

## Editorial

This volume contains pertinent missiological reflections regarding five issues, namely, African urban theology of mission and ministry; missional ecclesiology in a time of Covid-19; lessons from missionary history; migration and mission; mission and Christian higher education. Authors have contributed various perspectives on these issues in relation to contextual realities in Benin, Gabon, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia.

### **1. African urban theology of mission and ministry**

In relation to African urban theology of mission and ministry, Agbèdè engages the current reality of migrants in the City of Cotonou, Benin, theologically. He argues for theological education for Cotonou to flourish by 2050 by producing an African urban migratory theology that deeply engages the presence of migrants as contributors to socio-economic development. Mbakere, in relation to Gabon, makes an interpellation to the churches in the City of Libreville to take concrete action in response to acute present urban problems such as pollution, absence of waste management, and heat waves, that face the city. He contends, the Church should participate towards identification of root-causes for these urban challenges and in the process open the Church to flourish in socio-political, socio-economic, and socio-cultural spaces as she works towards solving these issues.

### **Missional ecclesiology in a time of Covid-19**

Mission including ecclesial praxes found themselves in uncharted terrains during dreadful days of Covid-19. Kabongo discusses the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable communities in Soshanguve, a township in the north of the City of Tshwane. He asserts, pandemics disrupt the normal routine of life in society as experienced during Covid-19 and as a result, in Soshanguve, vulnerable members of households, namely children and women have been victims of abuse. The Covid-19 restrictions saw a surge in child neglect and intimate partner violence (IPV). He therefore stresses in his article that the church should put the emancipation of households at the centre of its priorities. He argues for functional households which could be an engine for building local communities and society. The church could prioritise leading by example, what it means to care well for children, empower men and women to learn to resolve differences without resorting to violence and equip men to be involved parents and spouses. He concludes that the church has a critical role to play in empowering households to be the centre of good quality of life and contain the spread of the coronavirus. While Mashau begins, in his article, by af-

firming that pandemics are not only a reality in human history; similar cases are also recorded in biblical texts like Numbers 16:41-50 and are still happening today, as in the case of the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Given the fact that pandemics are either a creation of humanity and/or a creation of God, as is the case in Numbers 16:41-50, he argues for a missional reading of this text to define life and ministry in the context of pandemics as standing in the gap—between the angry God and rebellious people of God, and between the living and the dead in the efforts to mediate life over judgement. He suggests that the church should assume the very prophetic and missional role that we have witnessed during the apartheid era – when the church became not only a symbol of hope to the hopeless, but a site of struggle to many.

## **2. Lessons from missionary history and legacy**

Missionary history is easily lost if not recorded. Louw, in her contribution, offers a reflection on a research project undertaken over a period of nearly five years at the St Cuthbert's Anglican community near Tsolo in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. This article highlights the importance of recording testimonies of elders to underline the value of 'living heritage' as an added research tool to contribute to the existing archive, especially as many of the elders have since passed away. She argues that constantly adding to existing archival collections by recording the lived experiences of relevant individuals is a missionary resource useful for current and future endeavours. While Dube, presents an emic study of the work that the South Africa General Mission (SAGM) missionaries initiated in Zimbabwe. The article follows a desk analysis approach by using primary sources in the form of the *South African Pioneer's* articles that were written by several SAGM missionaries that were involved in this evangelization work. He finds that SAGM missionaries, like missionaries elsewhere, had a paternalistic attitude towards the Ndaue people and as a result the Ndaue were not very welcoming to these "guests" at least in the first few decades of their work in Chimanimani District. On the practice of discipleship in Uganda, L. Hughes and Naidoo through an explanatory study found that there is a disconnect between ideas of discipleship and practices of discipleship. The value of the study is in its decolonial examination of Christian education to stress the need for the inculturation of the African worldview towards meaningful discipleship practice.

## **3. Migration and mission**

Migration has become a perennial mission topic in the 21st century. Mpofu, in his article, highlights mission challenges presented by the intensified movement of people in South Africa with a view to identify opportunities for Christian mission and challenge demagoguing in the context of growing intolerance. He argues for

migration to be identified as an opportunity for mission and discussed as one of the untapped resources not just for mission, but also for economic development and social transformation. He affirms that the presence of migrants offers an opportunity to engage in transformative Christian mission through a mutual partnership with migrants. Such transformation will require appreciating their agency.

#### **4. Mission and Christian higher education**

Christian education was and still is one of the tested missionary strategies for building bridges with communities, socioeconomic development, and evangelisation. Mwale, in her article, explores the activities of selected Christian Higher Education (CHE) institutions in the quest to sustain themselves in a changing university education funding landscape in Zambia. She argues that although most of these initiatives were grounded in being self-sustaining, they demonstrated the meaning attached to holistic Christian university education, as students were part of these initiatives, thereby directly and indirectly contributing to the creation of a self-sustaining Christian university community. The article contributes to missiological scholarship by applying the self-sustaining principle of Venn to Christian universities as providers of education that contributes to fulfilling the mandate of creating students who become agents of change.

Finally, thank you to authors for their scholarly contributions to this Volume 50. We are also grateful to colleagues who assisted us with peer review processes. Thanking also all the subscribers for your continued financial support which sustains this much needed missiological scholarship.

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