Introduction

While many of the readers of the Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care engage one or more articles through online and digital formats, we still have a tried and true, front-to-back readership. To these traditional, print-subscribers we are extremely grateful. And it is to you that this introductory editorial is written in order to acquaint you with the issue as a whole. And this issue, in particular, requires an introduction.

The issue begins with one of the clearest and most subtle overviews of the nature of Christian spiritual formation that I have ever read. Two of the founding editors of JSFSC—Jim Wilhoit and Evan Howard—co-authored “The wisdom of Christian spiritual formation.” Using the acronym WISDOM, Jim and Evan lay out the six essential elements (really, seven since WISDOM itself is the seventh element) of Christian formation. Part of the subtlety of their presentation is their referencing of highly relevant literature—both recent and ancient—on each of the elements they discuss. We often speak of maturing the spiritual formation movement, and Jim and Evan’s article represents that maturation well.

Euiwan Cho’s title says it all: “Resisting restless Protestant religious consumers in Korean burnout society: Examining Korean Protestantism’s rising interest in apophatic and desert spirituality.” Cho helpfully articulates one cultural expression of what is in some sense common to many different cultures; namely, drivenness and its resultant effects. Cho also documents Korean Protestantism’s attempt to find a corrective to this in the spirituality of the desert elders.

The issue then turns to a special section that is tied together by the theme of Pentecostalism and spiritual formation. The guest editor for this specially themed section is Simon Chan. Until 2016, Chan was the Earnest Lau Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Theological College, Singapore. Chan is an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God and graciously accepted the invitation to guest edit this special section of the journal. In the Call for Papers for this special theme, Chan wrote:

The Pentecostal movement has been around for more than a hundred years. Many outside the movement still perceive it as long on practice but short on theology. But within the last thirty years, the situation has changed dramatically. There is a growing number of Pentecostal scholars working in various theological disciplines involved in
articulating aspects of the Pentecostal theology and experience, relating the Pentecostal faith to other Christian and faith traditions, and recovering their spiritual heritage. Yet, there are few works that seek to show how the fruits of current Pentecostal scholarship are reshaping Pentecostalism as a way of life. In other words, how do these new understandings of Pentecostalism affect Pentecostal spirituality or the formation of a distinctively Pentecostal way of life? In addition, what does Pentecostal spirituality have to contribute to non-Pentecostal approaches to life in Christ as well as the “spiritual formation movement”?

After Chan’s introductory essay which describes more fully the recent engagement of spirituality by Pentecostal scholars, the articles by Macchia, Black, Stephenson, the Costelos, and Tyra each in their own way demonstrate how Pentecostal distinctives are being brought to bear on important issues in the field of Christian formation.

This issue of *JSFSC* concludes with informative reviews of six recent monographs that each address some aspect of formation and soul care. These reviews are not to be missed as they each provide a window into these important books and draw out one or more crucial points for reflection.

As always, the editorial staff and board of consultants (see inside cover) are grateful for the contributors and each of those involved in the production of the journal. Our prayer is that this issue will provide continued encouragement and stimulation as you seek to live out the calling the Lord Jesus has laid upon your life. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Steven L. Porter
Editor