

'The amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you.' – St. Paul (2 Corinthians 13, *The Message*)

AGST Alliance faces growth challenges

AGST Alliance (formerly known as AGST-MST) is a theological training venture offering specialised post-graduate theological programs for church leaders and theological/Bible college faculty in S E Asia, to equip them for more effective Christian ministry and mission.

AGST Alliance – part of the network of Asia Graduate School of Theology consortia – comprises these colleges:

- Bangkok Bible Seminary (Thailand)
- Bible College of Malaysia
- Chiang Mai Theological Seminary (Thailand)*
- East Asia School of Theology (Singapore)
- Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary
- Malaysia Bible Seminary
- Malaysia Evangelical College (East Malaysia)*
- Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology
- Phnom Penh Bible School (Cambodia)*
- Thailand Pentecostal Bible Seminary

*Associate Members.

The Middle East Association for Theological Education consortium (MEATE) is also an associate member of AGST Alliance.

AGST Alliance was established in 2004. Its programs are validated by the Asia Theological Association.

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The annual meeting of the AGST Alliance Governing Board took place at Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary (Penang) in late September. In a meeting marked by good interaction and careful listening by the members, a number of challenges were identified and significant decisions made.

Acknowledging where our confidence lies

Program and administration reports for the past year indicated much to thank God for in our programs. Dr Steve Taylor (BBS) reminded the board members that, just as the Apostle Paul's confidence was centred on God and the field of ministry that God had assigned to him (2 Cor. 10:12-18), so we too should strive to be faithful in what God has entrusted to us in AGST Alliance.

Challenges of new program areas

The board identified four new program areas for which there seem to be significant need in our region. Heading the list is a Biblical Studies program, which we would like to introduce as soon as possible. A program committee is now being



The Governing Board in session...

formed, and the specific shape of the program developed.

Challenges of administrative structures

The growth of AGST Alliance, especially as a multi-national venture, highlights a number of administrative challenges and responsibilities. Thus the board will request a qualified person to undertake a corporate



... and enjoying Penang cuisine

administration audit with a view to recommending a more efficient administrative structure.

Governing Board office bearers

The Governing Board made the following leadership appointments for 2010-11:

Chair: Dr Sunny Tan (MBTS)
Secretary: Dr Mah Yeow Beng (EAST)
Treasurer: Rev Wendy Ching (BCM)

- *Thank God for the ongoing encouragements in AGST Alliance and for the commitment of numerous people who pour their energy, time and skills into different aspects of our ministry in postgraduate theological education.*
- *Pray for our continuing confidence – to be centred on God and the special niche we believe he has assigned to AGST Alliance.*
- *Ask God for continuing generous provision of people and finance for the strategic program developments we sense are being placed before us.*

IN OUR PROGRAMS

MTh(Ed) graduation



Karen with her husband Dick Seow and senior pastor Canon Derek Hong.

At a simple lunch ceremony on 7 September with colleagues from her church (Church of Our Saviour, Singapore), Ms Karen Hoisington graduated with a Master of Theology (Education). Karen gave testimony to the significance of her time of study in AGST Alliance, and how fitting it was to be awarded her degree in the place of her ministry.

Karen's thesis topic was *Asking Questions: A Vital Approach for Faith Formation in a Singapore Chinese Community of Faith*. If you wish to find out more, email Karen at karseow@coos.org.sg.

- *Thank God for the successful completion of Karen's MTh(Ed).*
- *Pray for the other 20+ MTh(Ed) and MTh(Theol) students – at different phases of their programs but with the same goal in view.*

PhD progress

Our nine PhD(Theol) and PhD(Ed) candidates face special challenges in their non-residential research and study. As mentioned in the previous *Attuned*, 'patience and encouragement in the routines' is a slogan they need to keep in mind if they are to finish well.

- *Pray especially for productive and encouraging links between our PhD candidates and their supervisors, more often by email/phone/skype than face-to-face.*



Alex Tang works through 'yet another draft' (sigh!) of his PhD(Ed) with co-supervisor Allan Harkness.

Postgraduate thesis research forum

In mid-November a group of our MTh students and PhD candidates met on the new campus of Malaysia Bible Seminary (Kuang) for a forum designed to 'kick-start' the thesis research phase of their programs.

Highly interactive sessions covered the essentials of thesis/dissertation research and writing. A panel – comprising Drs Sunny Tan (Theology Programs Director), Rosalind Lim-Tan (our first PhD(Ed) graduate), Jason Lim (MBS Principal) and Allan Harkness (Dean/Education Programs Director) – responded to wide-ranging practical issues raised by the participants.

A less formal but greatly appreciated feature of the forum was the opportunity it provided for the students to meet and interact with one another. Most of the participants left the forum encouraged – clearer on the research and writing process ahead of them, and with a more precise research focus in mind.



Rosalind Lim-Tan in conversation with MTh(Theol) student Hiew Hoong Cheong.

- *Pray for our MTh(Ed) and MTh(Theol) students moving into their thesis research phase. They need a clear and manageable focus, good time management, and accessibility to suitable resource material. We need to line up a suitable supervisor for each student.*

Postgraduate diplomas validated

AGST Alliance awards postgraduate diplomas to students who complete the coursework for the MTh(Ed) and MTh(Theol) programs, but don't complete a thesis.

Few theological education institutions in Asia provide such diplomas, and so ours were not included in the AGST Alliance awards validated (=accredited) by the Asia Theological Association (ATA) earlier this year.

However, the ATA Commission on Accreditation & Educational Development (CAED) has recently advised us that these two diplomas are also now validated, as they are on par with the ATA standards for MTh programs:

- Postgraduate Diploma in Education, Spiritual Formation and Discipleship
- Postgraduate Diploma in Theology

We are grateful to the CAED for clarifying this for us.

Gift for library resources

We are delighted to have been notified of a grant of GBP3150 (~RM15,500, ~US\$4900) credit with Langham Literature, to purchase library resources for our programs. The donation is coming to us through LeaDev-Langham New Zealand, an organisation known to a number of our consortium member institutions.

Dr Sunny Tan, Governing Board chair, has commented: 'We thank the Lord and rejoice over this good news. It indicates AGST Alliance is being recognized.'

In due course our programs will decide what resources to purchase with this credit, and where the resources will be physically housed.

- *Thank God with us for this generous grant.*
- *Pray that God will continue to provide through his people and organisations/trusts for the ongoing resource development needs of AGST Alliance*

Coming MTh modules

MTh(Theology)

Theology and Spirituality

- Jan-April 2011; on-campus 7-11 Feb, 2011
- Location: Kuala Lumpur
- Facilitator: Dr Glen Scorgie (USA)

Theology and Church

- May-August 2011; on-campus 25-29 July, 2011
- Location: to be confirmed
- Facilitator: Dr Sunny Tan (Malaysia)

MTh(Education)

Approaches to Discipleship

- Dec 2010-Feb 2011; on-campus 6-11 Jan, 2011
- Campus: Malaysia Bible Seminary, Kuang, Malaysia
- Facilitator: Dr Sylvia Collinson (Australia)

Building Formative Faith Communities

- March-May 2011; on-campus 11-15 April 2011
- Campus: Bible College of Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
- Facilitator: Dr Perry Shaw (Lebanon)

- *Several students are commencing their MTh programs with these modules. Pray for them as they get into study mode – often it is quite some time since they did formal studies.*
- *Thank God for competent overseas faculty willing to partner with AGST Alliance. The honorarium they receive is small compensation for the expertise they bring and formational experience they provide in these modules.*

PROJECTS FOR PRAYER & PROVISION

1. **Redeveloping our AGST Alliance website** (www.agstalliance.org)
2. **Establishing a centralised database**
3. **Online learning management system**

We are closer to launching our redeveloped website. This will be followed by our centralised Moodle-based learning management system. Realistically, we're now looking at mid-2011 for the whole project to be complete.

- *Please pray for the timely completion of these internet-based projects, which can seem to take a frustratingly long time. Pray for the developer (in New Zealand) and Allan Harkness, overseeing the project, as they liaise on this ... through the Internet.*

4. **Theological resources:** The Governing Board has reaffirmed that it is essential for us to provide our students and faculty of AGST Alliance consortium institutions with access to key specialised internet-based data-bases. We are actively exploring viable (= affordable!) options, and doing our \$\$ calculations. Concurrently, it is heartening to hear of an international initiative for a special subscription deal with one of the most reputable theological databases for majority world theological institutions.

- *Pray for successful negotiations for this international initiative – and for designated funds to AGST Alliance for us to be able to take up this and other database subscriptions.*

5. **Research officer:** We continue to look for a research officer, tasked to collate resource lists in our member consortium libraries and to build a database of databases/resource availability. A significant chunk of this role could actually be done by someone living out of Asia and with reasonable internet access. Does anyone come to mind we may be able to approach?
6. **Corporate management expert:** As mentioned on p.1, we are looking for a qualified person to undertake a corporate administration audit of AGST Alliance, with a view to recommending a more efficient administrative structure. Again, do you know of anyone?

- *Pray with us for progress in finding these professionals – and for God's provision of the necessary finances.*

Ear-marked finance for any of these projects/roles would encourage us greatly. For further details – or to suggest names of people we could approach for the various roles – please contact AGST Alliance Dean, Dr Allan Harkness (dean@agstalliance.org).

FOR DONORS

- AGST Alliance bank account details for direct credit and telegraphic transfers are available from admin@agstalliance.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>).

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