

A Time of Celebration: the 25th Anniversary of the Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies

With this edition, the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies (AJPS)* completes its 25th year of continuous publication, making it the longest running journal of its kind in the English language in the Majority World. We thank God for his faithfulness to us. I would also like to express my thanks to my predecessors, William Menzies, Wonsuk Ma, Joseph Suico and Paul Lewis, upon whose shoulders I now stand, as well as all the editors, formatters and others, past and present, who have worked so hard to make this happen.

In honor of this momentous occasion, we asked Drs. Glen Menzies and Bob Menzies, the two sons of the late Dr. William Menzies, the founder of the Journal, who had a vision for providing opportunities for Asian Pentecostal scholars a place to publish their work and reflect on the issues of the day, as they saw them, to write about their father's theological legacy for this edition. For William Menzies, this was part of a larger vision that he had embraced years before as a co-founder of the Society For Pentecostal Studies and its journal, *Pneuma*, whose contribution to the Pentecostal/Charismatic (PC) movement and, especially, the development of Pentecostal academic publications, is beyond calculation. Over the years, the *AJPS* has gained wide acceptance as a leading voice in Asian Pentecostalism, for which we are eternally grateful.

The beginning of the *AJPS* must be seen as part of Menzies' other significant contributions to the pioneering and development of a research culture at the school we represent, the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary. In 1993, an annual lectureship, which now bears his name, was begun to promote Pentecostal theology in Asia.¹ The APTS Press was founded in 1995 and has gradually gained acceptance as a Pentecostal publisher in Asia.² The Asia Pacific Research Center was also begun in the 1990s as an archive for historical materials on the various Assemblies of God church bodies in the region.³ With the later

¹William W. Menzies and John F. Carter, *Zeal With Knowledge: The First Forty Years of FEAST/APTS*. (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2004), 99.

²Ibid., 104.

³Ibid., 85.

addition of the post-graduate programs after the Menzies departed, APTS has become a respected center for Pentecostal research, reflection, training and practice in the Asia Pacific region.

But our task of reflecting and writing about Asian Pentecostalism is far from being finished. All signs show that the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement, in all its variations, continues to grow at a healthy rate in Asia. Like any other Christian movement in history, it has accomplished great things but has also demonstrated a tendency towards schism, doctrinal error and any number of other problems. This is compounded by the fact that over 90% of Asians follow false religions and ideologies. As teachers in the church (Ephesians 4:11,12), our responsibilities and opportunities to guide, instruct and mentor have perhaps never been greater.

The rest of this edition reflects some central Pentecostal themes, some of which occupy much space in Pentecostal literature, both popular and academic. Following the article on William Menzies, Luke Wesley, a veteran global worker in China, writes about the house church movement in that vast land. Beginning with a comparison between the house churches and the government recognized church, known as the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) in English, he contends that the house church movement will prevail. According to Wesley, it will prevail because of its rich diversity in worship styles, theology and church structures. In other words, it will do so because it is indigenous, not contrived, forced and impacted by the West as he claims the TSPM to be.

The next two articles, one in the northern Philippines and the other in northeastern Thailand, reflect Pentecostal engagement in animistic cultures. Halka Sitabayashi, a recent APTS graduate from Japan, writes within the context of the northern Philippines about a ministry in which she was a student here. In this article, she explores the worldview of the Kankan-ey tribe of the northern Philippines and draws heavily on the work of Julie C. Ma, a pioneering writer in the field, and deals with issues related to spiritual formation of believers there. In doing so, she taps into the area where Pentecostals have often interacted with animistic worldviews, spiritual power, especially divine healing.

Wolfgang Sue, an Australian Assemblies of God missionary among the unreached Isan people of northeastern Thailand, takes on the always challenging issue of ancestor worship among folk Buddhists. Among the Isan, this is seminal research about the Isan in which he outlines the people's fear of evil spirits and angry ancestors. The problem is compounded by the practice of early missionaries to encourage the few Christians to isolate themselves from the rest of the community. Here, Sue searches for a better way of contextualization whereby the Isan can

remain fully integrated in their communities and completely Christlike. Perhaps the most significant value of Sue's reflection here is that it reveals the honest struggle of a missionary among an unreached people group (UPG) where the Church has not been well established and issues like these have not been resolved. As the Body of Christ continues to focus on UPGs many missionaries will be able to relate to his struggle.

Finally, we present two articles on Pentecostal history in East Asia. Christian Nathen Ng traces the origin of the Assemblies of God in Hong Kong in the 20th century claiming that while the churches there have had strong growth and are among the largest denominations there, they have received little academic attention, according to Ng. Furthermore, he responds to what he claims are inaccurate Pentecostal stereotypes and responds to questions that reveal the multifaceted realities of Assemblies of God churches in Hong through some cases studies.

We conclude this edition with the story of four pioneers among Assemblies of God missionaries in China, William Wallace Simpson and his wife, Harold and Josephine Baker, Les and Ava Anglin and Marie Stephany. All of them did evangelism and church planting and at least three of them also engaged in meeting the physical needs of the people they served. All of them persevered against great odds over many years of faithful service.

On a personal note, this year reflects a personal milestone for me as I complete my 10th year as the managing editor of this journal. I am thankful to God and give him glory for what we have been able to do over the past decade and look forward with great anticipation of what the future holds.

Warmly,
Dave Johnson, DMiss
Managing Editor