

Grounded:

In the Body, in Time and Place, in Scripture

3rd Evangelical Women in Academia Conference

Saturday 3rd August, 2019, 9am–5pm

Ridley College

Session 1 Electives: 10.45 – 11.15am

Grace Al-Zoughbi, *The Theology of Theological Education of Women in the Arab World*



This paper explores a theology of theological education in the Arab world by examining the significance of incorporating women's experiences and insights and reviewing the way theological education is done in the context. It calls for women's full participation and contribution in theological education in the Arab world through three key articulations: that a theology of theological education for Arab women is distinctive and it should be distinctive; that women should be full participants in Theological Education and the church in the given context; and, that solid theological reflections on women's calling and vocation affirm this. The theology of theological education has only been discussed more widely in recent years. This paper adds to the discussion by contributing to the importance of not only including women in Theological Education in the Arab world, but also encouraging them to follow God's call regardless of strong patriarchal contexts. It highlights the need for Arab women to be biblically and theologically equipped, which is ultimately a gain to the field of theological education and the world and for fulfilling the Great Commission.

Grace Al-Zoughbi is a Christian Palestinian from Bethlehem, and serves as a lecturer and the Head of Biblical Studies department at Bethlehem Bible College. She holds an MA from the London School of Theology (LST) and is working on her PhD in Theological Education with special reference to women in the Arab world, also through LST.

Katy Smith, *The Transformation and Re-Formation of Israel's Social Identity in Exodus and Leviticus*



The book of Exodus focuses on the formation of Israel as a covenant community whose social-identity is grounded in YHWH's presence with, and in the midst of, his people. In the book's opening chapters, the Israelites' social-identity is based on being descendants of the Patriarchs yet belonging to Pharaoh (Ex. 1–2). However, the text's presentation of Israel's social-identity is transformed as soon as the name YHWH is introduced into the Exodus narrative in the context of divine presence in chapter 3; the Israelites are now YHWH's people and YHWH is now present with them. By taking a literary approach, this paper explores the implications of Israel's transformed social-identity in Exodus and Leviticus, after which this paper offers observations about how these implications contextualise for the church in an Australian secular culture.

Dr Katy Smith is currently the Regional Director for CMS SA-NT and is writing the Exodus commentary for the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the Old Testament series. Before serving with CMS, Katy was the Old Testament Lecturer and Director of Postgraduate Studies at Bible College of South Australia. She completed her doctorate in 2018 through Trinity College Bristol (UK) focusing on the persuasive intent of Leviticus.

Louise Gosbell, *Sensory Experience and the Gospel of John*



The gospel of John is filled with body- and sensory-related language right from its opening chapter with the tactile emergence of God in human flesh. The chief steward at the wedding at Cana confirms the first miracle by tasting the wine. Lazarus' sister is afraid of the stench of his body when he is raised from the dead. The perfumes used to anoint Jesus fill the room with their scent. Those who encounter Jesus are encouraged to hear and see God while He likewise sees and hears them. Indeed, even the miracles themselves in John's gospel are described by the visual term of 'signs.'

Despite this abundance of sensory language, very little investigation has been done into the role the senses play in the gospel of John or any of the New Testament texts. This is despite recent developments in the broader fields of history and cultural anthropology which have forced scholars to recognise that the understanding of the senses is not universal, but rather, different cultures understand the role and purpose of the senses – and even the number of senses – in very different ways. This paper seeks to consider the role of the senses in the Gospel of John in light of current research into the senses in the ancient world and give consideration to what it means to be embodied and sensory beings for believers today.

Dr Louise Gosbell is a lecturer at Mary Andrews College in Sydney and completed her PhD at Macquarie University in 2015. Louise's PhD thesis on disability and the gospels was published with Mohr Siebeck in 2018. Louise is involved in a range of different ministry areas with people with disability including being on the overseeing committee for Jesus Club, a ministry to adults with an intellectual disability, and overseeing the Deaf ministry at her church in Sydney.

Moyra Dale, *Purity: Guarding the Body Corporate*



We can only meet God where we are, in our bodies in space and time. Deity and flesh meet ultimately in the Incarnation. Anthropological theory has long described how the individual body functions as a map of the body corporate. Social values are inscribed in our bodies, how we move, speak and orient ourselves in social space.

Social ordering requires boundaries, with classification of appropriate and inappropriate elements. Purity is a powerful organising paradigm in societies around the world, as a way of guarding the corporate body and its values. Social disruption occurs through 'dirt', famously defined as 'matter out of place': substances or behaviour that cross socially determined boundaries.

Causes of defilement include body fluids, behaviour that breaches moral boundaries, disease and death. Ritual and moral defilement find particular embodiment in women in many societies. Communities guard social boundaries through deterrents such as shame, isolating individuals. Control is also enforced through embodied standards of morality or desirability, such as FGM, or ideal body size. The socially powerless may seek control through their own body, through asceticism, anorexia or cutting.

We meet Jesus as God embodied, who redeems our bodies, individual and corporate, as he redefines and inverts social classifications.

Dr Moyra Dale is an ethnographer who has worked for over two decades in the Middle East. Her research includes adult literacy in Egypt and the women's mosque movement in Syria through women's accounts and understanding of their own lives and realities. She writes and teaches on cross-cultural anthropology and Islam.

Amelia Schwarze, 'Bone of my Bone and Flesh of my Flesh'



How has Christian thinking surrounding the ownership of women's bodies impacted those experiencing domestic violence within the church over the centuries?

The possession and control of women's bodies has been an important issue in all cultures throughout history, including Christian societies, and has recently come to prominence in the #MeToo debates. This paper will explore how evolving theology and church practice has influenced the social and legal status of women as expressed in issues such as coverture, property rights and remedies available for domestic and sexual violence. We will look at key moments where church and societal thinking has evolved in relation to the possession and control of female bodies with a focus on domestic abuse and sexual consent, with a special emphasis on the Australian experience. We will also explore how abuse of the body has real spiritual impacts on women and ultimately affects the health of the church.

Amelia Schwarze is currently the Domestic Violence Area Specialist within the Mercy and Justice Ministries of Anglican Deaconess Ministries. In 2017–2018 Amelia was one of the inaugural ADM Research Fellows looking at the topic of domestic violence in the church.

Monica O'Neil, *Tethered between Reality and Aspiration: Grounding and Formative Practices for Australian Leaders.*



We leaders aspire. We aspire to better, to stronger, to calmer, to livelier. We aspire to wiser. We aspire for and with our communities and our teams. Yet Max De Pree (1987) claimed the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. While this is true of organisational reality, it also speaks to the realities of the leader's formation. Leaders breathe rarefied air. Truth is hidden or extrapolated as those who connect with the leader seek to shield that leader from inconvenient or disturbing realities. To be grounded in both reality and aspiration therefore requires intentional habits.

This essay explores the formation practices which foster the tethering of the (sometimes) ashes of reality in our character with the wonder of aspiration. The paper notes the kind of ethical foundations which inform the shape of good character. It argues three types of habit: examen, friendship, and prayer, as outlined by Joseph Kotva (1997), are grounding and forming for leaders and weaves in stories of such intentional practice by Australian leaders.

Monica O'Neil is an experienced minister, facilitator, and strategy consultant, with a demonstrated history of working in professional training, supervision & coaching. She is the Director at Vose Leadership and lectures in Ministry and Practice at Vose Seminary. Monica pastors Living Grace Dianella in Western Australia.

Session 2 Electives: 1:40 – 2.10pm

Jude Long, *Salvation by Adoption*



One thing I have learned from Aboriginal people is that everything is about relationship. This seems very closely aligned with the Scriptures. It is unfortunate therefore, that the most relational of all acts, our salvation, has often been reduced to a legal exchange leading to justification. What can we learn from Aboriginal kinship structures that might inform our understanding of salvation as a process of adoption into God's family?

Dr Jude Long is Vice Principal Educational Development at Melbourne School of Theology. Prior to that, she was the Principal of Nungalinga College in Darwin for 8 years. Nungalinga is a combined churches adult education college for Indigenous Australians providing theological training, music, media and literacy programmes. Jude has a passion for facilitating education that will transform the whole person and help learners to grow in their relationship with Christ.

Melinda Cousins, *Embodied Worship: The Psalms and the Senses*



Biblical studies have tended to engage with Scripture in predominantly intellectual ways. Certainly, the Scriptures seek to transform by renewing the mind, but they also do so by evoking emotion, inspiring the imagination, and engaging the body. This is noticeably demonstrated in the book of Psalms, which are grounded in concrete communal experience. These poems, songs, and prayers of the people of God invite us into their engagement with God and the world, calling for worship as response to God using every aspect of who we are. This article reflects on the ways the

Psalms do this through the embodied experience of sensation, using the framework of seven body parts through which we make sense of the world: eye, ear, nose, tongue, mouth, hand, and foot. It includes an exploration of how a contemporary Australian church could incorporate practices of seeing, listening, breathing, savouring, speaking, creating, and walking into community worship and life.

Rev Dr Melinda Cousins is the Director of Ministry Accreditation for Baptist Churches South Australia and teaches Biblical Studies at Tabor. She completed her PhD in 2016 on the Psalms of Ascents (Pss 120-134) looking at ideas of theological interpretation, pilgrimage, and performance.

Anthea McCall, Purity, Body, and Jesus in the Gospels



The tripartite division of human responses to sin (identified by Nida 1954) of Guilt/Innocence, Fear/Power and Shame/Honour have been foundational in recent years and have informed formulations of contextualized gospel presentations. However some scholars have submitted that there is a valid fourth category – Impurity/Purity. This theological work on the body and purity is beginning, but it needs more exploration, particularly with more focus on the Gospels.

I will survey the Gospel material on purity and defilement to show how prevalent an issue it is in Jesus' teaching and ministry. Some of this material is well but requires a more thorough survey, exegesis and analysis, not only of the passages themselves, but also to include theological reflection on the incarnation. The paper also maps these issues of ritual purity against the background of the categories for ritual impurity in the Levitical codes. It engages with Moyra Dale's suggestion of horizontal barriers (Jews – Gentiles) as separate from the vertical purity category. The paper also explores the Gospel's solution(s) to impurity and concludes with an attempt towards the pastoral implications of the findings. The conclusion stresses that purity is still important for us before God, but that purity finds its fulfilment in the Messiah.

Anthea McCall teaches Bible and Languages, and is Assistant Dean of the Anglican Institute at Ridley College, Melbourne. Her research interests are in the Gospels, and the social and historical background to the New Testament. Anthea also heads up the Women's Preaching Network – an initiative of the Ridley College Preachers Conference.

Lyn M. Kidson, Sacred Bodies and Sacred Spaces: Saving the Woman of 1 Timothy 2:12



Adela Collins in her article 'The Female Body as Social Space in 1 Timothy' (2011) describes the letter's purpose as the construction of 'a social space in which each male and female has a proper place and a proper type of behaviour.' While I agree with Collins that there is a struggle over the female body, I disagree with her conclusion that 1 Timothy 'advocates practices for women ... subordination rather than leadership, and marriage rather than sexual continence' implying 'a social space in which the autonomy of women, including control of their own bodies, is severely limited.' Collins

argues that the writer sees women's autonomy as the problem and that he is responding to second century heretics who prohibit marriage (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Yet, there is evidence that celibacy became the desired state in the first century. This paper will argue that the writer of 1 Timothy was dealing a crisis over the elevation of ascetics, who saw themselves at the door of the new age, at the expense of those who were married. I shall make the case that the writer at 2:12 is prohibiting married women from advocating sexual abstinence and promoting normal marital relations at 2:15. In this way he believes a wife will be saved from an unhealthy and aberrant life to a life grounded in the present.

Dr Lyn Kidson worked as an associate Baptist pastor before completing the MA in Early Christian and Jewish studies at Macquarie University. In 2017 Lyn's PhD (MQ) was on rhetorical strategies in 1 Timothy 1. She is an associate lecturer at Alphacrucis College and has published articles on 1 Timothy and numismatics.

Enqi Weng, 'Get Your Rosaries Off My Ovaries': Christianity in Contemporary Australian Media



Media evolution throughout history has seen Christians respond in divergent ways. The more recent digitisation of media has influenced how we 'produce' (Christian) media, form real-life and digital communities and perceive religious authorities. Digital media has simultaneously enabled the proliferation of celebrity pastors and motivated restrictive media uses among Christians. More recently, negative images of religions, including Christianity, have ceaselessly emerged on news media and public debates, capturing churches' attention and invigorating conversations about

Christianity's contemporary place and relevance.

This paper focuses on one particular type of media and presents findings from research on Australian news media's depiction of Christianity. Findings reveal that cultural aspects of Christianity remain rooted and continue to be reworked in the public imaginary. Cultural Christian references also appear to strongly inform media and public religious literacy. This version of Christianity is most frequently bound up with race, gender and institutional religion. In light of these research findings, this paper proposes informed considerations in sharing the gospel to a new digital generation.

Dr Enqi Weng completed her PhD from the School of Media & Communications at RMIT University. Currently working on her monograph titled 'Of Dominance and Diversities: Media Perceptions of Religious Changes in Australia' (Routledge), she was born in Singapore where she had over seven years of industry experience in marketing communications.

Tania Watson, *The Relationship between Trust, Authority and Leadership in Australia*.



In the main, the practice of Australian leadership is grounded in the cultures that we have brought with us in our luggage. Rather than lead with indigenous knowledge and skill formed through direct experiences of living in, and developing, our own society, leaders look to other places for their cues: and they are also watching their backs because that it is what you must do when your leadership approach just does not quite fit.

This paper argues that the instinct to lead well in Australia is right and necessary but for the most part, our ongoing appetite to learn from and adopt frameworks from other lands is not producing grounded and effective leadership. It is time to stop looking elsewhere and to reflect on our own history of learning to live in this land. What Australian history teaches us is that in order for leadership to be effective, we must pay attention to building and nurturing trust, and to understand and reconcile ourselves with the concept of authority.

Dr Tania Watson is the Executive Minister of Churches of Christ WA, a role that she has been privileged to steward over the past 10 years. Tania recently completed a doctoral project motivated by a desire to see the Christian community flourish through godly leadership that understands the times in which we live. Tania is married to Neil. They enjoy walking and canoeing along their local stretch of the Canning River with their cute dog.

Session 3 Electives: 2.15 pm – 2.45 pm

Kara Martin, Grounded in Work as Christians



Paid work takes up the majority of our waking lives, yet is often overlooked as a subject of preaching, teaching or discipleship in church or theological colleges. When we widen the definition of work to include anything we do with intent or purpose, then it becomes an even more significant portion of our lives, with scant attention from sources of biblical reflection and spiritual guidance.

This chapter will consider what it means to remain grounded as Christians in our work, taking as its starting point that the first mentions of work in Genesis literally deal with the ground, a significant metaphor. Consideration will be given to the varieties of work that we might be drawn to through our lifetime; and particularly the changing nature of work. Women's work will be briefly considered. When looking at resources and examples of remaining grounded at work, current research in spiritual formation for workplace Christians is drawn on, and suggestions of what is needed to cognitively, behaviourally and affectively be equipped for work are offered.

Kara Martin has authored *Workship: How to Use your Work to Worship God*, and *Workship 2: How to Flourish at Work*. She lectures at Mary Andrews College and Alphacrucis College, and has worked in media and communications, human resources, business analysis and policy development. She is currently doing her PhD at Alphacrucis College, researching the variables of skills, knowledge and values for workplace Christians to effectively integrate their faith and work.

Jill Firth, Desert Spring, Dead Dog Waterhole, Disappointment Creek: Is the God of the Book of Jeremiah Bad for Women?



Some recent readings of the book of Jeremiah present a distressing picture of Judah as a promiscuous woman (Jer. 2–4), violently punished by God as an angry husband (Jer. 4–6) who shames her through rape (Jer. 13.20–27). Scholars such as Renata Weems and Susanne Scholz raise concerns about the impact of such deprecating imagery and masculine violence on present day misogyny, intimate partner violence, and weaponised rape. In the book of Jeremiah, God presents himself as a reliable spring of living water (2.13), but the people accuse him of offering them poison water (8.14), and

Jeremiah himself questions whether God is untrustworthy like an seasonal brook (15.18). The drought setting of Jeremiah (14.1) and the thirst for life giving water resonate both as an external and an inner landscape in Australia. Is the God of the book of Jeremiah a never-failing spring, a poisoned waterhole or an intermittent creek for spiritually thirsty women? This paper examines imagery in the early chapters of Jeremiah in the light of genre, poetics and therapeutics and in the context of the whole book and the canon.

Dr Jill Firth is a lecturer in Hebrew and Old Testament at Ridley College, Melbourne. She holds a PhD in Old Testament and an MA in spiritual direction. Jill is an ordained priest and has been a Canon of St Paul's Cathedral. She is currently writing on Jeremiah and Psalms.

Theresa Yu Lau, Grounded in His Perfect Love and Design: Mary, Martha and Me



Jesus' loving admonition on the hospitable Good Samaritan, Martha, immediately after His powerful teaching of the parable itself triggers many questions and reflections on the meaning of the gospel. This paper seeks to exegete Luke 10:38-42, exploring Lucan narrative design and its intriguing message for women in ministry, and in the process, let the message exegete my personal journey as an Asian women pastor, academic and missionary in Australia and Spain. Martha's obedience to the Lord's command to 'go and do likewise' and her lack of submission to the supreme Lordship of Christ, as revealed through the narrative's artistic lenses, reflects the conflicting nature of human obedience and the blindness of cultural convention. In contrast, Mary's motionless yet highly revolutionary gesture is being recommended by the Lord as a wise choice.

What is this 'one thing' that Martha needs and Mary has? The answer to this question can be found in the framing story of the lawyer who approaches Jesus and the Lord's prayer. The meetings of the 3 stories creates meanings at a deeper level and provide better understanding of the gospel, discipleship and ministry. The meeting between the story of God and the story of us as an individual can help to decipher meanings at a grand level and bring healing to our hearts and cultures.

Rev Dr Theresa Yu Lau currently serves as Curriculum Planning Director & Online Learning Campus Coordinator at Melbourne School of Theology Chinese Department, Australia. She is also an ordained priest in the Anglican Church of Australia. She has been a missionary to Spain, serving as Academic Dean & Associate Professor in New Testament at International Chinese Biblical Seminary in Europe.

Elizabeth Culhane, Grounded yet Wandering: The Theological Importance of Place and Church Buildings



The theological significance of place is contested in contemporary Protestant thought. This is manifested in discussions about church buildings. At best, they are deemed a means of attracting newcomers and extending hospitality. At worst, they are judged a frivolous distraction from the real work of disciple-making. In either case, beliefs about church buildings have been shaped by the idea of the church as God's homeless people, a community that lacks material and visible contours as it journeys toward its true eschatological home.

The present paper defends the theological importance of the church as an entity grounded in material reality and time ('place'). This exists alongside the church's status as a peripatetic community that is

performed ('space'). Drawing on William Dyrness and John Inge, the paper situates place in God's good creation, where created entities point to God and God meets with humanity. This provides a basis for understanding how church buildings can signify invisible realities and orientate humans toward their maker. The paper contributes to the emerging theologies of place and church buildings that are aimed at contemporary Protestants, especially those who identify as evangelical. It uses examples drawn from the Australian context, chiefly St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne.

Elizabeth C. Culhane is a tutor at Ridley College and a PhD student at the University of Queensland. Her dissertation investigates the theological concept of revelation with respect to human artistic creations. Her work has been published in *Religion & Literature* and *Political Theology*.

Denise Cooper-Clarke, Grounding Our Discussion of Abortion



Much of the discussion of abortion in evangelical circles is focussed almost exclusively on the moral status of the unborn child. It is also often claimed that the scriptures are clear in relation to this. In the broader secular debate, the 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice' positions are usually framed in terms of the competing rights of the unborn child and of the woman. Both approaches are reductionistic and tend to abstract the discussion from the concrete realities of life for women and children. It might be assumed that adopting a feminist perspective will lead to a broadly 'pro-choice' position. Yet a number of feminists now realise that abortion serves the interests of men more than of women, and that high abortion rates are a symptom of a society that devalues women and children. Further, the rhetoric of individual choice abstracts women from their relationships and their communities. An alternative evangelical approach that grounds the discussion in the Bible, but also in the lived experience of women, the unique bodily relationship between a mother and her unborn child and the nature of Christian community is explored.

Dr Denise Cooper-Clarke is a graduate of medicine and theology with a PhD in medical ethics. She has special interests in professional ethics and the ethics of virtue. Denise is an occasional adjunct lecturer in Ethics at Ridley College Melbourne and voluntary researcher with Ethos Centre for Christianity and Society.

Amy Isham, Critical Ethnography for Grounded and Endogenous Church Revitalisation

Introduction: Critical ethnography admits researcher bias to interpret culture and Endogenous growth theory focusses on change from the inside out. This paper combines both approaches to tell a story of a country church revitalisation through aiming to Love Jesus and to Love People.

Method: This paper uses critical ethnography, leadership development theory and endogenous growth theory to analyse the modest revitalisation of a small country church in a Victorian Wheatbelt. Ethnography is often used in cross-cultural mission, and endogenous growth theory tries to identify the exogenous 'shocks' as separate from endogenous change

initiated by the congregation.

Analysis: Identifying church culture; 'I'm not really a leader': Fostering and Identifying Leaders; Defence Against the Dark Arts: Doing music in divided congregations; A Healthy Church 'Loving Jesus and Loving People.'

Conclusion: This critical ethnography aimed to encourage and document sustainable, healthy, endogenous growth within a congregation, instead of creating programs based on the gifts of the ordained pastor. The result emphasises on slow sustainable shifts with an emphasis on worship and fellowship and spiritual 'Health'.

Amy Isham studied Arts, Library studies and Public Health and is in her final year of a PhD in Social and Economic Research, focussing on Leadership. She is married to Luke who pastors Horsham Presbyterian Church and has two cute, busy kids, Evie, 8 and Solomon, 6.

Session 4 Electives: 2:50 pm – 3.20 pm

Naomi Wolfe and Aunty Reverend Patricia Courtenay, Grounding Indigenous Australian Women's Connections with Evangelical Australian Women in Place and Scripture



Naomi Wolfe



Aunty Rev Patricia Courtenay

As Aboriginal Christian women we bring greetings from our Country and blessings from our communities. We are seeking to open dialogue and sharing from our Aboriginal perspectives to Evangelical women and the wider church on matters of grounding, connection and the Gospel. As Aboriginal academics we offer practical and engaging ways of building relationships through Scripture with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities including discussion of the following:

- Knowing the history of the Australian church with regards to Indigenous Ministry.
- Knowing your own cultural practices and how this influences how 'you do church' and its relationship to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
- Knowing the foundation of identity, and theology of land and spirituality of place – that is the cultural and spiritual beliefs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Knowing the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women theologians and scholars.
- Seeking opportunities for Partnership & Allyship for Evangelical women that is relational with Indigenous communities.
- We seek to bring the hopes of our communities and to enable a growing partnership with Evangelical women across this vast country that is grounded in people, place and Christ.

Naomi Wolfe is a Trawlwoolway Aboriginal woman with Jewish German, and Irish heritage. She is an Academic at Australian Catholic University & has also been assisting the University of Divinity with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community engagement strategy. She is also a foundation member of the Australian Board of NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community – an International community of First Nations theology.

Aunty Rev Patricia Courtenay belongs to the Gurang Gurang and Birri traditional lands, and also has English, Irish and French ancestry. She has over 30 years of professional experiences in community, government, education and religious organisations. Patricia holds a Master of Social Administration and a Master of Theological Studies. Her current doctoral topic is 'Aboriginal Spirituality in a Christian Context.'

Erin Martine Sessions, 'Descending from the hills of Gilead': Undressing descriptions of the lover's body, and how Australian women can reclaim and embrace their embodiment.



The Song of Songs is an ecstatic exploration of love and of the bodies making it. The Song is sublimely romantic, suggestively erotic, and notoriously difficult poetry of the highest art, and its deliberate density of poetic devices requires careful consideration. This paper analyses the concentrated description of the lover's body in chapter four, which is the backbone of the beloved's enraptured depiction of the lover's body, and it is grounded in pastoral, architectural, and military imagery. I first explore what this poetic portrait of the lover's body might have meant in its original context, especially for the lover, with reference to 1:5-6 and 6:4-7.

And I then, building on my research on Song of Songs and Intimate Partner Violence, and using the same interdisciplinary approach combining feminist interpretation and Australian social research, apply these findings to the Australian context and explore their significance for women in Australia, the prevailing attitudes and beliefs about our bodies, their sexualisation, and how we might reclaim and embrace our own embodiment. The Song of Songs is a sensuous celebration of intoxicating love and exalted embodiment, and there is much that Australians can learn from this rhapsody.

Erin Martine Sessions is working toward her PhD with the Australian College of Theology and lectures in Old Testament at Alphacrucis. She is Common Grace's Domestic and Family Violence Justice Team Lead. Erin is an errant poet and arrant academic. She bends time and space to binge-watch Netflix.

Deborah Storie, At Jacob's Well: Re-grounding the Samaritan Woman



This paper offers a 'discipleship reading' of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan Woman (John 4). Until recently, dominant traditions of interpretation focused on the woman's dubious reputation, shady past, and alleged immorality, sometimes associating her personal failings with the alleged idolatry of her people. More recent interpretive traditions valorise the woman. Missiologists claim her as 'the first evangelist' or 'missionary.'

Feminists are delighted that John's discourse-heavy Gospel honours her with its longest one-on-one conversation with Jesus. Few interpreters seem to appreciate how profoundly power, privilege and life experience, as well as time,

geography, culture and language, estrange us from the worlds of and behind the text. What happens if we re-ground the encounter at Jacob's well in time and place, in community, and in Scripture? What happens if we invite the experiences of contemporary women who navigate similarly precarious situations to guide our encounters with this text? What happens if we notice the expectations that the time, place and manner of the meeting evoke within Scriptural tradition? What happens if we attend to the layers of meaning conveyed through water and well imagery and the nuances of the Greek text? What types of discipleship response might a re-grounded encounter with this text motivate and generate in our time and place?

Dr Deborah Storie lectures in Biblical Studies at Whitley College and is Senior Pastor (Interim) at Canterbury Baptist Church and Honorary Postdoctoral Associate at University of Divinity. She previously worked in community development in Afghanistan, served on the Board of TEAR Australia, and evaluated development projects in Africa and Asia.

Rebecca Lindsay, Grounded Walking: Reading Ruth alongside Natalie Harkin's Sovereignty



Narungga woman Natalie Harkin's poem 'Sovereignty' explores key moments in Australian Aboriginal histories through the motif of walking. She narrates nine episodes which confront the ongoing realities of colonization with Indigenous Sovereignty. The land is presented as active, present and healing. Harkin's poem is preceded by the observation of white Australian academic Fiona Nicoll that 'the legacy of *Terra Nullius* sticks to our shoes with the dirt as we walk over Indigenous sovereignties every day.' This offers a challenge for white Australian readers to recognize the impact of this legacy in our engagement with the land. Land is also a key motif

within the stories of the Hebrew Scriptures. The book of Ruth explores land through its themes of agriculture, fertility and migration. I engage the grounding of white Australian feet in the legacy of *Terra Nullius* by reading contrapuntally. I place the poem 'Sovereignty' alongside the story of Ruth working in Boaz's fields (Ruth 2: 3-17) and intersperse my own experiences of walking where I live. In bringing these diverse texts together, I explore the ways that white Australian interpreters of the Bible can engage in decolonizing reading as part of a wider walk towards a decolonizing biblical hermeneutic.

Rebecca Lindsay is undertaking a PhD in biblical studies through Flinders University. Her research looks at decolonising biblical hermeneutics within Australia in conversation with the book of Ruth. She is an ordained Uniting Church minister, working at Hope Uniting Church in Maroubra.

Breeana Mills, The role of implementing missional spirituality practices in small groups to promote missional revitalisation in a post-Christendom Australian church



As the church seeks to find a way forward in a post-Christendom culture, there has been a renewed interest in how we connect with our local communities and seek to participate in God's missionary activities. This renewed interest has been led in the majority by apostolically inclined leaders of Christian communities leading to a flurry of church planting in different forms and a growing tension between those in the mainstream church and these missionally minded church plants. Missional revitalisation research in Australia church contexts is limited, with most successful examples demonstrated only in small church contexts. This paper aims to

explore whether the implementation of missional spirituality practices into the smallest unit of a congregation, its small groups, can aid in bringing about a missional revitalisation within that congregation. Based on an action research project carried out in an Australian church, this paper will summarise the findings of this research, alongside other similar papers in order to demonstrate the value of both grounded practices, and space for reflection and conversation, to bring change in a missional direction in mainstream consumer-orientated congregations. It is hoped that this research would help to effectively equip church leaders to bring about missional revitalisation in other Australian churches.

Bree Mills is a wife, mother, and the Associate Pastor at Glen Waverley Anglican Church. She has recently completed a Masters of Missional Leadership, focusing on missional revitalization in existing churches.

She is on the board of The Cascade Network and passionate about catalysing change, raising leaders, and contextualised mission.

Tanya Riches, 'Wisdom Cries Out': Towards a Feminist Pentecostal Theology of Disability



This paper draws upon Sarah Coakley’s feminist pneumatology to (re)construct a ‘power-in-vulnerability’ that decentres the normative able-bodied pastoral model of leadership. Within the biblical wisdom literature Sophia is depicted as crying out in the public square, or marketplace (e.g. Prov 1:20). Rather than a Christianity wedded to the state, what is often termed the ‘Pentecostalisation’ of the Evangelical church has represented a transformation towards the market economy.

Pentecostals today are critiqued in the mainstream press for embracing secular consumerism and individualism. However, at their origins they were known for their emphasis on ecstatic, embodied experience. Within Pentecostalism, God’s wisdom was unmediated – a direct experience of the presence of God. Each believer contributed their charisms or gifts back to the community. With a liturgy gathered around Spirit-led prophetic prayer, the community practiced being attuned or attentive to hearing the voice of God who still cried out – with these vocalisations very often occurring via bodies relegated to the social margins. This contrasts today’s Christian emphasis upon brand, image, and performance.

This chapter/presentation adopts a practical theology approach based on ethnographic research in Australian Pentecostal churches today to draw upon the alternative practices of pentecostal spirituality. In particular, it observes how the body becomes the site of the Spirit speaking, in order to move towards a feminist Pentecostal theology of (dis)ability.

Dr Tanya Riches is Senior lecturer and Masters program coordinator at Hillsong College. She also co-leads the research pillar at The Centre for Disability Studies, affiliate of the University of Sydney. Her monograph investigating urban Aboriginal-led Pentecostal Christian congregations will be released with Brill’s Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies series in 2019.