

From the Editor

I write the introduction to this issue of *The Asbury Journal* in the middle of a global pandemic, the likes of which has not been experienced by most of those alive today. Classes at Asbury Theological Seminary have shifted online, people are under stay-at-home orders, and churches have been unable to meet for over a month. How do we as the Church respond to such a situation? With churches closed during Easter, we had to think about what it meant to be part of the Body of the resurrected Christ in isolation from each other. It was an odd time, and even though we may be beginning to emerge from it, we can expect the ramifications of this time to reverberate through academia within the Church for the next few years at least. This makes it a perfect time to also look back at history and sideways across cultures to gain some perspective about different issues the Church has faced in the past.

Winfield Bevins sets the stage for this volume by raising the reality of church planting accomplished in England during the height of the Victorian era. We don't often think of that period as a time of rapid church growth in the period of industrialization and rising poverty, but it was. Philip Hardt brings before us the challenges of Methodism at its height in New York City, as it set out to dominate the issue of Catholic schools and the teaching of the Bible in the city, while Samuel Rogal goes back even further to the personal challenges Methodism's founder John Wesley faced in his own tumultuous marriage. Kim Okesson reveals the passion well-known mystery writer Dorothy Sayers brought as a woman and Christian theologian who sought to bring Christ to the masses through her unique insights into communication. Robert Danielson uncovers the challenges faced by a holiness missionary couple in India, who faced a famine and totally changed the way they understood their mission.

As we move from the history of the Church in the West to a more global perspective on cultural crises, Dwight Mutonono examines the cultural challenge of Christians kneeling before leaders in Zimbabwe and Yohan Yong seeks to understand how a common phrase used in the Philippines can either create powerlessness among people, or be transformed to empower them. Finally, in the *From the Archives* essay, we explore the relationship between an Asbury administrator and academic and Iva Durham Vennard, one of the great holiness women educators, who has often been forgotten by history, but who struggled to raise others, especially

women, to reach the world for Christ. Without friends like John Haywood Paul, this might have been an impossible challenge in her day, but together they worked to overcome all kinds of educational barriers.

This issue should remind us that crisis and challenges are not new situations in the Church. Rather, every generation of Christians must direct their attention to new issues both cultural and physical. The Corona Virus epidemic is just one of another continuous stream of trials in a long history of difficulties. The Church will always face challenges, some external and some internal, some personal and some decidedly public, some rooted in our identity, gender, or culture, and some rooted in the unavoidable realities we must rise to face. The commonality is that through the love of God, the good news of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit we can get through such trials. As the Apostle Paul wrote from prison, "...for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:11-13 ESV). As a people, our security is in the person of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, not in the situations or calamities that surround us. While everything around us may seem to be crumbling and falling apart, we have the ability to stand contented and without fear, knowing God is the one who holds the future. We can even face Covid-19 and be more than conquerors (Romans 8:37).

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