Editorial

The opening article of this issue is a contribution by Agnes Brazal and José Lacsa on the St John Neumann Migrants Center and its FaceBook page, which function as the cyberchurch of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Shrine in Baclaran, Philippines. The cyberchurch was started some years ago to cater for the spiritual, religious, and social needs of overseas Filipino workers in the Gulf states, many of whom visit the shrine before their departure. Brazal and Lacsa show that the FB page/Center does not merely provide religious services such as live streams of the Sunday mass and of the novenas, but also counsels overseas workers who face work-related challenges or abuse. More so, through its transnational networks it is able to assist overseas workers with repatriation and legal claims.

The second contribution is an article by Christian J. Anderson on Christian conversion. In his contribution, Anderson takes a critical look at the “traditional” Western dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic factors in Christian conversion processes. By drawing on three case studies on Bengali Muslim background believers (called Isai groups), he concludes that “the Isai’s conversion is not straightforwardly described as inward, as it hinges on an extensive re-structuring of social and spiritual relations around a newly established spiritual patronage.” Anderson therefore argues that it is necessary to move beyond the interiority-exteriority paradigm, by insisting that the theological and spiritual ruptures of conversion be interpreted within the relational networks and performative settings in which they play out.

The third contribution is co-authored by four Finnish researchers: Talvikki Ahonen, Sini Mikkola, Laura Kallatsa, and Pekka Metso. In their contribution they examine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the eucharistic and communal practices in two local Finnish churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) and the Orthodox Church of Finland (OCF). The article analyses how eucharistic practices in the ELCF and the OCF changed during the pandemic and how these transformations were experienced by both parishioners and pastors. They conclude that whereas both churches underscored the significance of belonging during the time of social distancing, in the ELCF members experienced belonging mainly in terms of Eucharist, while for OCF members belonging was most often connected to the corporeality of the liturgical community.
In the fourth and final article of this issue Minna Hietamäki explores how recognition become tangible in ecumenical relations. Hietamäki shows that while ecumenical texts cultivate a rich language of attitudes referring to trust, commitment, love, faithfulness, openness, etc., their role in ecumenical advancement has often been taken for granted. After reviewing a number of contemporary recognition theories, which reflect on the subjects and objects, the direction, and the consequences of recognition, Hietamäki delineates how these insights can be made fruitful for understanding recognition in ecumenical relations. She for example differentiates between recognition on the interpersonal and institutional level, and between individual, corporate and institutional subjects and objects of recognition.

As is customary, the last pages of the issue are dedicated to book reviews.

Lastly, a word on some changes in the editorial team of Exchange. After serving for five years as one of the managing editors of Exchange, Lucien van Liere has decided to step down and hand over his editorial responsibilities to Aron Engberg. Van Liere graciously agreed to temporarily serve as one of the managing editors of Exchange in July 2017, when due to unforeseen circumstances the journal suddenly found itself without a managing editor. What began as a temporary solution evolved into a five year editorship.

Van Liere brought to the editorship his extensive knowledge of religion in Southeast Asia (especially Indonesia) as well as expertise on the topic of religion and violence, and on discourse analysis. Combining academic rigor with first-rate coaching skills, Van Liere has counselled many an author on how to further develop their contribution or sharpen their argument.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Lucien for his commitment and dedication to Exchange and for the amiable, gracious and collegial manner with which he took on this unforeseen task. Terima kasih banyak!

Aron Engberg and Martha Frederiks
Managing editors