



## THINK TANK 2018: A TRANSFORMING JOURNEY

At this year's Think Tank, step by step, our well-advanced plans for the next issue of *Journal of Missional Practice* were demolished. Our original plan had been towards an issue on 'Hope in an Age of Anxiety', but our conversations at our Vancouver gathering pushed us in quite a different direction. I noticed two streams in our conversation come together to create this new thing. One was Acts 16 and *Dwelling in the Word*, the other some experiences of living with and sharing journal stories.

This year, as last year, our *Dwelling in the Word* focused on Acts 16 and [the winding journey to find Lydia](#). This process is always special for me, even holy, sacramental. The emphasis is never what I, as an individual, say, but what I hear through the voice of another. As we listened and reflected together we felt stirred again by the missionaries' risky journey towards a river bank, to an Asian trader, a woman and decidedly not a Macedonian man! In earlier work (last year's Think Tank) we had already heard this challenge. The diversity of the conversation about place ([A Question of Place, Issue 10](#)) bears

witness to that. But this time the theme of the 'stranger' took its place at the heart of what the journal is called to become. We felt called to look beyond western cultures to find help from people 'along the river bank' who could help us honour again the vulnerable sensitivity to the Holy Spirit modelled in the story. We were grateful to have Harvey Kwiyani's challenge towards discernment *in community*. We are not invited to declare individualistic 'prophecies' and hunches to gratify an impatient ego. We are called to be community, listening to one another, honouring our own diversity, sensitive to vulnerability, and hearing God speak.

The second stream emerged from discussion of the narrative nature of our journal. We did talk a little about epistemology, but it came home for me when Paul Weston described his experience of sharing one of our stories ([the Saturday Gathering Food Bank story](#)) with a group of students. As he encouraged a group of students to engage with the story he noted how it affected all students, including those who were more resistant to the class. Narrative, he commented, does not spawn theory, it gives rise to questions about your own relationship to the story, sometimes to transformation. Our desire, at this Think Tank, was to make our stories available for transforming knowledge, for leaders growing in their practice of action reflection.

Our conversations were suffused with the story of Acts 16. We felt that we were living the story. We are uncertain and our plans for the journal have often been thwarted and may be again. However, for now we have been drawn to go outside the city gates to learn from the unexpected 'others' who are waiting for us. We look for learning communities, open to transformation, who will listen to stories and the Holy Spirit with us.



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