

## **Pentecostal Missions in Southeast Asia**

Pentecostals have been doing missions in Southeast Asia for around 100 years. In some places such as some sectors of Malaysia and, more recently, places like Cambodia, East Timor, some parts of Indonesia, the minority groups in Myanmar and possibly Vietnam, they have enjoyed some success. In places like the Philippines and Singapore, the growth has been spectacular. However, among groups dominated by Islam and Buddhism, they have not always done as well, although there are some encouraging trends. In this edition, we will reflect on the work that God is doing in three of these countries, the Philippines, Cambodia and Indonesia. However, the application of these articles could be broadly applied in other Majority World contexts.

Pentecostal missions in Southeast Asia have traditionally focused on evangelism and discipleship, church planting, workers training and ministries of social concern—although this has not always been a major element. As local churches multiplied and indigenous leaders were put in place, missionaries gradually moved into a partnership paradigm with them.

Except for church planting, we will focus on these elements here. Claudia Janneth Mendoza, a Columbian Assemblies of God veteran missionary to Indonesia, opens this edition with an article on how Muslims in Indonesia process their understanding of the Holy Spirit through their cultural grid of folk Islam. Supernatural power is at the nexus of folk religious practices all over the world and the two hundred million or so folk Muslims in Indonesia are no exception.

Mendoza's thesis is that beyond a power encounter, a sustained biblical pneumatological approach to folk Muslims in Indonesia, where the Holy Spirit meets their felt needs, produces a long-term allegiance to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. She then proceeds to offer evidence to support this thesis by outlining steps that Muslims can take toward embracing Christ and the Spirit through reviewing Paul's redemptive pneumatology in Ephesians. Ephesians, as well as the other Prison

Epistles, is addressed to those coming out of a polytheistic milieu in Asia Minor. Because both the polytheism of ancient Asia Minor and the folk Islam in Indonesia are focused on supernatural power, this pneumatology of this epistle can have a powerful impact not only in Indonesia, but anywhere in the Majority World.

To reach, gather and disciple new believers requires trained pastors, evangelists and missionaries. To accomplish this Bible schools, have, can and must be started in areas where churches exist or are being planted. In the second article, Dianna Clements, who served along with her husband as Assemblies of God USA missionaries to Cambodia for twenty-two years before moving on to the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary to train workers for all of Asia, demonstrates that competent leadership is essential to doing Bible school ministry well.

To be specific, she explores the leadership roles of Bible school administrators, faculty, and students, discussing guiding principles that will facilitate growth of Bible school leaders which will increase the effectiveness of the schools' training programs. The end goal, then, is to graduate well trained leaders for our churches, other Bible schools and missionary efforts that will reach more people for Christ and multiply more churches.

Virtually all Asian pastors and church leaders recognize that poverty is endemic in many parts of Asia. Haruka Shitabayashi, an MDiv student from Japan who has a background in working in ministries of social concern, looks at how one local Christian NGO known as Turning Point Ministries (TPM) in Itogon, Benquet, Philippines, is holistically addressing practical socioeconomic issues, specifically livelihood and education, or the lack thereof, being one of the reasons for poverty in their community.

She uses Brian Howell and Jenell Paris' definition of social inequality as "differential access to valuable resources" based on social grouping.<sup>1</sup> After reviewing a considerable number of statistics and literature on the subject, mainly written by Filipinos and including impressive documentation of the problem in the area served by TPM, she delves into what the Bible says about social equality. She then turns to demonstrating how TPM is successfully addressing these issues through

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<sup>1</sup>Brian M Howell and Jenell Williams Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2019), 75, Kindle.

farming and other developmental projects, as well as caring for widows and orphans and various educational initiatives while maintaining a Christ centered focus.

Finally, Bill Snider's article on partnership in the Philippines ties these subjects together to evangelize and disciple, plant churches, train workers and conduct ministries of social concern. In this article, Snider contends that international mission partnerships struggle in praxis due to a lack of emphasis on a Biblical theology of partnership, which in turn is due to a lack of understanding the necessity of relationships based on mutuality and reciprocity where power is shared. Snider further contends that this is also due to a lack of sensitivity in listening and learning what partnership means to the Majority World Church. In exploring a Biblical foundation for partnership, which, in true Pentecostal tradition, calls for a strong reliance on the Holy Spirit, he examines the true meaning of *koinonia* in the New Testament. He does this by focusing on several key passages in New Testament where the Holy Spirit is an active participant in partnerships.

After reviewing the current literature as well as the results of his own personal discussions with leaders in the region, he concludes by suggesting how the Majority World Church can contribute to the conversation about mission partnerships and further suggests several missiological implications for cross cultural workers serving this region.

Regular readers will note that we normally have about six articles. This time we have only four, but two articles are longer than normal, making the quantity of content about the same. We be back to the normal number of articles next time.

As always, comments and questions can be sent to me through our website, [www.aptspress.org](http://www.aptspress.org). I always enjoy hearing from our readers.

In Christ,  
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Managing Editor