issue to you as discerning readers and adventurous, enquiring ministers.

In closing, I also want to thank my editorial team - Kerrie Stevens, Astrid Staley and Clayton Coombs - for all their effort in making Issue 3 happen.

(Dr) Jon K. Newton
Editor