

EDITORIAL

Editorial Volume 5 Issue 2

Steve Taylor

Welcome to what is the tenth issue of *Ecclesial Futures*, a journal focused on the mission of God in the world, particularly in local Christian communities and the systems that support them.

The journal began in June 2020, publishing print only through Wipf and Stock. Ten issues later, in December, 2024, we are online and open access, thanks to the support of Radboud University Press and Open Journals, who provide a professional Open-Access publishing platform for scholarly, peer-reviewed journals.

In this issue you will find eight book reviews, a wonderful testimony to a growing community of scholars who are reading, thinking and interacting together.

You will also find five articles that explore the nature of the mission of God as analysed in local church partnerships, spiritual practices, liturgy, patterns of migration and liberative readings of Scripture. The authors are located in South Africa, Philippines, Zimbabwe and United Kingdom and work within Anglican, Catholic, Pentecostal and Reformed denominational systems. The articles and book reviews contribute to a growing body original research about the mission of God in the world in and through Christian communities.

As always, my thanks to my colleagues Nigel Rooms (co-editor), Patrick Todjeras (editor of book reviews), Chris Pipe (copy-editor) and the team at Radboud University Press and Open Journals for their skill and care.

Original research

In a **first** article, Ian Terry explores the role of partnerships in transforming unjust structures of society. The research is located in a local church context, as a Church of England parish embraces mission with the homeless. A feature of the research was gathering the voices and experiences of the homeless, including eighty participants in five focus groups. These lived experiences are then read in dialogue with common good thinking, as a tool for analysis.

The article offers missiologically formed suggestions to empower rough sleepers. Four practical steps forward are outlined. These include the role of listening in giving voice to those who are vulnerable, providing opportunities to empower rough sleepers, offering personal mentoring in the finding of work and working toward advocacy with, not for the homeless, as they challenge bureaucracies to operate in more user-friendly, less de-personalised ways. A feature of the research is the case study approach, that weaves local ministry, research with the homeless and theological reflection on “common good building” among the homeless. Concretely, the article argues that local churches build associations, local groupings, to encourage respectful listening and shared decision-making with the homeless.

In a **second** article, Mookgo Solomon Kgatle argues for a pneumatological missional imagination as a way of understanding migration and mission. The article outlines a lack of theoretical frameworks to understand the intersections of migration and mission. Three theories are proposed. The pneumatological imagination draws on Spirit-mediated encounters, including between God and human beings and among human beings. The missiological spirit understands God the Spirit as the missiological Spirit, empowering believers to move beyond the local area to other nations in sharing of gospel love. The missional imagination involves the orientation of the whole church towards the mission of God. The article proposes these three be woven together as a pneumatological missional imagination, defined as the orientation of the migrant church towards the mission of God through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in encountering people of other nations. This pneumatological missional imagination is relevant for witnessing to others, speaking foreign languages, and orientation to the mission of God.

An illustrative example is used, drawing from the challenges facing the Apostolic Faith Mission Ministry International in the United Kingdom (AFMIMUK). This allows empirical research, particularly participant observation, to be a resource in examining mission and migration. The article argues that the pneumatological missional imagination can empower God’s migrant people amid the challenges of ministering with cultural relevance in a new country, navigating cultural difference and orientation to the mission of God.

The dynamic relationship between culture and faith is explored in a **third** article. Kevin Maicom assesses the reception of Vatican II’s *Directory of Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* (DPPL) in the Philippines. Issued in 2001, the DPPL provided guidance in integrating popular piety with the liturgy. The article provides an initial overview of the complicated interactions between Filipino popular piety and the Catholic liturgy. Festivals incorporate connections to societal issues and human

emotions. Gestures, including dance resonate with the expressive dimensions of Filipino culture. Prayers address socio-political dimensions like poverty, health, education and food. Music draws on cultural elements including the “kundiman”, sad Filipino songs about the wounded hero sacrificing everything for love. Popular piety can allow people to express their communion with God and within the ecclesial community in local cultural forms. Equally, it can distort Christian doctrine in liturgical practice.

The article then outlines a framework within the DPPL for assessing popular piety in the liturgy. Four areas – biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological – are outlined and tested with an illustrative example. The “Salubong” is a common Catholic practice which imagines the encounter between Jesus and Mary, his mother following the resurrection. The article teases out connections that are liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological and offers a creative re-reading of Biblical texts that could be used to deepen the integration between Catholic faith and popular piety. Rather than settle for static approaches to culture, the article demonstrates how popular piety can enrich the liturgy in dynamic relationships that enhance the lived experiences of the People of God. A dynamic approach to liturgy emphasises the value of theological education for the future life of the church.

A dynamic approach to Christian life is the focus of a **fourth** article. Peter Ruxton assesses New Monasticism in Britain in light of the missional spirituality of the Celtic *peregrini* who from the sixth century established monastic centres for mission and evangelism in Britain and Ireland. The article groups the spiritual practices of the Celtic *peregrini* into two categories, one distinctively Celtic, the other shared in common with other monastic movements. Aware of the danger of romanticising the past, Ruxton employs a method of “looking through” original texts. The five distinctly Celtic practices involve a intense sense of God’s sacramental presence, a commitment to risky living, a season of formation, an embrace of silence, solitude, evangelism and service and bounded sense of sacred space. Two practices are shared with other monastic movements: a daily rhythm of prayer and Scripture and shared values in a rule of life.

The article then brings the spirituality of the original Celtic *peregrini* into dialogue with four New Monastic expressions. The Iona Community, the Community of Aidan and Hilda, the Northumbria Community and the 24-7 Prayer movement are described. Finally, the life of these new monastic expressions is assessed against the spiritual practices of the Celtic *peregrini*. Ruxton argues that in an age increasingly ambivalent toward institutions, an increased focus on the original spiritual attributes of these Celtic Christians will enrich contemporary expressions of New Monasticism.

In a **fifth** article, Pieter Labuschagne uses decoloniality to interrogate the biblical text. The article uses a method of exegesis by story, which Labuschagne asserts allows modern readers to dwell in their world yet engage with how an ancient community received and utilised the Biblical text. Labuschagne demonstrates the “coloniality” present in Gideon’s initial interaction and yet the possibilities for transformation of identity. The argument is that within the Biblical narrative is the challenge of realising that Gideon’s real prison was not built by his coloniser but was located within in his own mind and heart.

Several conversation partners strengthen the reading offered by Labuschagne. One conversation partner is the sermons of Martin Luther King Jr, in particular his use of the Zaccheus narrative in a sermon in 1957. A second conversation partner is the literature on decoloniality, particularly in the African context which explores the interplay between oppression and agency. The third conversation partner is a careful reading of the impact of apartheid in South Africa on all peoples and analysis of the limits of blaming other cultures.

The article raises important questions for a journal focused on the mission of God in the world. Christian mission has a history deeply entangled in colonialisation. Within the limits of a single article, Labuschagne offers a constructive approach, working with a single Bible text to test a liberative reading of Scripture. As editors, we welcome further thinking on what it means to share good news among communities enmeshed in coloniality.

A growing body of *Ecclesial Futures* research

With ten issues and over fifty articles, as a journal we are now seeing themes not only within an issue but between issues as well. I highlight three examples.

- Read the article in this issue by Ian Terry on mission with the homeless alongside the article in volume 3, issue 2 by Sally Mann on the place of storytelling in ministry amongst the homeless.¹
- Read the article in this issue by Mookgo Solomon Kgatle on mission and African migration in conversation with the article in volume 3, issue 1 by Naar M’fundisi-Holloway on women from Southern Africa who adopt an entrepreneurial approach in local diaspora networks in the United Kingdom.²
- Read the article in this issue on new monastic spiritualities alongside the article in volume 2, issue 2, by James Fox-Robinson on the Franciscan Vow of Poverty as an Ancient and Modern Resource for Innovative Missional Practice.³

For authors looking to submit articles in the future, we as editors encourage a reading through previous issues of *Ecclesial Futures* to explore the richness of scholarship that is developing around the journal's focus on the mission of God in the world embodied in local Christian communities and the systems that support them.

Transitions and partnerships

We bid farewell Dr Darren Cronshaw, who has moved into a different ministry context. Darren has been on the *Ecclesial Futures* editorial board since the journal began five years ago. As editors, we are thankful for Darren's ministry, in particular the promptness and the constructive tone of his reviews.

As a journal, we welcome Dr Tanya Riches to the Editorial Board. As Director of Master of Transformational Development, Eastern College, Australia, she works with students applying transformational development in the Middle Eastern, African, Asian and Australian contexts. Tanya undertook PhD research that investigated links between urban Aboriginal-led congregations' worship practices and their social justice initiatives. We look forward to being enriched by her research expertise in ethnography, global Pentecostalism, missiology and development studies.

Ecclesial Futures continues to be grateful for the partnership with Radboud University Press and Open Journals. Over the last months, Open Journals has worked with us to upgrade the website at <https://ecclesialfutures.org/> and update policies around transparency in authorship and ethics. Through Diamond Open Access, original research is available free to authors and readers. To receive updates via the newsletter, sign up at <https://ecclesialfutures.org/>.

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References

- 1 Sally Mann. 2022. "Parklife – Listening to Stories as a Deep Missional Practice". *Ecclesial Futures* 3 (2): 11–29.
- 2 M'fundisi-Holloway, Naar. 2022. "Discipleship, Mentorship and Training Which Empowers African Women for Ministry in the Diaspora". *Ecclesial Futures* 3 (1): 41–57.
- 3 James Fox-Robinson. 2021. "The Franciscan Vow of Poverty as an Ancient and Modern Resource for Innovative Missional Practice". *Ecclesial Futures* 2 (2): 73–98.