

in God's image

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**About the Cover**

This abstract digital painting work is entitled "Let us celebrate Eucharist with inclusive community." Jesus broke down all barriers and social stigma against persons with disabilities. This painting reflects inclusiveness of our communion. The artist is Jebasingh Samuvel, who has completed his Bachelor of Divinity degree and belongs to the diocese of Madurai Ramnad, Church of South India (CSI). He is currently an intern with the Department of Communication at the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), Chiangmai, Thailand.

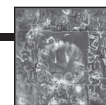
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<b>Contents</b>	
1	Editorial
3	Living Together as One Community in the House of God: from Person with Disability Perspective <i>Arulampalam Stephen, Sri Lanka</i>
7	Silent and Silenced: Deaf Theology and Spirituality <i>Kristine Meneses, Philippines</i>
17	The "Gift of Being" in the Making of a Just and Inclusive Church and Society: A Theological Perspective <i>Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, Philippines</i>
23	Love has no Disability: Love and Sexuality among Persons with Disabilities <i>Yick Wing-wah, Hong Kong</i>
28	My Battle with Anxiety Disorder <i>Eunice Barbara C. Novio, Philippines/ Thailand</i>
31	Jesus the Slaughtered Lamb: A Disability Hermeneutics of Revelation 5 <i>Tabita Kartika Christiani, Indonesia</i>
37	Interrogating my Perceptions on Disability and Body: A Reflection <i>Gifliyani Krisna Nayoan, Indonesia</i>
42	Becoming an Inclusive Church <i>Tabita Kartika Christiani, Indonesia</i>
48	In Memory of a Feminist Theologian Wang Jen-Wen (1965-2017) <i>Wong Wai-Yin Christina, Hong Kong</i>
52	In Loving Remembrance of Wang Jen-Wen <i>Jessica Richard, India</i>

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## Disability

In the process of putting together this special issue of *IGI* on Disability we realize that so little is known about the existing writing and wisdom on the topic of Disability. In a way, this is indicative of the scant attention and space we have afforded to the perspectives of and from those with disabilities within theological articulation in Asia. *IGI* would like to acknowledge that disability has not received enough attention as a subject for critical feminist reflection either in the feminist movement or in feminist theology. It is a fact that often, as feminists, we too are indifferent to the experiences of wo/men with disabilities and are responsible for their invisibility in much of our feminist theorizing, theologising, strategizing and movement-building. As a small step towards remedying this oversight in our theological articulation as feminist theologians in Asia, this issue of *IGI* has tried to bring together voices from different parts of Asia on the theme of Disability. While we try to keep in focus that disability is the standpoint of most of the articles, we need to be careful to understand that it is not their disability alone that defines our authors' theological articulation—their personhood and their distinctiveness do not hinge on disability alone.

In *Living Together as One Community: From Person with Disability Perspective* Arulampalam Stephen, points out that the idea that disability is a result of sin has been passed down throughout Christian history until today. This has been particularly damaging for Christians with disabilities who have felt guilt, shame and uncleanness because of their impairment. Stephen advocates that giving opportunities, respecting human dignity and inclusiveness are key factors towards removing social and economic stigma that disabled people face. He identifies Jesus Christ also as a “Blind Christ” and suggests that “Theology of Disability, inclusive way of reading the bible and re-interpreting miracles of Jesus and creating God in our own image will help us to become an inclusive people.”

Kristine Meneses in her article *Silent and Silenced: Deaf Theology and Spirituality* tries to show us how to understand the Deaf, who are a minority in our hearing society. She points out that apart from language, one of the major causes for their experience of exclusion in society is the attitude of the hearing towards them. This article presents the Deaf, their perspective of themselves and the theological and pastoral call they raise to our Church and society which we must face with humility. Kristine presents the Deaf perspective about their own identity and then explains how they view the healing narratives in the scripture, the landscape of our liturgy and church communities. Synthesizing these three, she then attempts to present a Deaf theology and spirituality.

In her article *The “Gift of Being” in the Making of a Just and Inclusive Church and Society: A Theological Perspective*, Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro contends that a disabled woman seeking to live in a just and inclusive church and society stand at many intersections and her gendered female body becomes the place where the intersections cross. Muriel calls on the church to explore and construct patterns for relating across our human differences and intersections in such a way that differences are not mislabeled or used as an excuse to separate communities and individuals as “us vs. them” and “normal” vs. “disabled”.

*Love has no Disability: Love and Sexuality among Persons with Disabilities* by Yick Wing-Wah is

about the advocacy that a group of Christian women in Hong Kong are involved in to raise public awareness about the sexuality and sexual rights of the disabled. A keen critique of the feminist movement in this article is the observation that even within feminism, voices for sexual rights of vulnerable groups are not given much attention. The article calls us to reshape our understanding of disability and the disabled and pay attention to their needs for sexual rights and affirms that “the sexual rights of persons with disabilities are the same as those of able-bodied persons.”

In *My Battle with Anxiety Disorder* Eunice Barbara C. Novio writes with stark honesty and rare courage about her battle with anxiety disorder and how she copes with it. Her story uplifts that disabilities can sometimes be invisible and difficult for others to perceive and therefore makes it that much more difficult for those labouring with such disabilities to share or reach out for help.

In *Jesus the Slaughtered Lamb: A Disability Hermeneutics of Revelation 5* Tabita Kartika Christiani continues the interpretation of the resurrected Jesus as the disabled God that Nancy Eiesland builds in her book *The Disabled God* to talk about Jesus as the Lamb of God who is slaughtered in the book of Revelation chapter 5. Starting with the work of Eiesland, and moving to socio-rhetoric, postcolonial, and political interpretations of Revelation 5, she finally ends with a disability hermeneutic to Revelation 5.

In her reflection on *Interrogating my Perceptions on Disability and Body*, Giffiyani Krisna (Nina) Nayoan shares her experiences at a consultation on disability that she attended which has been a liberating and transforming encounter for her as an able-bodied person to confront her own perceptions of the disabled, and disability. Through this consultation she admits that she was able to see people with disability from the way they represent themselves without imposing her own view on that process of seeing.

In her second article *Becoming an Inclusive Church* Tabita studies two documents related to disability published by EDAN (Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network) namely “A Church of All and for All” and “The Gift of Being.” She first talks about these two documents from the perspectives of some approaches to disability and then she proceeds to the ways in which a church could become inclusive and involve persons with disabilities.

We are very much saddened with the passing of Wang Jen-Wen, a member of AWRC, on 10 May 2017, after a long and courageous battle with cancer. As a tribute to Jen-Wen, an Asian feminist theologian, who has contributed her writing and art to AWRC/*IGI*, we have an article by Wong Wai-Yin Christina, *In Memory of a Feminist Theologian Wang Jen-Wen* and a tribute by Jessica Richard, *In Loving Remembrance of Wang Jen-Wen*. We have also showcased some of Jen-Wen's artwork that she generously contributed as cover design for some issues of *In God's Image* and the books, *Modules on Asian Feminist Theologies*.

We thank all the authors who have shared their thoughts, experiences and reflective and critical articulations with us in this issue of *IGI*. To the artists who have given their art work for use in this issue we owe our thanks as well. Deepest thanks to members of the Editorial Advisory Committee (EAC) who took time to review all the submissions made for this issue. We hope that our readers will have a fruitful time of learning new perspectives through this issue.

*Jessica Richard*

(For Editorial Advisory Committee (EAC))