



Attuned

A NEWSLETTER OF AGST ALLIANCE FOR INFORMED PRAYER | NOVEMBER 2009

'Four things let us ever keep in mind: God hears prayer, God heeds prayer, God answers prayer, and God delivers by prayer.' – E. M. Bounds

Asia Graduate School of Theology Alliance (formerly known as AGST-MST) is a theological training venture offering post-graduate programs for church leaders and theological/Bible college faculty who are seeking to be better equipped for ministry and mission that will enhance God's mission in Asia. AGST Alliance was established in 2004.

The members of the AGST Alliance consortium are: Bangkok Bible Seminary, Bible College of Malaysia, East Asia School of Theology (Singapore), Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, Malaysia Bible Seminary, Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Phnom Penh Bible School (associate member), and Thailand Pentecostal Bible Seminary.

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NEWS & UPDATES

Introducing: The AGST Alliance Programs Committees

To oversee the development and administration of our programs – currently in Theology and Education – a program committee works closely with each program director. Each committee meets about twice a year, but there is also a good deal of interaction and decision-making between meetings.

These committees meet in different modes: the Education Programs Committee meets face-to-face (with comments from the non-Singapore member received beforehand), and usually with freshly brewed coffee; while the Theology Programs Committee meets via Skype – evening for most of us but early morning for Terry in USA.

- The agendas? The committees make decisions relating to such areas as
- The format and module topics for the MTh programs.
 - Confirming students for entry into the MTh programs, and candidates into the PhD programs.
 - Updating on student progress and problems.
 - Ensuring appropriate academic standards.
 - Approving recommendations for students to graduate.

Education Programs Committee

- **Rev David Burke** (Presbyterian minister)
- **Dr Goh Kim Chuan** (National Institute of Education)
- **Dr Allan Harkness** (AGST Alliance Dean; Program director)
- **Dr Perry Shaw** (Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, Lebanon)
- **Dr Jeanie Shim** (until recently, Baptist Theological Seminary, Singapore)

Theology Programs Committee

- **Dr Ng Kam Weng** (Kairos Research Centre, Malaysia)
- **Dr Terry Larm** (USA; until recently, Baptist Theological Seminary, Singapore)
- **Dr Sunny Tan** (Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary; Program director)
- **Dr Steve Taylor** (Bangkok Bible Seminary)

- *Thank God for the commitment of the members of the program committees, all busy with much besides AGST Alliance.*
- *Pray for clear communication between the committee members, especially when so much is 'electronic' – via email, Skype, phone calls etc.*
- *The Education Programs Committee meets 26 November, and will discuss especially the current academic standard of our programs, and where/how we 'benchmark' them.*

In the MTh(Theology) program

Forthcoming modules

The on-campus sessions of the next module in the MTh(Theol) program, *Issues of contextualisation in Asia*, take place 30 Nov – 4 Dec., facilitated by Dr David and Mrs Rosemary Harley (UK), on the campus of Bangkok Bible Seminary. About eight students will participate.

- *Pray for smooth logistics for all – the students, David and Rosemary – and for safe and stress-free travel, good interactions, and freedom from sicknesses.*

The first MTh(Theol) module in 2010 will be *Contemporary Asian theologies*, 1-5 March, facilitated by Dr Steve Taylor (Bangkok Bible Seminary), in Kuala Lumpur.

Relevant thesis topics needed

Meanwhile, several of the MTh(Theol) students are now thinking about their thesis focus, with a view to starting their thesis research as soon as they complete their last module. They need topics which will be significant for building God's Kingdom and Church in Asia – and we need to find suitable supervisors able to work with them.

New cycle from mid 2010

We thank God for a worthwhile first cycle of the MTh(Theol) program. Now, the module topics for a new cycle of the MTh(Theol) program (from June 2010) are being shaped up, and the program promoted.

- *Pray that information on this program will get into the hands of church leaders who will benefit from participating.*
- *Pray for Dr Sunny Tan as he lines up module facilitators and oversees practical details.*

First MTh(Education) graduate

Dr Chuah Seong Peng (Malaysia; pictured with his family) won't forget Sunday 6 September quickly. On that day he was inducted into the role of bivocational pastor in his home church, Holy Light Presbyterian Church (English) in Johor Bahru – and graduated with his AGST Alliance Master of Theology (Education) degree.

Seong Peng acknowledges how his MTh(Ed) has equipped him for his pastoral role: "My AGST-MST study has provided me with a holistic education that has helped me in my personal growth and equipped me to be a better educator-leader in the church."

- *Thank God for Seong Peng's response to his call on his life. Pray with Seong Peng that "as I continue on my journey with God, I will know the greater things yet to come."*
- *Pray for two other MTh(Ed) students from Seong Peng's cohort: one has just submitted a revision of her thesis for re-examination; and one needs to submit her thesis ASAP.*
- *The five MTh(Ed) students in the second cohort all need good time management and motivation to ensure they finish well. Once the pressure of the modules came off (in late 2008), they all have made much slower progress than expected.*
- *Pray, for good progress for our six PhD(Ed) and one PhD(Theology) candidates, at different stages in their research programs.*



New MTh(Education) commences in January

We are on target to commence the new cycle of the MTh(Ed) in early 2010. The revised focus of the program is reflected in its new title: *Master of Theology (Education) in Spiritual formation and Discipleship*.

Currently, about six students are either accepted or their applications are being processed – but we would benefit from another 3-4 at least to make the program really viable. We are anticipating that 1-2 participants from the Middle East will be in the program, as part of the partnership between AGST Alliance and the Middle East Association for Theological Education (MEATE).

The on-campus sessions of the first module, *Education in Christian faith communities: Overview and foundations*, facilitated by Dr Allan Harkness, take place 23 Feb – 2 March, at East Asia School of Theology (Singapore).

- *Thank God for the potential of this MTh(Ed) program, now entering its third cycle.*
- *Pray for the students preparing to commence the program in early 2010, especially as they plan strategies to be able to give adequate time to their studies alongside their ongoing ministries.*
- *Pray for news about our programs to get out to the people who would benefit from them. We have advertised recently in several Christian publications, but personal contact and endorsement is often the most effective channel.*

Personnel changes

Ms Siau Hoi Ching (Klang, Malaysia) has played an important role as our AGST Alliance accounts clerk this year. She has been responsible for ensuring our current financial records have been entered into our new accounting software, and preparing them for our recent (and successful!) audit.

Hoi Ching has stepped down from this role; and is replaced by Mr and Mrs **Lim Kong Eong** and **Melissa** (Kuala Lumpur). Kong Eong and Melissa have just graduated from programs at Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS), and are taking on roles in KL for MBTS. We are grateful that they are willing to supplement their MBTS ministry with our accounts work.

- *Thank God for those who serve 'behind the scenes' in AGST Alliance: Kong Eong and Melissa, and Ms Michelle Seetoh (Registrar). Their roles don't take a*

lot of time, but are crucial for the smooth (and somewhat complex) administration of AGST Alliance.

- *Pray for Melissa and Kong Eong in their first couple of months, as they undergo training in the accounting software, and enter the financial data from our first four years into our system.*

Successful audit

A major milestone for us has been to get our AGST Alliance financial records up to an acceptable level of accuracy and transparency. We rejoice that we have successfully passed our first audit – for the 2008-09 financial year.

- *Thank God for the successful audit – and for Ms Lew Chit Moi, our honorary accountant, whose professional competence overseeing 'the big picture' aspects of our multi-national financial structure has been instrumental in getting our accounts to this point.*

Bangkok doesn't agree with all

In November 2008, Dr Pieter Theron (*right*) and his wife Haniki were in Bangkok, where Pieter was facilitating our MTh(Ed) module on Educational Leadership. Their time in Bangkok coincided with the closure of Bangkok International Airport – and they spent a somewhat horrendous and expensive week trying to get out of Thailand to start their planned holiday with family in their home country of South Africa before returning to Mongolia, where they serve.

This November, Pieter and Haniki have again visited Bangkok, this time for a conference of the leaders of their organisation. A relaxed afternoon visit by the conference delegates to an elephant show turned into catastrophe when an elephant threw Pieter and a colleague into the air. Both men were injured, Pieter very seriously. We praise God that Pieter is recovering well, he is unlikely to have major long-term debilities, and he and Haniki should be able to leave Bangkok by the end of November.

The Therons are not planning a future trip to Bangkok just yet ☺



PROJECTS FOR PRAYER & PROVISION

We have several fairly major 'infrastructure' projects in progress:

1. **Redeveloping our AGST Alliance website** (www.agst-mst.org)
2. **Establishing a centralised data base**

We are struggling to find the right professionals who can take on these two projects, in a reasonable time frame and within our budget. We would dearly like to be pointed to suitable competent and available people, and soon.

3. **Updating our corporate visual entity:** We look forward to unveiling a fresh updated logo and stationery design in the new year. Pray for creativity for Gek Lin, the designer.
4. **On-line theological resources:** We are continuing to explore subscribing to a key specialised internet-based database for theological research. But progress is slow. (We hope that God is already tapping the shoulder of a generous sponsor for this project, too.)

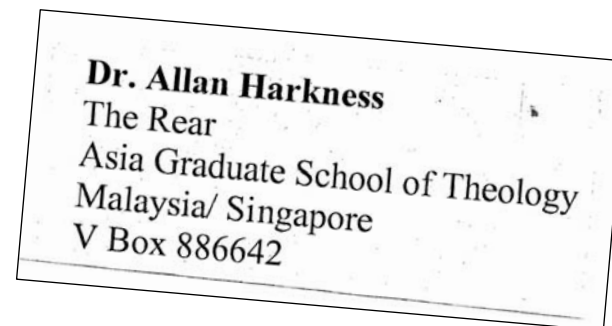
We rejoice that we have a person with library experience ready to take up the role of Research Officer – her task will be to build a database of databases/resource facilities for our students to be able to access readily. Lots of creative and patient sleuthing will be needed!

- *Like life generally, there are some encouragements and some frustrations in these 'back room' developments. Please pray with us for progress in God's time.*

Ear-marked finance for any of these projects would encourage us. If you are able to sponsor one or other of them, please contact AGST Alliance Dean, Dr Allan Harkness (email: dean@agst-mst.org; tel: 65-6778-5141.)

The Dean knows his place!

To keep AGST Alliance Dean Allan Harkness aware of his real position, he recently received a letter addressed this way:



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Perceptive readers will notice the slight change in our institutional name in this issue of *Attuned* – from AGST-MST to AGST Alliance.

We started in 2004 as *Asia Graduate School of Theology (Malaysia/ Singapore)*. This was extended to AGST-MST in 2006 when two Thai institutions joined our consortium. With institutions from Myanmar and Cambodia joining in 2008, we don't want to become AGST-CMMST!

When we registered as a company in Malaysia in 2008, AGST Alliance was selected as appropriate by the Registrar of Companies. So to simplify communication, we will be using AGST Alliance more often – the same entity, with a less unwieldy name.

FOR DONORS

- AGST Alliance bank account details for direct credit are available from (admin@agst-mst.org).
- Please make RM/SG\$/US\$ cheques payable to 'AGST Alliance Sdn Bhd'; and Thai Baht cheques payable to 'Bangkok Bible Seminary'.
- USA donors may send tax-deductible financial gifts for AGST Alliance to MEANS USA (<http://www.meansusa.org>).
- AGST Alliance postal address: VBox 886642, Singapore 919191. Tel./Fax: (65) 6778-5141