

NEW BEGINNINGS

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Welcome to volume two of *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology*! One may ask, “where is volume one?” And one would be right to ask. The first, and until now the only, issue of *Spiritus* appeared in 1985. That single issue constituted volume one. It was a modest offering, consisting largely of in-house contributions from Oral Roberts University (ORU) faculty, as aptly indicated by the full title of that initial effort: *Spiritus: The Journal of the School of Theology*. Precisely why there was only one issue seems lost to history. Nevertheless, after a lengthy hiatus, *Spiritus* is resurrected and signals an exciting new chapter in the story of ORU’s College of Theology and Ministry with the Holy Spirit Research Center, this time with a global focus.

Rather than forget the first issue, the editors decided that the journal should stand in continuity with the first effort all those years ago. Thus, with this issue, numbering resumes with volume two. This particular issue will consist of issue numbers one and two, with the semiannual publication schedule, with cover dates March and September, beginning in 2018.

Why another journal? More specifically, why another journal in the Pentecostal-charismatic tradition? In this crowded field, *Spiritus* raises a voice in service to global Spirit-empowered communities, a space that both expresses the distinctive contribution of ORU to these communities and offers itself as a gift to and for them. As distinctive contribution, *Spiritus* is a vehicle that advances the vision of ORU’s founder, Oral Roberts, to bring God’s healing and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit to “every person’s world,” so that every person, every community, indeed all of creation, might experience God’s restorative power. As gift, *Spiritus* is a forum for theological reflection that actively promotes a global exchange of views, fostering conversation among Spirit-empowered leaders and communities. To these ends, *Spiritus* promotes mutual learning, the exchange of ideas and experiences, and

the exploration of new theological domains and approaches from a wide range of multi- and interdisciplinary perspectives, especially from various areas of the globe, including from emerging contexts.

The editorial team envisions *Spiritus* as more than just a place where scholars publish to enhance their curriculum vitae and pave the way for promotion in rank and tenure. There are more than enough such venues. Rather, *Spiritus* is a place where the full gifts and graces of the academy intersect with the missional concerns of Spirit-empowered communities that are at work in the world to further God's kingdom and witness to the full range of God's healing for God's world. So we take the word 'gift' quite seriously. In God's wisdom, God has raised up many voices who seek to bring the efforts and fruits of their scholarly vocations to aid the church as it fulfills its commission to proclaim the gospel in all the world.

On the one hand, this vision entails witnessing to our Spirit-empowered distinctives, in what others before and around us might call "Pentecostal" or "charismatic." We unabashedly and unashamedly own the identifier "Spirit-empowered," not as something that sets us apart, but as something that speaks to the contribution that God in God's providence has provided for the church of Jesus Christ at this time. In this respect, *Spiritus* will help shape the self-consciousness of this people through studies that identify these distinctives and illustrate how they are at work in God's mission in the world.

On the flipside, *Spiritus* will endeavor to show that the Spirit-empowered movements in the world are inextricably connected to the larger church of Jesus Christ throughout space and time. If Spirit-empowered movements settle in ghettos of their own making or set out to separate themselves into sects that have no connection to the church universal, then these movements will have come up short. Early Pentecostal consciousness evidences the notion that this move of God is a gift to the whole church. *Spiritus* will take seriously the idea that the move of the Spirit in the world is not the possession of one group, no matter how explosive its growth. Rather, the journal will offer its studies as gift not only to the Spirit-empowered communities, but also to the whole church of Jesus Christ.

The present issue expresses the editorial philosophy of the journal quite well. Though originating from within the ORU College of

Theology and Ministry and the Holy Spirit Research Center, no more than approximately half of the studies in each issue will come from ORU faculty. Contributions from scholars from around the world as well as from North America will feature prominently in the pages of *Spiritus*. An exciting feature of the journal is the welcome inclusion of at least one study in each issue from an emerging scholar, where those in the midst of their graduate studies lend their voices to the conversation. *Spiritus* invites a wide range of participants from all corners of the Spirit-empowered world to help shape the future of these communities in their missions. This invitation includes reviews of noteworthy books on topics germane to the interests of Spirit-empowered communities.

Of special note is the effort to offer frequent scholarly inquiries into the contributions of Oral Roberts to the church. Among many opportunities for scholarly probing are these: how is it that a Pentecostal preacher with little formal higher education established a Spirit-empowered university; and how is it that a minister known primarily as a tent-crusade healing revivalist had the vision to establish a medical center that sought to merge divine healing and medical science into a holistic vision of God's healing power? Studies about the life and ministry of Oral Roberts will be one aspect of the gift of the journal to Spirit-empowered communities.

Readers will notice on the cover a one-time appearance of the University's fiftieth anniversary seal. Over the course of the past three academic years, the University has marked the fiftieth anniversary of several milestone events: the founding of the University, the admission of the first class of students, and the first commencement ceremony, to name a few. As we bring these celebrations to a close, we mark a new era in the life of the University with the (re)launch of *Spiritus*. *Spiritus* occupies a foundational place in the University's emerging role as a research center among Spirit-empowered communities. It appears first in a series of envisioned institutional efforts, including a Ph.D. program in theology and the growth of an ecology of research and publication. With this issue, we invite all who participate in the scholarly study of the work of the Spirit in the world to come join the conversation.

