



University to establish School of Graduate Research

“The new SGR represents a wonderful opportunity to build on a long track record of excellence in research training. This will include increased opportunities for fostering a community of scholars and for resourcing students to acquire skills in research engagement as well as the creation and exploration of new fields of knowledge.

The University’s investment in the development of our doctoral programs will support the growth of future generations not only of academic leaders but also professional practitioners in a wide range of contexts.

- Professor Peter Sherlock

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In 2020 the University of Divinity will establish a School of Graduate Research (SGR) with responsibility for research training, including higher degree by research students and their supervisors. This new approach builds on a century’s experience in the education of doctoral graduates in theology, ministry, and related disciplines.

This decision of the University Council follows a recent review of the University’s Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Learning Environment, chaired by Professor Terry Evans (Deakin). The Evans Review received feedback from over 80 current and former research students of the University.

The primary recommendation of the Evans Review was the establishment of a School of Graduate Research, “to foster and manage the HDR learning environment, its supervisors and candidates”. The SGR should aim “to become a high-quality body encompassing all stages of candidature from pre-enrolment information and advice through to post-candidature (alumni) guidance and networking”.

This recommendation is modelled on the Schools of Graduate Research or similar entities found at most Australian Universities. Typically an SGR oversees administrative processes and provides academic support such as orientation or career development programs which are specific to HDR candidature, while individual faculties or schools provide the research expertise relevant to a student’s research project.

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From the Vice-Chancellor: The Community of Scholars

From 1 January to 30 June 2019 I enjoyed an extended period of leave, incorporating an opportunity for personal refreshment as well as a sustained time engaged in academic research. This included three wonderful months as a Short Term Fellow in residence at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC, USA. The Folger is one of the world's top research institutions, founded by Henry and Emily Folger in 1932. Devoted to the life and times of William Shakespeare, the Library possesses the world's largest Shakespeare collection, including first editions, manuscripts, account books, recordings and more.

During my three months at the Folger, I was able to complete the first draft of a long-planned book, provisionally entitled *Empire of Memory: The Monuments of Westminster Abbey 1500-1750*. The book will tell the story of how one remarkable building was transformed from a royal sacred site to a mausoleum of memory, from a place of pilgrimage to a tourist destination. But this was not the highlight of the Fellowship. Two aspects stood out.

First was the value of a consistent daily routine focussed on a single task. This is a precious rarity in the age of disruption, when the benefits of information and communication technology can be overwhelmed by constant interruption and distraction. It was an exceptional privilege to spend eight hours a day, five days a week for three months on the challenge of research and writing in an institution with every conceivable resource to support that task. And it was a lot of fun to sit every day in the same seat (thank you Mrs Folger), even if this meant I was gazed upon by the fascinated tourists who were permitted to peer into the curious world of the neo-Renaissance library for a few moments each day. Perhaps the most memorable of these glimpses was the day I was caught kneeling to photograph a floor plan of Westminster Abbey in seventeenth-century book with a raptured look on my face as if it was an object of devotion as well as study.

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Vox: The University of Divinity Magazine

Issue 10, November 2019

ISSN 2204-9339 (Print)

Published by Office of the Vice-Chancellor
University of Divinity, 21 Highbury Grove,
Kew, Victoria, 3101

Editorial responsibility Peter Sherlock

Copy editing Fotini Toso

Layout Meg Nelson

Printed by Bambra Press, Port Melbourne

Compilation and Text © University of Divinity 2019

University of Divinity

ABN 95 290 912 141

CRICOS 01037A

Websites: <http://www.divinity.edu.au/>

<http://vox.divinity.edu.au/>

Vox is available in print and electronic pdf formats



Robin Mann to be awarded Doctor of Divinity



In October 2019, the Council of the University of Divinity resolved to award the degree of Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) to Robin Mann.

The Chancellor of the University, Dr Graeme L Blackman AO, will confer the award on Mann at the University's graduation ceremony in Adelaide on Friday 6 December 2019.

The Doctor of Divinity is the oldest award of the University, created in 1910 and first awarded in 1913. It is the highest academic honour that the University bestows. The award is made in recognition of Mann's sustained and distinguished contribution to theological scholarship through original musical composition that advances the celebration of Christian, communal life and identity, particularly in the unique Australian context.

Mann recently celebrated the Golden Jubilee (50 years) of his life as a writer, musician, worship leader, performer and practical theologian. This remarkable achievement attests to the continuing value that Australia's broad Christian community places on Mann's work. It is theologically timeless, relevant to contemporary Australian contexts, and singable for whole communities.

The citation for the award reads:

Robin Mann has made a sustained and distinguished contribution to theological scholarship over the last fifty years through original musical composition that advances the celebration of Christian, communal life and identity. This contribution deeply engages Australia's unique physical and religious context in its imagery and insight, combining pastoral encouragement and prophetic challenge which is acutely attuned to the medium of congregational song. Robin Mann's exceptional gift to the Australian Church is appreciated across many denominations and demonstrates excellence in the engagement of theology with the life of the wider community. Through his ministry with schools, congregations, leadership gatherings and training workshops, as well as his publications and recordings, he has provided visionary stimulus to the production of authentic Australian music and worship and inspired subsequent generations of worship songwriters.

The Community of Scholars continued...

The second and biggest highlight was the community of scholars. Through its Fellowship program, the Folger Institute brings upwards of forty researchers annually from around the world to use its collections and to participate in its program of seminars and colloquia. I met scholars and practitioners from four continents, introducing me to a wealth of ideas and possibilities and creating the opportunity to form several new friendships.

There is no question that the community of scholars comes at a cost in time, money and resources. Yet the surprise was that the community was fundamentally generated by two simple experiences. The Library's reading room was, to all intents and purposes, an open-plan office (though one without phones in which the only noise was the occasional whisper or the muffled sounds of a rehearsal in the theatre next door). There is an intense camaraderie in studying – no, thinking – alongside a dozen other people working on related projects. Then there was the phenomenon of afternoon tea at 3pm, virtually compulsory, which through the simple medium of a table, a hot drink and a biscuit

engendered lively discussion ... What are you working on? How are you doing your project? Have you thought of this? Do you know that? It was at tea that friendships and research partnerships were forged through that most basic human activity, conversation.

As I return to the University of Divinity with a sense of joy and renewal, I invite you to ponder with me: How can we build up the community of scholars in this land?

Three simple tasks suggest themselves. Build a daily routine and focus on one task at a time. Drink tea regularly with others, especially people you don't know, and be prepared to listen, learn and engage. Perhaps above all, make the most of the incredible resources of our libraries, public and institutional, as sources of knowledge and places of gathering, as we seek to stimulate the collective imagination and to build up the store of wisdom which is the foundation of a flourishing society.

Introducing the School of Graduate Research

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At the University of Divinity, the SGR will provide increased University-wide support – and accountability – for all research students and supervisors (including both HDR and Minor Thesis programs). It aims to ensure consistent, high-quality outcomes for all students, and to increase the resources available to prepare applicants, students and graduates for the changing needs of research training, communication and engagement in the contemporary world. This support will be provided by two new full-time staff, the SGR Dean and SGR Registrar, whose responsibilities are entirely dedicated to the SGR.

Existing College-based programs and resources will continue alongside the SGR, including recruitment, delivery of research seminars and providing pastoral and practical support. Governance of the SGR in 2020 will remain with the University's Research Committee, which will include the SGR Dean and a research-active staff member from each of the University's Colleges.

The SGR will commence with around 270 members – around 100 HDR students, 50 Minor Thesis students, and 120 supervisors. As such, it will highlight both the vibrant strength of the University's current research training activities and the opportunity to build greater collaboration into the future.

What does the SGR mean for students?

From January 2020, students enrolled in an HDR or in the Minor Thesis will be members of both the SGR and a College of the University. SGR membership will be conferred automatically on all existing students in these programs, and on new students by virtue of admission to an HDR or enrolment in the Minor Thesis.

As members of the SGR, students will be entitled to access a range of programs to support their successful completion, including existing initiatives such as the orientation program, annual Research Conference, HREC training, Thesis Boot Camp, and Research Methodologies. These will be supplemented over time by new programs in areas such as preparation for confirmation, publishing and presenting research, research skills and career development. SGR members will receive regular bulletins advertising research seminars and research training events and opportunities to apply for grants and scholarships. Students will have access to the SGR Dean and SGR Registrar as well as College-based staff for advice, help and support for the duration of their candidature from application to graduation – and beyond.



“ I am excited about the vision of the School, and the prospect of building a strong research community which will nurture a new generation of scholars able to resource the life of the community and church.

- Associate Professor Liz Boase

Associate Professor Elizabeth (Liz) Boase is Academic Dean at the Adelaide College of Divinity and Head of Theology at Flinders University in South Australia.

Liz holds a Bachelor of Applied Science (Speech and Hearing) from the Western Australian Institute of Technology (now Curtin University) and a Bachelor of Divinity (Honours) and Doctor of Philosophy from Murdoch University. She lectured at the University of Notre Dame Australia (2004-2008) and since 2009 has been at the Uniting College and Adelaide College of Divinity.

She publishes regularly in the area of Hebrew Bible, with research strengths in the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah, and trauma hermeneutics. She presents regularly in Australia and overseas.

What does the SGR mean for supervisors?

From January 2020, to be eligible to supervise an HDR or Minor Thesis, a person will need to become a member of the SGR. Eligibility for membership will remain unchanged from present accreditation requirements for supervisors set out in the University's Academic Staff Policy (sections 6.5 and 7.4) and the Supervisors Policy.

All current HDR and Minor Thesis supervisors will automatically become members of the SGR, for a transitional period of two years to 31 December 2021. A person may become a member of the SGR as a supervisor even if that person is not presently supervising a thesis, providing an easy way to identify staff who are available as supervisors for prospective students. Membership requirements may change as the SGR develops, however any new requirements would be subject to approval by the Academic Board on the advice of its Research Committee or equivalent.

Over time, the SGR will improve support for both new and experienced supervisors and improve quality assurance by providing training and professional development. As SGR members, supervisors will also receive regular news of research seminars and research training events. The SGR Dean and SGR Registrar will be available to provide advice, help and support to supervisors, both new and experienced, in delivering a high quality research training experience for students, from the Minor Thesis to the PhD.

Who will lead the SGR?

The University has announced the appointment of Associate Professor Elizabeth Boase as Dean and Dr Suman Kashyap as Registrar of the University's new School of Graduate Research, commencing in 2020.



Dr Suman Kashyap has been Research Services Officer at the University of Divinity since 2011, providing extensive operational support to both research and research training areas.

She holds a Bachelor of Education from Annamalai University, a Master of Philosophy and a Master of Science from Punjabi University, a Graduate Certificate in Applied Statistics from Open Universities Australia, conducted by Swinburne University of Technology and a Doctor of Philosophy from the Indian Institute of Technology. Suman has more than twenty years' experience in university research administration, having held positions at the Indian Institute of Technology (1998-2005), the University of Melbourne (2006-2008), Monash University (2008-2010).

“ I am particularly looking forward to increased opportunities for collaboration and networking with the students and supervisors who will be members of the SGR.

- Dr Suman Kashyap



René Erwich appointed Professor of the University

Congratulations to Reverend Professor René Erwich, appointed a Professor of the University of Divinity by the University Council on 31 October 2019. Professor Erwich is noted for his outstanding contribution to Research, Leadership in the Academy and Engagement with the Churches and Community.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Sherlock, said that: “Professor Erwich’s contributions to theological scholarship, research and leadership are great gifts to the University of Divinity, Whitley College, and the societies we serve. This professorial appointment recognises his sustained commitment to engagement with the issues of the contemporary world, and as such exemplifies the University’s Vision. I look forward to the continued leadership Professor Erwich will provide in and beyond the University, especially in applied and collaborative research.”

The citation for the award reads:

Professor René Erwich is an internationally recognised expert in Christian theology and ministry and its application to contemporary society. His research involves a hopeful articulation of Christian faith in engagement with the needs and challenges of secular society. He has been the recipient of several major grants for applied and collaborative research, including projects on spiritual leadership in a post-Christian society and Christian identity in health care. Professor Erwich is also widely recognised for his teaching in pastoral theology and missiology. Scholarly appreciation of his work has led to numerous guest lectureships and conference presentations in many parts of the world. He has rendered significant leadership to the church and academy as Research Professor in Theology at the Ede Christian University in the Netherlands and since 2017 as Principal of Whitley College.

Banner: René Erwich. Photo courtesy of Whitley College.

Mark Brett elected Fellow of the Religion Section of the Australian Academy of the Humanities



Professor Mark Brett is Professor of Old Testament Whitley College. His area of academic expertise is the study of the Hebrew Old Testament with a particular focus on the application of postcolonial theories. His work is concerned with the intersection between religion and politics in contemporary Australia and the South Pacific, and the lifting up of indigenous theological voices. During 2005–2008 he worked for an Aboriginal organization in developing new frameworks for the negotiation of native title claims within the state of Victoria. He served on the editorial boards of several journals, including five years (1992–1996) as an executive editor of the interdisciplinary journal *Biblical Interpretation*. In 2019 was the first non-North-American to be appointed as General Editor of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*.



Wendy Mayer elected Head of Religion

Congratulations to Professor Wendy Mayer, elected Head of the Religion section of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

According to Professor Julianne Schultz, in 1959 when Australia's Prime Minister Robert Menzies approved the foundation of the Humanities Council he wrote that it would provide:
"Wisdom, a sense of proportion, sanity of judgement, a faith in the capacity of [hu]man[kind] to rise to higher mental and spiritual levels. We live dangerously in the world of ideas, just as we do in the world of international conflict. If we are to escape this modern barbarism, humane studies must come back into their own, not as the enemies of science, but as its guides and philosophic friends."

It's successor body, the Australian Academy of the Humanities, continues to work towards those goals, especially at a time in Australia's history when the teaching of the humanities is under threat. In the recent furore over the Education Minister's excision of 11 successful Australian Research Council grants in 2018, it was the swift response of the Academy's President, Professor Joy Damousi, that helped to publicise the action and promote public conversation.

The Academy, to which Fellows are elected only after rigorous international peer review, advocates for and works to build future capacity in the humanities in Australia and to network Australian expertise internationally.

Religion is one of 11 sections that reflect areas of expertise in the humanities. The Head of Section is the conduit between the discipline area in Australia and the Academy Council and Secretariat. Heads of Section are a key source of advice in the formulation of policy responses to the government.

Four faculty members of the University of Divinity (UD) are currently Fellows: Reverend Emeritus Professor Brendan Byrne, Reverend Canon Professor Dorothy Lee, Professor Wendy Mayer and Professor Mark Brett. Election is a significant honour that recognises their outstanding contribution internationally to their respective fields.

Professor Mayer was brought onto the faculty of Australian Lutheran College (ALC) in 2017 as its first Associate Dean for Research and Research Professor. Since then she has worked closely with the Research Office to build capacity at ALC in the higher degree by research (HDR) sector.

In addition to serving on the UD Research Committee, she has served on the doctoral review committee and the ERA 2018 Publications and EI Reporting working committee. She serves on the editorial boards of a number of international journals and book series, and is Associate Editor of *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, and co-editor of the new series *Critical Approaches to Early Christianity* (Brill). Her expertise is in increasing demand internationally.

During 2019 Wendy has been a Directrice d'étude invitée at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, contributed to an Interfaculty Research Collaboration, *Religious Conflicts and Coping Strategies* at the University of Bern, and was an invited researcher at the University of Regensburg. In August she delivered an invited plenary lecture at the peak body in her discipline area, the International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford.



John Capper retires as Director of Learning and Teaching

On Wednesday 6 November, University of Divinity academic staff gathered at the annual Teaching Conference, which concluded with a farewell to Reverend Dr John Capper who retires from the role of Director of Learning and Teaching. John has enjoyed a long association with the University. He began his current role in April 2013, following a period as Dean of the United Faculty of Theology.

When asked to describe highlights of his time as Director, John responded:

“It has been a great honour to be welcomed regularly in each of the Colleges, to be trusted to offer advice and to be looked to for educational leadership. In my first year we began the annual Teaching for Learning event, now the Teaching Conference, to raise the profile and develop skills in teaching theology theologically. I leave the University soon after the seventh of these. The Graduate Certificate in Theological Education is a world class product of wide consultation and generous contributions from across the higher education and theological education sector. I have been glad to be part of the development team.

“It is one thing to be structured in a collegiate manner. It is another to operate collegially. I have enjoyed working with small specialist groups to develop policy, review quality, build training events, review units and courses and explore opportunities—and through that to build trust and wisdom. As in any organisation, the challenges are around misunderstandings which can build distrust. Keeping connected and having fun in our work have been part of how we have overcome the challenges and thrived in the opportunities.”

“As a young engineer I carried piles of punch cards as part of my computing assignments. I am so glad of excellent partnerships with vendors like Androgogic (who manage ARK, our learning management system), Turnitin and eXplorance, who provide other technological magic and “carry the cards” for us. But the technical achievements have only been possible through friendship, trust and shared vision within the University and with our partners – that is where the pride for all of us in the University should lie.”

John concluded his formal role with the University as Director of Learning and Teaching on Friday 8 November 2019. We are, however, delighted that John has accepted the invitation of the Chancellor to give the guest address at the forthcoming University graduation ceremony in Melbourne, on Friday 27 March 2020. It was also announced, to much delight at the celebration, that John will commence a new chapter as Academic Dean at Stirling Theological College in 2020 – and so we say farewell from the role, and not goodbye.

Banner: John Capper with members of family at his farewell celebration. Photo by Andrew Hateley-Browne.



University launches an Alumni Network

The University of Divinity has graduated over ten thousand students since the very first graduation ceremony was held on 6 May 1913. Our alumni are found in every corner of the globe and every walk of life. On the evening of Tuesday 8 October 2019, our alumni joined together to celebrate the launch of a new network to connect alumni with each other and the wider community of scholars.

At the launch of the Alumni Network the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Sherlock, said:

“The University has a long history since its foundation in 1910 as the Melbourne College of Divinity in preparing people for a wide variety of ministries. Since 2012, the University has developed major new projects in Indigenous theology, gender and theology, counselling and responding to the grave issues raised by the Royal Commission. We look forward to our alumni continuing to grow in diversity and applying theological wisdom in more and more contexts.

Naomi Wolfe (alumna) gave an Acknowledgement of Country:

“On behalf of the growing community of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and First Nations, Elders, staff, students, and now growing number of Indigenous alumnae, we welcome you here tonight and thank you for being part of this wonderful journey. The University and its member colleges have embarked on a relationship and journey that no other university has yet to begin. There

is a growing number of the International Indigenous theologians and we are happy to be part of this journey. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners and custodians of the land we are gathering on tonight.

Reverend Dr Robyn Whitaker (alumna) gave a guest address, reflecting on her own experience of studying theology at the University (then MCD) as a “bright-eyed, very naïve, and rather conservative 20-year-old, straight out of an undergraduate science degree” who felt a calling to become a congregational minister. Robyn praised her education at the University as having equipped her to “survive and thrive” when she embarked on a highly competitive overseas PhD program in New Testament at the University of Chicago.

Robyn said:

“Until I went to Chicago I had taken for granted several key aspects of my experience at the UD. In Chicago, I met students who had never had a female lecturer or had never studied in an ecumenical environment. I realised that my experience of stellar female professors and smaller, seminar style classes that contained students from Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church Australia and other denominations learning together was a rarity and a privilege. In contrast, several of my female friends had had no female academic role models, and many had either studied theology in massive undergraduate lecture halls of several hundred or small theological colleges with singular ecclesial cultures. Our ecumenism and long

commitment to the theological education and equality of women is quite remarkable in the global context.

Remarkable too is that here you can engage in a breadth of subjects from indigenous theology, to ancient Coptic, to cutting edge feminist theology – making what is on offer at the University of Divinity unparalleled in the Australian theological scene.

Robyn celebrated the remarkable achievements of alumni across the globe:

“ You. We. Are world-changers. Our alumni are spiritual directors and church leaders, both lay and ordained. You have founded non-profit companies that work to stop modern slavery or with non-profits on domestic violence or indigenous advocacy. You are school chaplains, tertiary chaplains, hospital, prison, and airforce chaplains. You are medical doctors and nurses, school teachers and university lecturers and leaders of theological colleges in Asia. Some of you work in East Africa, London, Asia, Tasmania, and Geneva.

Dr Graeme L Blackman AO (alumnus) spoke of being encouraged to study theology as a healthy counterbalance to his professional work as a research scientist in the field of chemistry and reflected on his pride to be both alumnus and Chancellor of the University. He then formally launched the UD Alumni Network with a ceremonial cutting of the ribbon.

To conclude the formalities, Meg Nelson, Events and Communications Manager at the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, addressed the alumni saying:

“ The primary aim of this new network is to invite you to engage with, inspire and support our wider community of scholars – to have a dynamic and engaging network, inspired and perhaps run by alumni, for alumni – supported and resourced by the University.

Alumni then enjoyed the University’s hospitality and socialised, with “I didn’t realise you were a graduate!” being one of the common greetings.

Thanks to the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, speakers and all the alumni who attended the launch. All alumni can keep in contact through Vox, the Alumni page on the UD website and a dedicated (private) Facebook group.

Banner and below: Members of the new Alumni Network at the launch event. Photos by Meg Nelson



Are you a graduate of the University of Divinity or Melbourne College of Divinity? Sign up to join our new Alumni Network.

www.divinity.edu.au/alumni

What’s included?

- Invitations to exclusive alumni events
- Regular alumni-focused eNews
- Access to curated online library resources
- Access to a private social network Facebook group with mentoring focus

Alumnus PhD thesis published by American Society of Missiology monograph series

Congratulations to Dr Randall Prior, on the publication of his PhD thesis by the American Society of Missiology in their monograph series.

Dr Prior is an alumnus of the University of Divinity, having graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in 2017. His thesis, *Contextualising Theology in the South Pacific With Lessons Learned from The “Gospel and Culture in Vanuatu” Project* was supervised by the Reverend Dr Lawrence Nemer.

Dr Prior is currently a member of associate faculty at Pilgrim Theological College. During five years of ministry in a newly independent Vanuatu in the 1980s, he became immersed in the issues of the relationship between the Gospel and cultural context. He has pursued that passion for over thirty years. He is the publisher of ten books in the Gospel and Culture in Vanuatu series.

The thesis establishes that the contextualisation of theology in the South Pacific must take account of key factors which profoundly shape its content and methodology. These factors are that South Pacific cultures are oral-based; and that they are defined by Melanesian and not Enlightenment categories. It is argued that the ‘Gospel and Culture in Vanuatu’ project offers a genuine theological model.

Professor John McDowell, Director of Research praised the publication, saying:

“**Randall Prior’s book *Contextualizing Theology in the South Pacific* is the fruit of considerable experience and research. It provides both a rich resource for understanding the conditions and contexts of theological learning in the South Pacific, and a valuable grounding in the case study on the ‘Gospel and Culture in Vanuatu’ project.**

About the publication of his work, Dr Prior said:

“The publication of this book marks the end of a long and most unexpected journey that really began in January 1983 when I was appointed to serve in the Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu. It was just after the

achievement of independence that brought with it a great sense of national pride, a rejection of all things colonial, and a resurgence of local cultures. The local church was now prioritising its own agenda of the cultural relevance of the Christian



Gospel. For me, it was like landing on another planet, certainly into a different world. Rather than continuing the pre-independent missionary agenda, I was expected to work in ‘the Melanesian way’, to adopt the indigenous agenda, and to partner with local leaders.

As a result, I found myself caught up in a generational movement exploring ‘Gospel and Culture in Vanuatu’. At the end of my five years appointment, and now passionately immersed in issues of Gospel and Culture, I began a more serious engagement with the wider issues of contextual theology that were, by then, emerging across the whole theological world. Increasingly, I felt the need for the voice of the South Pacific to be heard in this debate. Over a period of years, and working with the local people in Vanuatu, we began to document and publish the story of how the Gospel is grounded within the unique cultural context of these oral communities. But a deeper question emerged in all of this: what does the pursuit of theology look like in cultures that are essentially oral and communal, and where the presuppositions and parameters of post-Enlightenment literacy-based western cultures simply do not exist?

My unexpected appointment onto the Faculty of the Uniting Church Theological College in 2003 provided the environment and opportunity to tackle this issue within the framework of a doctoral dissertation, requiring me to sharpen my insights, and to articulate the significance of my learning (notably, as required by, and suitable for a literacy-based cultural context).

Successful completion of the doctoral dissertation was, of course, personally satisfying. But for the American Society of Missiology to publish this work in its monograph series has a much greater sense of bringing my journey to a conclusion. It enables a story that deserves to be heard, the Vanuatu Story of Gospel and Culture, to be brought to international ears, it puts into a wider global arena the distinctive account of the contextualisation of theology in the South Pacific, and it enables the pressing but overlooked issues around the nature of theology in oral-based communities to be given voice. These issues are not confined to the South Pacific or to other oral contexts like Africa; they are increasingly pressing wherever people from oral-based communities happen to be ministering and theologising, and that means, in Australian churches and theological colleges.”



Field Education Shares Common Ground

Amanda Smith

Responding to the Royal Commission Project Officer

Supervised Theological Field Education is a significant part of the University of Divinity's teaching in Theology: Ministry and Mission. As the name implies, this is learning while out in the field, through a student placement in a parish or other pastoral or ministry situation.

Supervised Theological Field Education (STFE) units not only include the pastoral placement, but provide a strong support structure of seminars including planning and preparation, as well as discussion, feedback and analysis. There are also required sessions of individual supervision. All these have theological reflection as a core method to integrate the experiential learning.

Supervised Theological Field Education units are offered by most of the University's Colleges. At the start of 2019 Associate Professor Frank Rees, Chair of the Academic Board, convened a Working Group to consider STFE units with regard to best practice and also in light of recommendations about pastoral formation from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Working Group consisted of STFE staff from across the Colleges together with the University's Project Officer, Responding to the Royal Commission. All of the group are also ministry practitioners.

The STFE Working Group examined all the University's Supervised Theological Field Education units. They commended the diversity of tradition represented and the rich breadth of approaches to ministry education. The Working Group agreed that within these approaches, equivalence and best practice should be clearly demonstrated. The Working Group proposed

establishing a set of common requirements to which all STFE units must adhere and demonstrate alignment, as an agreed point or framework of accountability in relation to both University and community expectations, and effective pedagogy.

Over five months, the Working Group developed the Supervised Theological Field Education Framework. It sets out requirements, definitions, and parameters in areas including: structure of the unit, student enrolment and selection, student workload and assessment, the placement agreement/covenant, Pastoral Supervision, and Safeguarding.

The University of Divinity Academic Board recently received and endorsed the Working Group's recommendation to establish the Supervised Theological Field Education Framework.

Associate Professor Frank Rees commented:

“ This is a great outcome for the University and church communities, and for our pastors, ministers and church workers of the future. It is also a very positive example of inter-college cooperation. Thanks to everyone involved in developing the Supervised Theological Field Education Framework.

Banner: Trinity College Theological School students and staff in the chapel. Photo courtesy of Trinity College

Future of Ministry

Professor Peter Sherlock
Vice-Chancellor

Without a doubt the greatest challenge faced by churches and their ministers, lay and ordained, at the present time is how to address the crisis of child sexual abuse. The institutional failures have been thoroughly documented by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. In August 2018, the University of Divinity co-sponsored the Health and Integrity in Church and Ministry conference in Melbourne, which brought together survivors, support groups, church leaders, and professional experts to respond to both the letter and the spirit of the Royal Commission's findings. The Conference Proceedings are now available online.

A key question raised at last year's conference was this: in light of the Royal Commission, what changes might be required in training future generations of bishops, clergy and religious leaders?

In August 2019, the University brought together members of all of its Colleges to consider this question through a Ministry Colloquium. The University of Divinity has a unique responsibility amongst Australia's Universities, as an institution which for nearly 110 years has educated generations of people for ministry and leadership across dozens of Christian traditions.

We know that requirements for ministry training have changed profoundly in the past half a century. These changes have been driven by movements within the churches, from the Second Vatican Council to the ecumenical movement, and from without, through the expansion of access to higher education to the professionalisation of both lay and ordained ministries.

Of course, there are also many continuities, such as critical familiarity with the Christian scriptures and the development and practical import of doctrine. Yet even these have been transformed by more recent forms of on-the-job and online education.

In reviewing the positive effect of many of these changes and continuities, there is some reason to be hopeful that many of the mistakes of the past can be averted by present and future generations of ministers. Yet the Royal Commission has clearly shown that we need to be much more intentional and accountable about how we

prepare our leaders than we have been in the past, using evidence and critical inquiry, not supposition alone.

So our Ministry Colloquium offered an exciting, searching opportunity to review what we are doing in the world of theological education for ministry. What is bearing fruit, and what needs correction or improvement or even transformation?

Our focus was not on the overall responses of our churches and religious orders to the recommendations of the Royal Commission, but in the specific responsibility of the University of Divinity: the formation of people for Christian ministry through higher education. What are we doing, how are we doing, and what effect is it having?

Our last major conversation of this nature took place in the 1970s, when Protestant and Catholic theologians sat down to negotiate how two theologically and historically divided curricula could be brought together into a single degree structure. This proved to be a liberating and enriching experience. It created the basis for life-giving relationships between staff and students who previously were barely allowed to talk to each other, and offered a means of overcoming centuries of division, persecution and violence. Concurrently, new methods such as Clinical Pastoral Education or Supervised Field Education were introduced, bringing insights from other academic disciplines and areas of professional practice into conversation with theology and ministry.

There is no question that the future of ministry in Australia and beyond will of necessity be different from much of what has gone before, even as ancient theological traditions continue to speak wisdom into challenging new contexts. I, therefore, look forward to the opportunity in August to learn anew of the diverse ways in which the University and its partners approach the challenge of educating people for ministry, and how we might do this better together.



Women of the New Testament show us God's inclusive plan

Reverend Canon Professor Dorothy Lee FAHA
Stewart Professor of New Testament, Trinity College

The women of Jesus' ministry, and those who worked alongside Paul, need to be re-discovered, argues Dorothy Lee. Through them, women today can see how they are set free in Christ to become their true selves as daughters of God and sisters of Christ.

Women's ministry is an important feature of the New Testament writings. For more than 100 years, women have been rediscovering slowly but surely their place within the biblical text and attempting to live out its radical call to equality and mutuality, a calling that goes back to Jesus' own ministry. Yet this has not been without fierce opposition from within the church. Christian feminism has been branded as indifferent to biblical authority and caving in to a secular, liberal agenda. In fact, women continue to discover, in the pages of the New Testament, a new place of freedom and a new authority within the community of faith. Christian women now read the Bible from their own context, challenging past interpretations that reflect the male-oriented prejudices of their day.

The Gospels

This relatively new way of reading goes back to Jesus himself who had an extraordinary way of connecting to women on equal terms, unusual in his day. His vision of the kingdom or reign of God resulted in a community of equals gathered around him, women as well as men, many of whom left their homes and possessions to follow him. The Gospels in different ways testify to the remarkable freedom Jesus had in relating to women as persons, as disciples, and as leaders.

The first three Gospels present women as models of discipleship and followers of Jesus, who stay with him on his journey to the cross, even when his male

disciples desert him (Mk 15:40-41). Luke tells us that these women are among Jesus' disciples from Galilee and that they minister to Jesus, making possible his work through their acts of service, including financing his ministry through their resources (Lk 8:1-3). While these Gospels speak of an inner group of twelve disciples or apostles, they are also aware of women who have a special relationship to Jesus: an inner group of men and an inner group of women. Luke names these women as Mary Magdalene, Joanna (who is connected to the royal court), and Susanna. Mark also mentions another Mary and Salome, who may well be the mother of the apostles, James and John.

John's Gospel is more concerned with individual encounters with Jesus than with groups and so his focus is on Jesus' meeting with a number of individual women who come to faith in him, sometimes through doubt and struggle. At the beginning of the Gospel, the mother of Jesus plays a part in commencing Jesus' ministry, declaring her faith in his word and, at the end, the dying Jesus gives her to the beloved disciple as his mother (2:5; 19:25-26), thus indicating the beginning of the Christian church, grounded in mutual and familial love. The Samaritan woman comes to find in Jesus the source of living water, quenching her deep thirst for life; she brings her fellow-villagers to faith, acting in an apostolic way (4:1-42). Martha and Mary discover that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, confessing their faith in him through word and deed (11:25-27; 12:3-8).

Mary Magdalene, whose surname is most likely a nickname given to her by Jesus (meaning "tower of strength"), is the first to meet the risen Christ in this Gospel. The later church gave her the title "apostle of the apostles", emphasising her apostolic role and her significance in the spread of the good news. In John's Gospel, she is the first to see and fully to believe, the first to be given the commission, the first to announce

Jesus' triumph over death. Her joyful announcement, "I have seen the Lord!" (20:18), is the formal Christian proclamation of the resurrection, as well as the deeply personal experience on which it is based.

Paul and baptism

The apostle Paul is often seen as a misogynist who had problems with women and their leadership, unlike Jesus. Yet this is far from being the case. Apart from anything else, Paul had a significant number of women colleagues who worked in ministry and mission alongside him. In one place, he mentions ten women who include the theologian, Prisca (Priscilla), along with her husband Aquila; the deacon, Phoebe, who worked in Corinth as deacon and a patron of the church, and was commissioned to take the Letter to the Romans to Rome on Paul's behalf; and also the apostle, Junia, and her husband, Andronicus (Rom 16:3-16). For many years, it was questioned whether a woman could be an apostle, but there is no longer any doubt that the apostle's name was "Junia", a common female name. Even John Chrysostom in the fourth century recognised her as an apostle.

Even more important theologically is Paul's core statement about baptism: "as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28). Unlike circumcision, which is by definition only for males, there is a new identity in belonging to Christ in baptism, with far-reaching consequences for women, as for Gentiles and other outsiders. It is baptism into Christ that includes women in the covenant community of God's people.

From this Christology flow radical implications for the believing community. Though being a Jew and a male, Christ through the resurrection embraces all human beings, gathering them into his identity. Elsewhere, Paul speaks of baptism as dying with Christ in order to rise with him. The pattern of Christian living is one where believers daily die to the old order of things and rise to the new (Rom 6:3-4). The death and resurrection of Christ make possible a new and transformed way of life, in opposition to the old order of sin, violence, oppression, domination, and death.

Paul is also aware of the first creation account in Genesis where women and men are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27; see 1 Cor 11:11-12). What this means is that the same original equality of men and women, before the fall, is now restored in Christ. Women need no longer be submissive and subservient to men but can take their rightful place within the community as those created in the divine image and re-made in the image of Christ.

Other Pauline texts

The rest of the Pauline writings need to be set within the context of this key passage. From this perspective, not all the texts say what interpreters have assumed down through the ages. For example, though 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is a difficult passage to understand in its details, it is clear that Paul sees women as able to participate fully and vocally in worship, including being given the highest gift of all, that of prophecy. They have their own authority to teach and preach in the gathered assembly (11:10).

In other places it is quietness that is called for, not silence, which means the kind of submission every Christian should cultivate in listening to the word of God (e.g. 1 Timothy 2:11-15). Women putting forward erroneous views in a contentious spirit are instructed to cultivate a receptive openness to apostolic teaching. These are desirable qualities in all Christians and need not exclude women from leadership or authority.

Other texts, such as 1 Cor 14:33b-34, which seems to contradict 1 Corinthians 11, may reflect a specific context now lost to us. Paul already knows that women are permitted, like men, to speak in the assembly. Why he should silence them here makes no sense. The passage may refer to a specific group of women, much less educated than their husbands, interrupting worship with their questions and objections; they are encouraged to take their questions home to ask their much better educated husbands. This is a context that is significantly different from our own. On the other hand, there are good arguments for considering these verses a later addition to the text.

The "household codes" also have their difficulties for us. These are instructions for Christian homes based on Greek philosophy addressed to a context where Christians are struggling to survive in the fierce world of Roman imperial power. They may seem less radical than other Pauline texts but they are attempting to tone down those aspects of the gospel which are perhaps too drastic for their immediate context. Thus they assume, for example, the institution of slavery as much as the submission of wives to husbands, attempting to soften these structures and give them a Christian motivation (e.g. Col 3:18-4:11; Eph 5:22-6:9).

In the Pauline letters we see both the radical calling of the gospel and the need, in specific contexts and for limited periods of time, to live in a reality that is far from ideal. Yet, in the end, what counts is the deep-seated invitation and summons of the gospel in its most inclusive forms — against racism, misogyny and any other barriers that human beings erect. We need great care in interpreting the New Testament so

that its fundamental message is not lost in the detail, endeavouring to live out the far-reaching call to follow Jesus in his all-embracing, benevolent, and open-hearted ministry of love and grace.

Conclusion

The New Testament attests to the equality and mutuality of women and men within the home and in the life of the church, as well as in the secular arena. The women of Jesus' ministry need to be re-discovered anew, as do the many other women of Paul's mission. Mary Magdalene's calling to proclaim the risen Christ is a vocation as much offered to women today as to men. We need no longer feel ourselves enslaved to patterns of male domination and authority. We are set free in Christ to become our true selves as daughters of God and sisters of Christ, remade in his image. This is the rediscovered lesson of the New Testament's teaching on women.

Those who continue to oppose the gifts and calling of women sometimes speak of their position as "complementarian", perhaps one of the most ironical and dishonest self-descriptions. Many women in lay and ordained ministry also believe that men and women have a degree of complementarity in the gifts they have been given, but without it denying their full equality and capacity to minister. A more honest designation of this

position would be that of "subordinationism", which has radical implications for women's participation in all spheres of their lives. If women must be subordinate to their husbands in the home and to their pastors and priests in the church, they should not be seeking positions of leadership in their professions and trades in the secular world. They should refrain, on principle, from becoming heads of organisations, teachers, and politicians, and indeed taking on any task that accords them authority and leadership.

The real danger is that "complementarians" — without always realising it — are clinging to male power and influence, unable to relinquish it, even for the sake of the gospel. They read their own agenda into the biblical text, focusing on certain passages while ignoring others, especially those that proclaim the redemptive and liberating power of the gospel. The evangelical calling to such people is to relinquish power, as Jesus did, and to work with women and other marginalised groups in drawing all people into the inclusive and all-encompassing love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

This article was originally published by The Melbourne Anglican (9 September 2019) and is republished with permission.

Banner: A woman looks over St Paul's Cathedral spire in Melbourne. Stock photo sourced from unsplash.com

New Doctor of Ministry Partnership

The University of Divinity and Stirling Theological College have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Abilene Christian University (ACU) TX, to enable Australian students access to the ACU Doctor of Ministry program. Stirling is the national college of Churches of Christ in Australia and ACU is a leading university from the same movement of churches in the USA.

Under the agreement, most of the coursework component of the Doctor of Ministry will be completed in Australia through Stirling and taught by both US and Australian faculty. The major project will be administered by ACU's experienced Doctor of Ministry staff and supervised by both Australian and US faculty, depending on the nature of each specific project.

Students with a University of Divinity Master of Divinity (or an equivalent combination of awards from the University of Divinity) and appropriate experience will qualify for admission to the program.

Stirling Theological College Principal, Reverend Dr Andrew Menzies commented:

"This project has been a wonderful three-way collaboration of the University of Divinity, Abilene Christian University and Stirling Theological College developed with the emerging needs of experienced ministry practitioners in mind. For the last few decades American theology schools have led the way with Doctor of Ministries as significant capstone awards for professional ministers. This new partnership creates access to University of Divinity students to one of the USA's top ranked Doctor of Ministries at very reasonable cost and requires only two trips to Texas."

An additional benefit that the agreement opens is for faculty exchanges and cooperation in research. The first faculty exchange occurs in Winter 2019.

Enquiries from suitable qualified and experienced ministers should be directed to Stirling Theological College (03) 9790 1000.