

From the Guest Editor

by John Kim, Coordinator of the Asia Society for Frontier Mission

As an Asian field worker and coordinator serving through the Asia Society for Frontier Mission (ASFM), I want to express my appreciation for having been invited to co-edit this issue, *IJFM* 34:1–4 2017.

The ASFM was established in 2010 as a hermeneutical community focused on issues in frontier mission. This society grew out of the AFMI (Asian Frontier Mission Initiative), which equips frontier mission field workers in a kingdom of God paradigm through its training programs. From the beginning, the society's annual conferences have created a space where a rather unique constituency of workers gather to discuss crucial missiological questions together. Interaction and cooperation among God's servants of different nationalities and socio-religious traditions (those popularly known as "insiders") remain a core value.

The US-based ISFM and the ASFM share many missional values: a frontier mission spirit; missiological breakthrough as a primary goal in frontier fields; a commitment to Jesus movements within socio-religious traditions and unreached people groups (UPGs); and the critical role of hermeneutical communities of biblical reflection on frontier mission issues.

We are now observing some of the great and unsearchable things on a scale unprecedented in Christian history (Jer. 33:3). Therefore, we must fix our eyes on Jesus alone as the author and perfecter of our faith. The year 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. While many have offered astute reflections on its significance, is it possible that these excellent assessments of the Reformation may have overlooked certain critical features? An Asian society like ours must grapple with one feature in serious decline across this Protestant movement: the *oikos*-based ecclesial fellowship.

Why have *oikos* fellowships continued to decline in Western Christendom? Tragically, the God-given social unit called *oikos* (household/family) has not escaped the fragmentation so common in human life and society. All over the world, many suffer the bitter and traumatic consequences of broken families.

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But any (even cursory) examination will notice a striking biblical feature of *oikos* among movements to Jesus in least-reached communities: they encounter Jesus together as members of a household. In many cases, this fact not only prevents families from fracturing, it seems to play an instrumental role in the restoration of the other families—broken *oikoi*—and in the reconciliation of their members.

Unsearchable things are even now taking place in the form of movements with *oikos* dynamics within different religious traditions. We are thus forced into self-awareness and biblical reflection at this time. We urgently need to learn from what we have observed among many UPGs. In October, the ASFM drew together many frontier mission leaders, experienced field practitioners and Jesus followers from different religious traditions, including several from Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim communities. Our purpose? To sit together and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As participants shared what they had learned about *oikos* from both their field experiences and academic research, we rejoiced to see that the Holy Spirit has been at work in fellowships in different religious communities just as happened in the *ekklesia* (churches) of the New Testament.

I believe that this special issue is a small but decisive step towards global

cooperation among networks of spiritual *oikoi*, whose members will have already experienced reconciliation with each other through Jesus Christ. God's *oikos* is spiritual and not confined to any man-made tradition, such as Western Christianity. This is a perspective I offer more fully in my article herein (p. 37). In a modern world where traditions are clashing, only the Spirit of Jesus can give true reconciliation resulting in *shalom*. In this special issue of the *IJFM*, themes and issues surrounding *oikos* will come under close examination. Hopefully we can learn from one other, and successfully adopt transformative practices in order to fulfill the historic task remaining in the extension of God's kingdom.

I deeply appreciate the spirit of cooperation that allowed the various aspects of this *oikos* theme to converge into a common vision of what we hope to fulfill in the near future. Many of the ASFM 2017 papers included in this issue of *IJFM* were also compiled and published in Korean under the title *Spiritual Oikos*. My deepest thanks to the committed authors—Westerner and Asian, alongside and insider, from many traditions—whose hard work and fruitful efforts made that book a reality.

As readers interact with this special issue and observe God's awesome promises throughout history, may they come to know how great God truly is and that those who minister before him will be "as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore" (Jer. 33:20–22). As we seek His kingdom together, may we all come to enjoy God's presence in this spiritual *oikos*.