

Grounded: in the Body in Time & Place, in Scripture

# Grandmothers of Intention: Women in Australian Theological Academia (1883–2003)

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## Meet the authors

Jill Firth is a lecturer in Hebrew and Old Testament at Ridley College in Melbourne. She completed her PhD on Psalms in 2016 and publishes on Psalms and Jeremiah. Jill has lived in Victoria, NSW, WA, the Northern Territory, and Hong Kong. She encourages women to consider theological study.

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## Chapter overview

The title 'Grandmothers of Invention' is a riff on the proverb 'necessity is the mother of invention.' The chapter looks back to 100 mothers, grandmothers, and great grandmothers in the faith who undertook theological education in order to love, serve, and become like Christ. It is a patchwork of names and stories, giving glimpses of informal and formal training of women, often in the face of difficulty. The information was crowdsourced, and is necessarily incomplete, inviting further research and publication.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, women were granted access to Australian universities and to some theological colleges, though access for Indigenous women was delayed into the twentieth century. This chapter traces the work of early bible teachers such as Angelina Noble and Serena Lake, through to the training of missionaries, church workers, and professional women in missionary training centres, bible colleges, and universities in the early twenty-first century. The first women teachers were in missionary training centres and Sunday Schools at the end of the nineteenth century. Winifred Kiek was a bible college lecturer in 1930, Hilda May Abba in 1951, and Mary Andrews in 1952. Judith Lieu established an MA program at Macquarie University in the 1960s. Dawn Cardona was appointed Principal of Nungalinga in 2003.

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## General Study Questions

### Question 1

What is the value in looking back to past stories of women in theological education?

### Question 2

Retell a story of a woman in theological education that you know from your family, community, or denomination.

### Question 3

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Are you surprised by the dates of women first being admitted to universities in Australia (1880s) and the first Indigenous women graduates (1950s–1960s)? Australian universities were open to men from the 1850s. The first Indigenous men graduates from universities were also mid-twentieth century.

#### **Question 4**

What was the most interesting information in the chapter for you?

#### **Question 5**

What was your favourite story about a woman graduate from your state or denomination?

#### **Question 6**

Which names or stories would you like to know more about?

- Give thanks for the women who have gone before you. You could mention one or more names.
- Pray for women you know who are studying or teaching.
- Is there a woman you know whom you would like to encourage to study theology?

### **Academic Questions**

#### **Question 1**

Do you know the history of women's study and teaching at your institution?

#### **Question 2**

What useful essay topics or research projects could arise for further study?

**Question 3** Would you like to follow up a specific woman or topic such as Indigenous, majority world, leadership, theological teaching?