

## HE MOVES EVEN IN THE DARKNESS: HEALING AND RESTORATION IN SRI LANKA

By Angelica De Vera  
Research and Communications Officer

*“It’s an economic crisis that was brought on by a political crisis, and now, we’re just generally in crisis.” – Al Jazeera Start Here with Sandra Gathman.*

A once self-sufficient nation, Sri Lanka is now reeling from bankruptcy. One crisis has led to another, a downward spiral that has quickly escalated into the freefall of a nation.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the country was already headed towards a fall. It began with the 2019 Easter bombings where three churches and three luxury hotels in Colombo became target of Islamic groups. These bombings initially baffled the nation as there was no provocation from Christians. It turns out these bombings were politically motivated, a tactic to regain power. These politically motivated attacks did propel certain people into power, but they also did so much harm to the Sri Lankan economy- a country that has been highly dependent on tourism.

The year after, the COVID-19 Pandemic hit, and the tourism industry continued to plummet... and so did the Sri Lankan economy.

In addition to that, the pandemic was severely mismanaged. Resources were severely exploited. Vaccines that could have been bought at a lower price were foregone for those of a higher cost because those in power got a bigger cut.

*Continued on page 2*

### What's inside:

Page 7

**Meet our Speakers and Panelists for the 2022 General Assembly**

Page 10

[Be excited about our breakout sessions!!!](#)

Page 11

**Evaluation Visits in the Second Quarter of 2022**

Page 13

**Coming Soon!: ATA North America**

Page 14

**Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education: Beyond Dialogue**

Page 15

**2022 ATA GA Schedule**

From page 1



All these along with policies that did more damage than good.

Corruption was on the rise and media freedom was suppressed. The amount of stealing was not discovered up until the country found itself bankrupt in the middle of last year. The people hadn't known what hit them until it was too late and the economy's free fall was inevitable.

The economic freefall of Sri Lanka meant that the nation could no longer import, even the most basic of goods, be it milk or fuel. Inflation has skyrocketed even as income levels have remained the same. This has resulted in having 50% of the population living below the poverty line. Protests have erupted in the capital since the beginning of April. Yes, it was peaceful until Mahinda Rajapaksa, the prime minister resigned, although the president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, remained in power. That was when things began to turn violent.

The few thousands who supported the Prime Minister turned against the peaceful protesters, destroying their tents, pulled down their banners, and even assaulting the protesters.

And violence does beget violence. The protesters in turn burned down many homes of government officials, including the president's ancestral home.

It has been chaos and deep darkness, pain and despair.

But amid that, the Lord is doing something that has not never been seen in the nation's history- and our member schools have witnessed it for themselves.

We have five accredited member schools in Sri Lanka: Assemblies of God Bible College, Baldaeus Theological College, Colombo Theological Seminary,

Lanka Bible College and Seminary, and LIFE Bible College- along with one associate member as well. While we did try to hear out the stories of member schools, it was not feasible to do so and ended up with only three. So, here are their stories both of struggle and victory amid the ongoing crisis their nation is facing...

## The story of Colombo Theological Seminary

"The visibility of the church in the time of crisis will determine its credibility in the time of nation building" ~ Dr. Ivor Poobalan

Colombo Theological Seminary's story of struggle began even prior to the nationwide crisis. Being a seminary with seven extension centers, which are also called provincial centers, faculty travel and teach modular classes in those centers. But the pandemic brought these all to a halt. While CTS has been able to resume classes in these centers at some point, the instability began to set in and once again disrupted them. The political crisis has also raised questions if the seminary will indeed be able to continue in the following months.

But the leaders of CTS have found themselves concerned not just with the operations of the school itself but also with its students- who are mostly Christian workers. With the current crisis of Sri Lanka, the biggest problem looming for Christian workers is the threat of survival. While those in the rural areas can easily plant food to get by, most Christian workers are landless and rely on small communities for income. CTS wants to create a safety net for these Christian workers- most of whom are also part of the CTS family- and it has been an overwhelmingly huge task.

The disruption of education along with the economic challenges and the emotional and psychological disruption of families have created a lot of anxiety in the homes. CTS, with 800 students and 650 alumni, has a large network of Christian leaders to care for, of whom several remain economically vulnerable.

The challenges are great but the Lord's faithfulness to CTS has been greater still.

Continued on page 3

For one, the Lord had already prepared CTS to continue its mission amid the global pandemic and the lockdown that ensued. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, CTS began developing an online infrastructure as part of the Vital Sustainability Initiative (VSI). So, when the lockdown took effect, CTS had 6 weeks to prepare for the implementation of the online infrastructure they were developing. The Lord blessed their efforts, and they were able to launch 40 classes online that term. So, amid the pandemic and the 2-year lockdown, the institution continued to operate, uninterrupted, pursuing its God given mission.

But more than simply being able to continue, this also opened another education platform for the school and grew the institution. Because of the newly developed online infrastructure, CTS was able to begin innovating CTS Global. CTS aims for this to be a platform in which to provide theological education on a global scale and allows the institution to better serve the region. Through CTS Global, CTS aims to equip Kingdom workers among the Sri Lankan Diaspora, many of which are first generation Christians, but of course is also open to non-Sri Lankans too. So now, CTS has three educational platforms: CTS- Capital, the main campus of the school, located in Colombo; CTS- Provincial, and yes, the new CTS- Global. While CTS- Global is still at its early stages, the leadership of CTS is still very thankful that the Lord has led the school to it.

But apart from that, the Lord has not only provided for CTS, but also kept the morale of its staff up during such a time when the economy was beginning to plummet. As salary cuts have become a common practice in every industry- and thus employee demoralization became common place- CTS maintained the salary of its staff and cut down on other expenditures instead. This was not a logical decision given the situation of CTS, but the leaders have learned to listen to the minority – the one dissenting voice – for which they are very grateful. As CTS stepped forth in , the Lord has been faithful to provide- and the morale of the staff was kept afloat.

Amid the chaos, the Lord is working- and that is not only true for CTS but for the entire nation of Sri Lanka as well, healing the nation, bringing an awareness and a visible manifestation of unity that

has never been seen in the nation’s history. From the occupation of the British, its independence in 1948, and even up until the present, those in power have always used the “divide and conquer” tactic. It has always been us versus them... until this crisis and the protests that ensued. People have now realized that the power-hungry politicians have fooled them. Now, the protest sites are sites of diversity: Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians – all together hand in hand. The crisis has led to a public acknowledgement that they are indeed one Sri Lanka.

This oneness manifested itself not only in words, but also through deeds. In the protest sites, you will see how people of different races and religions care for and even protect one another. The Lord is bringing forth a healthy pluralism in the public square.



The protests have been the first national struggle since the fight against the British and has been a rich nation building exercise. The entire movement, a leaderless one, has been powered by the youth, a generation that is very pro-justice and pro-equality.

Amid all this the church is learning the importance of embracing a theology of presence. The church is realizing that one need not preach in every given moment, that there is so much value in just simply being there, quietly serving. The Sri Lankan church sees that amid the chaos, it can be salt and light as it serves the poor, assists in medical aid... and just being present in this time of crisis. These actions will surely promote the kind of Christianity the church wants to show. It opens a nation once so prejudiced to the gospel to consider its great appeal of love.

Continued on page 4

The Lord is moving and healing the nation of Sri Lanka and we can join Him there by praying with the Sri Lankan church...

... for the church to fully embrace the theology of presence and for a full and deeper commitment to service, one that is not manipulative.

... and for a renewed spiritual generosity.

## The Story of Baldeaus Theological College

“God does not leave us alone in our darkest hour.” ~Professor Dushy Hoole

(BTC), located in Triconmalee, Sri Lanka, was born 25 years ago. An area that was battered by a 40-year war, there were a lot of internally displaced people and eventually churches sprung up- but the workers were untrained. So, a man named Charles Hoole started BTC in this post war area and ministered to the people.

Being a post war area made the already difficult situation more difficult in this time of crisis. Poverty is extreme and even the most fundamental things are not available- such as fuel. Electricity has become expensive and power cuts are now the norm. Amid the lack of the basics, even whatever produce that is available is substandard.

In addition to all that is the unnecessary harassment the citizens in the area have been receiving. The government has restricted travel and put check points in place, with inspections that intimidate ordinary citizens.

All the difficulty has taken a toll on the mental health of the people... and the leadership of BTC hopes that the people hold up. And as BTC perseveres in hope, it comes alongside the people in their area. While it is mostly the Roman Catholic Churches that are helping, BTC is doing its best by subsidizing food bills.

Even as BTC is doing its best to minister to the people where they are at, the institution does have its own share of challenges. Over the past two years, the school did not take any new students because of COVID. Alongside that, the school went through an organizational crisis that caused its funds to come in



only by trickles. So, to augment their income, BTC rented out rooms, but that too was sluggish because of the pandemic.

Persevering in the mission entrusted to the school was not an easy task. The students who stayed on were not able to take residence on campus and it was not possible to have everyone in a class at the same time. What BTC did was to travel to its students. That was not an easy endeavor either, but the Lord enabled BTC to keep on.

While the challenges have been big, but the Lord has proven Himself to be bigger still. For one, even if the funds began to only trickle down, there were people who still supported the work of BTC. Even pastors went running around and helping, even in IT literacy. Even churches, who lost most of their foreign funding, in their poverty have continued to help.

But one of the most beautiful things that the Lord has done in this dark time, was how, amid the intense suffering, each member of the community was just being a source of comfort for one another, each one helping another. This joint suffering only helped to strengthen the community and all those in it.

As the Lord is strengthening the Sri Lankan church in this crisis of its nation, the leaders of BTC hope that the Christians who are in government will speak up against the injustice and not fall into the mold of the system and bend to it.

As the Lord is moving in the life of BTC and of Sri Lanka, we can join in by praying along with BTC for...

...a strong board. Please pray for the election of a new board.

Continued on page 5

...Let us pray for the strengthening of BTC's students who have pressed on and that the Lord will bring the school more students, more pastors to be formed.

... the church as it is under pressure from the government to play down Christianity. Pray that the church will not crack under this pressure. Pray also for encouragement from established places for the church amid the trials and the pressure.

... for Sri Lanka as a whole, that the Lord will grant the nation leaders with a conscience, who can identify with the poor, and have integrity. Pray also for the children of the nation who are suffering the most, with no school and the threat of malnutrition hovering over them daily.

## **The Story of Lanka Bible College and Seminary**

“The church must learn to think beyond their boundaries and reach out to people in love and service.” ~ Dr. Lal Senanayake

If there was anything that can be said about the current economic crisis of Sri Lanka, it is that it continues to dramatically spiral down. It has been reported that as of March, the inflation rate is already at 133%, six times the official rate of the government. Everything is in short supply and the income of each household has lost purchasing power. It is a dire situation that has left everyone in a pit of challenges, and Lanka Bible College and Seminary is no exception.

Lanka Bible College and Seminary (LBCS) is a residential school and amid the rising costs, along with the uncertainty, and unpredictability of the country's situation, it's been very difficult to run and keep. With inflation at an all-time high and the significant devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee, the increased cost of living has left students unable to pay their fees and left LBCS struggling to pay the salaries of its staff. The low salaries of staff have, on the other hand, left the college facing the loss of some of its staff.

As challenges continue to loom over LBCS, the school's needs continue to present themselves to its leadership. There is the need to train new faculty and staff... and the need to for building maintenance...

and even the need to restart the English language program... and the list goes on and seems to have no end.

But despite all these, the Lord continues to be faithful! In the most mysterious ways, the Lord provides! In fact, most of the staff have helped in the physical labor of maintaining the building and have thus contributed to bringing down the costs.

The Lord also continues to bring the Sri Lankan church closer to His heart. Amid the worsening crises of the country where people's hopes are falling apart, He opened a door of opportunity for the Sri Lankan church to guide the people to in something solid and meaningful through effective Christian witness. As the darkness continues to loom over the country and is in fact getting the deeper, the church has found itself needing to learn to think beyond its boundaries and reach out to people in love and service, engaging in holistic ministry for the whole society.

Of course, the Lord is also working in the life of the nation of Sri Lanka, exposing the vanity of trusting in all things apart from Him- from the economy, material things, and even religion. The social and political unrest has caused utter confusion in the country and has dismantled the absolute trust of the people in their human leaders. The Lord is showing the nation that it is HIM they truly need.

And to make matters more exciting, the Lord is bringing Sri Lankan communities into true and tangible unity. Regardless of class, creed, or economic status, the once divided society is now standing together with one objective. What a beautiful sight it is!

As the Lord continues to work in and through the ministry of LBCS, the Sri Lankan Church and the



*Continued on page 6*

nation and people of Sri Lanka, He invites us to join in through prayer- and these are the ways we can do so...

...Please pray for the sustainability of this institution during this difficult time.

... LBCS is working on a new intervention (Series of Seminars) to educate senior leaders and decision makers of the local churches in Sri Lanka about the need for holistic approach to ministry in this post-COVID context of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has over 500 years of Christian history- and it can be traced back to 73 AD. Sadly, the Christian impact on society is minimal. The public perception of Christianity in Sri Lanka has been undesirable... alongside this, the socio-economic situation along with the rapidly deteriorating moral values. Evil, corruption, injustice, and poverty are on the rise. What is the role of the church in such a context? How can we bring about genuine social and spiritual transformation? How can the church make a transformational impact on Society? What is the theological foundation to understand this human predicament and how can the church respond to this reality? So, clearly, there is a need for the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to be applied to the whole person and to the context of the person. Often the churches have been involved only in Evangelistic activities for the spiritual salvation of the person only and other aspects of life are often overlooked. This program will integrate theological education, the Great Commission (Evangelism and making of effective disciples), great commandment (loving God and loving the neighbor—spiritual and social development), leading to holistic formation of the person. The purpose is to mobilize the church to be an agent of transformation in the society. Please pray for the success of this program so that leaders will have a transformational experience.

...Please pray for Sri Lanka. Political protests and sufferings of the poor people are rising. There have been instances when people tried to illegally migrate to Australia in boats and many died in the process. The new trend now is to escape in boats to India to get necessities. Please pray for a change in this corrupt system and for justice to prevail.

...Please pray for a proper education and training of pastors. The inappropriate and lackadaisical training programs are rapidly emerging and producing immature pastors. These unprepared pastors and Christian workers are causing many problems in the mission field, damaging the image of Christianity.

Christianity is humiliated and looked down upon. Please pray that this situation will improve.

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The situation of Sri Lanka does seem dire and the road to recovery looks long and tiresome. But the stories of our member schools have shown that even in the darkest, direst of situations, there will always be glimmers of hope. While the darkness hovers, God's light continues to shine and no crisis can stop Him from healing, restoring, renewing, and making all things new.

*Jehovah, Thou hast promised  
The isles shall wait for Thee  
The joyous isles of ocean  
The jewels of the sea  
Lo! we, this island's watchmen  
Would give and take no rest  
For thus hast Thou commanded  
Till our dear land is blessed  
Then bless her mighty Father  
With blessings needed most  
In every verdant village  
By every palmy coast  
On every soaring mountain  
O'er every spreading plain  
May all her sons and daughters  
Thy righteousness attain  
Give peace within her borders  
Twixt man and man goodwill  
The love all unsuspecting  
The love that works no ill  
In loyal lowly service  
Let each from other learn  
The guardian and the guarded  
Till Christ Himself return  
To Him our land shall listen  
To Him our peoples kneel  
All rule be on His shoulder  
All wrong beneath His heel  
O consummation glorious  
Which now by faith we sing  
Come, cast we up the highway  
That brings us back our King!  
~ Hymn for Ceylon, Walter Senior ♦*

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# Meet our speakers and panelists for the 2022 General Assembly

The 2022 Triennial General Assembly is a couple of months away and we're excited to introduce to you our plenary speakers and panelists...

## Plenary 1: Introduction: Overview of the Digital Turn

### The speaker:

#### Dr. Heidi A. Campbell



- She is director of the Network for New Media, Religion and Digital Culture Studies, and one of the founders of Digital Religion studies.
- She is co-editor of Routledge's Religion and Digital Culture book series and the Journal of Religion, Media & Digital Culture. She is also co-editor (with John Dyer) of Ecclesiology for a Digital Church: Theological Reflections on a New Normal (2022).
- She is author of over 100 articles and books including *When Religion Meets New Media* (2010), *Digital Religion* (2013, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2021), *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking Religious Authority* (2021).
- Her research focuses on technology, religion, and digital culture, with emphasis on Jewish, Muslim & Christian media negotiations.

### The Panelists:

#### Ms. So Young Kang

- She is a highly sought out speaker globally on multiple topics across Future of Work, Digitization, Transformation, Innovation, Leadership, Culture, Strategy, Education/EdTech and Entrepreneurship.
- She is a pioneer and serial entrepreneur constantly looking at new ways of solving big challenges. Her latest challenge is focused on how to maximize human potential and reach a billion people



through founding Gnowbe, an innovative mobile-first training and engagement platform focused on driving behavior change for real impact.

#### Mr. Arun Kumar

- He is essentially a storyteller who is passionate about bridging the gap between technology and society.
- Currently a Product Manager by profession, he bridges business goals, user needs and engineering capacities to build and innovate tech products.



#### Dr. Bernard Wong

- He is President and Associate Professor of Theological Studies at China Graduate School of Theology (CGST), Hong Kong.
- He is the author of *Beginning from Man and Woman: Witnessing Christ's Love in the Family* (2017).
- He is also co-editor of *Asian Christian Ethics: Evangelical Perspectives* (2022).
- He also serves as a pastor.



#### Dr. Kyungwha Hong

- She is a Professor of Christian Counseling at the Torch Trinity Graduate University in Seoul, Korea.
- She also earned an EdM & EdD in Human Development and Psychology from Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA, USA.
- Before coming to Torch Trinity, she was with the Talent R&D Center for two years and worked with the Global Talent Research Center at Seoul National University. Together these two institutions developed the Global Talent Indicator (GTI) which is a self-report measure that assesses adolescent capacities needed to work in today's global society.



Continued on page 8

From page 7

## Plenary 2: Digital Education and Holistic Formation

The Speakers: **Dr. Lai Pak Wah**



- He is Principal and Professor of Church History and Historical Theology at the Biblical Graduate School of Theology, Singapore.
- He is the author of *The Dao of Healing: Christian Perspective of Chinese Medicine* and a certified Belbin coach.
- He enjoys engaging in Tai Ji and Wing Chun martial arts as a form of spiritual formation practice.



**Dr. Sarinah Lo**

- She is the Program Director for graduate studies in Christian education at Bandung Theological Seminary in Indonesia.
- She is the author of *Faith-Integrated Being, Knowing, and Doing* (Langham, 2020).

## Plenary 3: Theology of the Church in the Digital Age

The Panelists:

**Dr. Imad Shehadeh**



- He serves as the Founder, President and Senior Professor of Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS).
- He has authored numerous books and articles in both Arabic and English, and has a growing number of online video and audio lectures and sermons.
- He has provided several teaching series on television that covered apologetics and the Trinity.

**Dr. Finny Philip**



- He is the Principal of Filadelfia Bible College, North India
- He is the author of the book *The Origins of Pauline Pneumatology*.
- He served as one of the theological editors for the recently published *South Asia Biblical Commentary: A One Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible*.
- He is the Editor and Director for Christian Trends, a bi-monthly magazine that tries to bring the evangelical Christian thinking and writing at a popular level.

**Mr. Rei Lemuel Crizaldo**



- He is the Coordinator of the WEA's Theological Commission.
- He is a thinker and a communicator whose writings and active online engagement aims to bring people together in reflecting on contextual theology, holistic ministry, and the impact of digitality.
- He is passionate about helping develop theological conversations that are marked by strong prophetic conviction rooted in Scripture while being reflective of the rich diversity of voices from within the global evangelical community.

Continued on page 9

## Plenary 4: The Landscape of Witness and Discipleship in the Digital Age

### The Speakers:

#### Rev. Dr. James Hwang



- He has served in Space industries/academics as a research engineer for 25 years, including 15 years in NASA, Johnson Space Center.
- He led a group of 38 scientists/engineers doing robotics research works.
- He established 8 robotics laboratories, taught many university courses, won numerous science/engineering research awards, lectured in a number of research institutes.
- In 2001, he retired from his professional career and has since dedicated to full-time Christian ministries
- He authored a book titled, *Amazing Universe, Amazing Good Fortune*.

#### Dr. Ivor Poobalan



- He is Principal at Colombo Theological Seminary (CTS) in Sri Lanka, and Co-Chair of Lausanne's Theology Working Group.
- Ivor is the author of *Everything Has Become New! Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*.
- He has contributed to several major works including the Langham's South Asian Bible Commentary (2015), Christianity Today's NIV Understand the Faith Study Bible (2015), and Biblica's NIV God's Justice Bible: The Flourishing of Creation and the Destruction of Evil (2016).
- He is currently writing two books on Genesis.

## Plenary 5: Community, Networking and Collaboration in Digital Theological Education

### The Speaker: Dr. Calvin Chong



- He is Associate Professor of Practical Theology at Singapore Bible College and has been teaching across multiple disciplines including pastoral ministries, educational design, as well as intercultural studies.
- He is author of several articles and book chapters focused on changing global realities that impact church and society, youth and young adults, ministry with diasporic peoples, and ministry amongst oral and visual learners.

## Plenary 6: A Critical Look at the Digital Age: upset, updates, or upgrade?

### The Speaker: Dr. Alexander Chow



- He is co-director of the Centre for the Study of World Christianity.
- He is co-editor of the journal *Studies in World Christianity* (Edinburgh University Press), and editor of the Liu Institute Series in Chinese Christianities (Notre Dame Press).
- He has written several articles on Christianity in China, and more broadly, in East Asia.
- He has written two books: *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; Chinese edition: Institute of Sino-Christian Studies, 2015) and *Chinese Public Theology: Generational Shifts and Confucian Imagination in Chinese Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2018).
- He is very much into digital theology having a background in the IT industry before turning to theology.
- He delivered the keynote lecture for 2021 Yale-Edinburgh Conference on "Oral, Print, and Digital Cultures in World Christianity."



### Responder: Dr. Stephen George

- He is president of Asian Christian Academy-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Hosur, India.
- His doctoral work focused on non-native speakers of English as adult learners and online theological education. This work has led to the development of the online M.A in Christian Studies at ETS.

Continued on page 10

From page 9

## Plenary 7: Learning from Digital Education Case Studies

### The Presenters:

- **Dr. Peter Ho**, Head of EduTech and Asst. Prof of Old Testament, Singapore Bible College
- **Dr. Manoch Jangmook** (with Teerakorn), President, Bangkok Bible Seminary
- **Mr. Raniel Gallardo**, Director for Online Learning, Asian Theological Seminary
- **Dr. Prabu Singh**, President, with Online staff, South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies, India
- **Rev. Victor Sadek**, Executive Director, Program for Theological Education by Extension, Jordan

We hope you are as excited as we are to learn together in the upcoming General Assembly. So, register now through this link: <https://www.ataasia.com/2022ataga/> ! See you then! ♦

See 2022 ATA GA Schedule on page 15



2022 ATA  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY

## The Digital Turn in Theological Education:

Impact, Challenges  
and Opportunities



Sept 26-30, 2022  
Penang, Malaysia  
Bayview Beach Resort



### GETTING TO PENANG...

Getting to Penang is easy!  
If there are no direct flights from where you're from or it'll be too costly, you can always fly to **Kuala Lumpur** and take a domestic flight to Penang from there. Or you can fly to **Singapore** and take a flight from there or a bus.

## Be excited about our breakout sessions!!!

There's much to look forward to in our upcoming General Assembly! Apart from the thought-provoking plenary sessions, we have **10 breakout sessions** to choose from- all of which facilitated by Subject matter experts. So, here they are, our breakout sessions and their facilitators...

1. Creating Deep and Meaningful Learning Experience in Digital Spaces  
Dr. Calvin Chong, Associate Professor, Singapore Bible College
2. Online Teaching, Course Development, and Moodle Management (two sessions)  
Rob Hayden, Vice President of Educational Development, Horizon Education Network  
Timothy Bahula, Director of Educational Technology, Horizon Education Network
3. Online Oral Literacy Learning – and Assistive Technologies  
Dr. Romer Macalinao, Dean, and Dr. Cameron Armstrong, Program Director of PhD in Orality Studies, Asia Graduate School of Theology, Philippines
4. Spiritual Formation within the context of online, hybrid, and residential models of theological education: Conceptual frameworks and findings from a longitudinal empirical program of research

Dr. David Wang, Cliff and Joyce Penner Chair for the Formation of Emotionally Healthy Leaders at Fuller Theological Seminary

5. Micro-learning and m-Learning: Instructional design for mobile-based theological learning  
Ms. So-Young Kang, Founder and CEO, Gnowbe
6. eBooks and Theological Education: analysis, value, and trade-offs  
Mr. Justin Holford, Executive Director, Theological Book Network
7. Preparing the Future Theological Education – AI, Data Science & Digital Space  
Mr. Arun Kumar, Engineer, Trainer; Founder of Waymaker
8. Understanding and Applying Social Presence, Teaching Presence and Cognitive Presence in Online Learning.  
Dr. Gary Griffith, International Coordinator, Global Associates for Transformational Education (GATE)
9. Roles for a New Era – How Faculty can Excel in the Digital Age  
Mr. Jacob Li, Faculty, East Asia School of Theology; Member, ATA CAED
10. Mastering Post-Pandemic Economics of Theological Education  
Dr. Emmanuel Bellon, Vice President, ScholarLeaders International ♦

## Evaluation Visits in the Second Quarter of 2022

In the second quarter of this year, Visiting Evaluation Teams have once again been sent out to different parts of the globe. This time, the visits have been done in a more hybrid kind of fashion- with some team members joining via zoom while others are onsite. So, these are the visits that have been done in this quarter:

### Visit to Houston Bible Seminary

With the Lord’s vision given to its President, Dr. Shaji Daniel, and his ministry colleagues, all from India, Houston Bible Seminary, Texas USA, was instituted in 2018 and from its inception, HBS has been offering online education to “prepare faithful servant-leaders who reflect Christ in their life and ministry with deep passion and dedication to serving God and humanity...”

Its training objectives are:

- Systematic theological education with ecclesiastical and societal dimension
- Training students with a holistic approach
- Formation of Christ-centered servant leaders with academic excellence
- A harmonious well-disciplined spiritual life and ministerial formation for serving God and humanity

- Empowering the students to stand for the cause of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

HBS’ initial meeting was held at the Christian Assembly of Houston, welcoming students and faculty from various Christian denominations. And three years since its founding, the seminary has become one of the most progressive evangelical distance education centers among Asian immigrants in the United States. When asked about the significance of developing more spiritual leaders, Dr. Shaji Daniel responded: "the world needs more progressive, mission-oriented, and servant leaders in a way that we have never needed them before. We need progressive, loving, embracing spiritual leaders who understand the importance of community and work together to impact the world for God."

HBS became a member of ATA in 2019 and this year, on May 16-18, went through the accreditation evaluation of its Master of Divinity and Bachelor of Theology programs. The Visiting Evaluation Team (VET) was composed of Dr. Theresa Lua, General Secretary, Dr. Paul Cornelius, Regional Secretary, ATA India, and Rev. Shaiju Thomas, Secretary-Value Added Services, ATA India. Drs Lua and Cornelius were physically present onsite, while Rev Shaiju Thomas participated via Zoom from India.

Before the accreditation visit, HBS held its first ever graduation on May 14th at the International Bible Church, one of its key ministry partners. Dr. Theresa Lua was the commencement speaker and Dr. Paul Cornelius also gave words of exhortation.

*Continued on page 12*



*The visit to Houston Bible Seminary was Hybrid with 2 members of the team onsite and one on zoom. Dr. Theresa Lua also spoke during the graduation.*

From page 11

## Other Visits held during the second quarter:

- Singapore Bible College - April 6-8, 2022  
VET members: Dr. Paul Cornelius, Dr. Sooi ling Tan, Dr. Bernard Koh  
This visit was done entirely in person.
- Gilgal Bible Seminary, UAE - April 18-20, 2022  
VET members: Dr. Arren Bennet Lawrence, Rev. Shaiju Thomas, Dr. Jonathan Ro  
Dr. Lawrence and Rev. Thomas went to the campus in person and Dr. Ro joined online.
- Bible Seminary of Hong Kong - June 6-10, 2022  
VET members: Prof. Ronnie Poon, Dr. Victor Lee, Dr. Rahmiati Tanudjaja

While this is a purely online visit, the local VET member, Prof. Ronnie Poon, visited the campus to inspect the facilities.

It has been exciting to see more VET going out both in person and online. We thank God for technology that enables us to better serve our member schools! ♦



The visit to Singapore Bible College was done entirely in person by a team composed of Drs. Sooi Ling Tan, Paul Cornelius, and Bernard Koh (R-L).



Visit to Bible Seminary of Hong Kong was done online although Prof. Ronnie Poon was able to arrange a brief visit to the campus.

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## COMING SOON: ATA NORTH AMERICA!

Over the years, the Lord has been faithful to grow the ministry of ATA, not just in Asia, but even beyond! He has grown the membership of ATA in North America to include 23 member schools in both the US and Canada- 10 of which are accredited and 13 are associate. With this, Dr. Theresa Lua, on June 24, 2022, convened the leaders of the 10 accredited schools in this region via zoom to discuss the proposal to form ATA North America. These 10 schools are: Canadian Chinese School of Theology, Chinese Online School of Theology, Christian Leadership Institute, Faith Bible Seminary, GETS Theological Seminary, Global Mission Seminary, Houston Bible Seminary, International Theological Seminary, Logos Evangelical Seminary, and Timothy Training International. Present also in this meeting was ATA Board Chair, Dr. Andreas Himawan.

The proposal to form ATA North America was met with much enthusiasm and support from the group! The group believes that the formation of a North American Regional Chapter will facilitate mutual

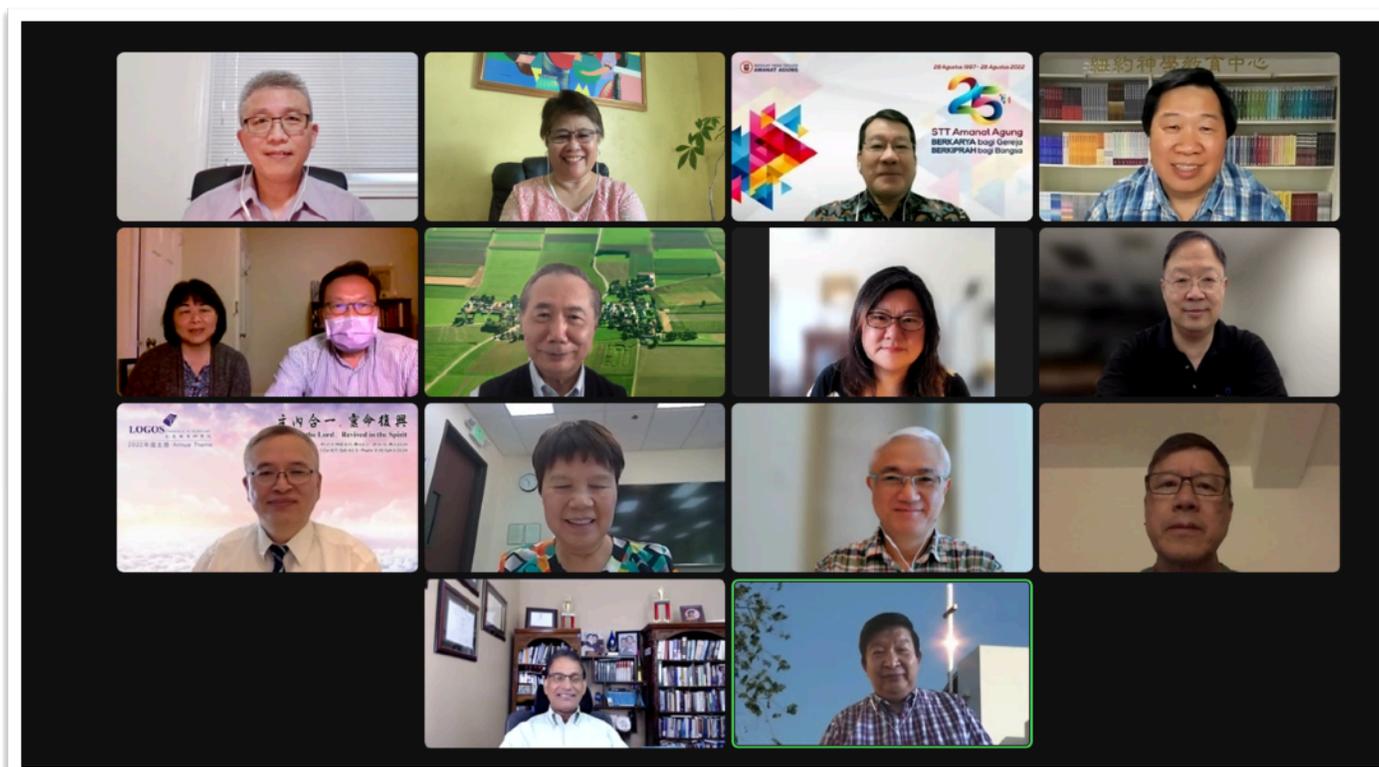
support and collaboration among the ATA member schools in the region. The group further believes that the formation of this Regional Chapter is a much-needed step to enhance the connections and communications with the larger ATA family.

Elected as leaders of ATA North America were Dr. Evan Hsu as Chairperson and Dr. Joseph Shao as Regional Secretary. Dr. Shao was ATA's 4th General Secretary and also served as President of the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines; upon his retirement he moved to the US and currently serves as faculty at the Global Mission Seminary in California.

Regional Chapters are the arms of ATA to coordinate regional contextual efforts to facilitate the implementation of ATA policies and objectives and promote the ATA cause within their regions.

The formation of ATA North America, along with the appointment of the Chairperson and Regional Secretary, will first be presented to the ATA Executive Board for approval and then to the ATA General Assembly for ratification.

We are looking forward to seeing a strong bond and fruitful collaboration among ATA schools in North America as ATA North America begins to take flight! ♦



## Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education: Beyond Dialogue

As borders continue to open, opportunities to gather in person likewise open. One such opportunity is the upcoming ICETE consultation with the theme “Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education: Beyond Dialogue”. This dialogue has been ongoing online since the consultation in November last year and numerous conversations have been exchanged through the ICETE Academy since then. So, one year from the time this dialogue began virtually, ICETE moves the dialogue to a more real-life setting!

Join us in real life conversations on November 14 to 18 in Hotel Korumar, Izmir, Turkey, expecting the following in this upcoming gathering:

- This is a working consultation: we’ll spend our mornings in different workshop tracks.
- This is a time of connection: we’ll use our afternoons for conversation and collaboration.
- Our goal is to see the Church fulfill its mission: our evenings will be times of worship and reflection.

Now, isn’t that exciting? Here are the registration details you’ll need to know to join in the conversation:

- \$875 if you’re coming from the Majority World (designated Developing by the UN and per capita income less than \$15,000)
- \$1075 if you’re coming from non-Majority World countries
- \$150 supplement for a single room

This registration is all inclusive, including airport transfers.

But if you are an ICETE Partner, Member, Associate or Affiliate, you can enjoy these discounts on the registration price...

First you can enjoy a 20% discount- and this means that Majority World participants will only pay \$700 and non-Majority World participants will pay \$860. That’s a big price drop and it’s available to all ATA member institutions through a discount code that will be sent to you via email. So, watch out for it!



# ICETE C-22

Then you can also enjoy an early bird discount of 10% if you register on or before August 1!

So, what are you waiting for? Register now by clicking on this link : <https://icete.info/equipping/consultations/register/> or scanning the QR code below.

And yes, if you are hesitant to join because you have not joined in the already ongoing conversation yet, you are still welcome to join the upcoming in person conversation.

So, see you on November 14 to 18 in Izmir, Turkey for “Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education: Beyond Dialogue”! ♦



## Asia Theological Association Triennial General Assembly September 26-30 2022, Penang, Malaysia

Time/Date	Monday   26 Sept	Tuesday   27 Sept	Wednesday   28 Sept	Thursday   29 Sept	Friday   30 Sept
7:00 am	BREAKFAST				
8:30-9:15	Devotions				
9:15-10:45		<b>Plenary 2: Digital Education and Holistic Formation</b>	<b>Plenary 4: The Landscape of Witness and Discipleship in the Digital Age</b>	<b>Plenary 6: A Critical Look at the Digital Age: upset, updates, or upgrades?</b>	<b>Plenary 7: 9:15-10:30am Learning from Case Studies on Digital Theological Education</b>  <i>Break (10:30-11:00am)</i>
10:45-11:15	TEA BREAK				
11:15-12:45		<b>Plenary 3: Theology of the Church in the Digital Age</b>	<b>Plenary 5: Community, Networking and Collaboration in Digital Theological Education</b>	<b>Business Meeting</b>	<b>11:00-12:15pm Summary Closing Communion</b>
12:45-2:00	LUNCH				
2:00-3:30	<b>Arrival and</b>	<b>Breakout Groups</b>	<b>Tour</b>	<b>Breakout Groups</b>	<b>Departure</b>
3:30-4:00	<b>Registration</b>	<b>TEA BREAK</b>		<b>TEA BREAK</b>	
4:00-5:30		<b>Breakout Groups</b>		<b>Breakout Groups</b>	
6:00-7:00	<b>DINNER</b>	<b>DINNER</b>		<b>DINNER</b>	
7:00-9:00	<b>Opening Night Welcome Plenary 1: Introduction: Overview of the Digital Turn</b>	<b>Free time/ Networking</b>		<b>Free time/ Networking</b>	

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