

APTS Silver Jubilee Edition

Sixty years have now passed since the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS), then known as the Far East Advanced School of Theology (FEAST) and located in Metro Manila, first opened its doors to a total of six students. It began by offering only bachelor's degrees because the Assemblies of God Bible institutes in the Asia Pacific and Pacific Oceania regions, which the school was designed to serve, offered only three-year diplomas at the time. As Bible school teachers updated their credentials, FEAST/APTS upgraded to master's degrees and, eventually, added post-graduate programs. As of March, 2024, a total of 1,441 students from fifty nations have graduated with their Bachelor's, Master of Arts or Master of Divinity, or with one of our post-graduate degrees. In many cases, students went on for a second degree at well. Many of them have also gone on to become district and national leaders in Assemblies of God churches or other groups, normally in their homeland. Hundreds more have gone on to teach in Bible schools all over Asia and Pacific Oceania, multiplying the legacy of FEAST/APTS in training workers for the Lord's great harvest. Faculty members have also travelled far and wide in teaching in FEAST/APTS extensions and other Bible schools as they were invited, as well as participating in forums such as the Asia Pacific Theological Association, the Asia Theological Association and the Association for Theological Association in Southeast Asia, as well as others.

With this celebration also comes a significant transition on our campus. The Reverend Tham Wan Yee, who has served school as president for fifteen years, making him the longest serving president in the history of the school, stepped down in March and will be taking up the president's role at the Ecclesia Theological Seminary in Hong Kong. In honor of his outstanding service and leadership, the Board of Directors, upon the recommendation and endorsement of the faculty, conferred a Doctor of Divinity degree on him at our commence exercises in March, 2024. The new president, Dr. Solomon Wang and his wife, Lori, are appointed missionaries with the Assemblies of God (USA) and have already served many years in restricted access nations, as well as with Convoy of Hope.

We chose to celebrate this memorable occasion by showcasing the work of authors who are all affiliated with APTS in one way or another, hopefully demonstrating a part of our contribution to the work of publishing within the Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions in Asia.

Since training Bible school teachers has been one of the core goals of APTS from the beginning, therefore, we lead off this edition with two articles about theological education by two alumni and resident APTS faculty members, Drs. William Toh and Darin R. Clements. Toh's article, *Leadership Formation and Theological Education: Assessing the Efficacy of Leadership Formation in Undergraduate Programs at Bible Schools*, opens with several questions regarding whether the Church is losing its impact in the world or in fact becoming healthier and more robust in fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. If the Church is losing its effectiveness, is it tied to leadership? If so, what role may theological institutions have played in this demise and what should be done? His purpose, then, is to answer these questions within the context of undergraduate theological education.

Darin R. Clements' article is entitled *Creating a Dynamic Balance between Theory, Practice, and Calling: A Pedagogical Model for Pentecostal Theological Education in Asia Pacific*. He begins by noting a well-known problem that theological education has always struggled with the balance between academic and practical training. He then discusses the challenge of creating a dynamic balance for Pentecostal schools in the Asia Pacific and Oceania regions.

The third article comes from Lora Angeline E. Timenia, another APTS faculty member, regarding Deborah, the prophetess spoken of in Judges 4:4-5:31. In this thought-provoking study, Timenia asks if the Spirit of Yahweh empowered a woman to lead. She also deals with what the significance of Deborah's story for the leadership crisis in her context might mean and if the story is significant for women in Christian leadership today. To answer these questions, she uses a narrative-theological analysis of Deborah's story, beginning with the proposal that the Spirit of Yahweh did indeed anoint Deborah as a leader, prophet, and judge and that her inclusion in the book of Judges reflects Yahweh's sovereignty in choosing his leaders, including women.

APTS faculty member Joel Tejedo's article reflects another excellent contribution by this author, along with that of Timenia, to the developing field of Filipino Pentecostal studies, in which he is already a leading scholar. This article comes from his long term research on megachurches in Metro Manila, a study underwritten by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

Noting that many of the megachurches in the Philippines are shaped by different religious traditions and theological orientations, his focus here is on Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF), a church that fits the description of indigenous Third Wave Pentecostals, even though it does not make this claim. He claims that with astute leadership and stewardship, VCF has catered to the needs of different groups and has been innovative in its worship services, especially during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, using social media and technology as well as in-person services. Undergirding it all is their passion for ministry, focused on discipleship to mobilize their people for global mission.

Frank D. Macchia's article is drawn from one of his lectures given at 32nd William W. Menzies Annual Lectureship Series, held on our Baguio City, Philippines, campus from January 29 to February 2, 2024, with the theme of Unity in Diversity: Theology in Light of Pentecost. We have retained his lecture style here.

Macchia's concept of the unity in the diversity of communion of the Body of Christ is deeply rooted in the theology of the Trinity. He goes on to claim that "exploring this concept of Triune communion opens up the doctrine of God as a delightful mystery that allows us to view God as a revolutionary concept, utterly unique in the history of religious thought." How he argues this point and comes to his conclusion is worthy of serious consideration by scholars and others alike.

Last but certainly not least, we have included the Lutheran-Pentecostal 2016–2022 Dialogue Statement: "The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me," which summarizes the last round of this dialogue. Our former president, Dr. Tham Wan Yee and two of our adjunct faculty members, Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss and Dr. Olga Zaprometova, were among the participants. We participated in the dialogue and have included it here as part of our efforts in walking out John 17:21 with other members of the Body of Christ.

As always, I welcome your feedback and constructive criticism. You can reach me through www.aptspress.edu or through our office, apts.press@aptspress.edu.

Warmly,

Dave Johnson, D.Miss.
Managing Editor