



AGST
ALLIANCE

Attuned

A NEWSLETTER OF AGST ALLIANCE FOR INFORMED PRAYER | APRIL 2011

'Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscle of omnipotence.' – Charles Spurgeon

What motivates our faculty – and students?

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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Dr Glen Scorgie (Bethel University, San Diego, USA) recently returned to Asia to teach our MTh(Theol) module *Theology and Spirituality* for the second time. What motivates him to make this significant personal investment? 'It has been a genuine joy to participate in these modules,' he writes. 'The inconveniences associated with my "long commute" to and from Asia pale in comparison to the great privilege of having a part in this strategic program. The students are generally among the most capable, sincere and committed emerging Christian leaders one is likely to meet.'

The experience of Dr Sylvia Collinson (Morling College, Sydney, Australia), who facilitated the recent MTh(Ed) module *Approaches to Discipleship*, is similar: 'My experience of teaching for AGST Alliance was a real delight. The students enthusiastically embraced fresh ideas on "discipling" in their situations, and I feel my input will be multiplied in many places through their ministries. It was a spiritually encouraging time for me.'

Attending Dr Scorgie's module as the first in her MTh(Theol) program was Ms Leona Boey (Singapore). Leona's desire for further studies has been on hold for some time to allow her to concentrate on parenting, but now, she comments, 'AGST Alliance's flexible study programme is a great help to me in balancing study with other obligations.' Her initial impressions of the program? 'I appreciated working with students and lecturers from other regions and contexts, as it makes the learning more interesting. I'm looking forward to more opportunities for reflection and interaction!'

Senior pastor Rev Kenny Chee (Singapore) is enthusiastic about his first two MTh(Ed) modules (including *Approaches to Discipleship*): 'The modules have been relevant and applicable for me, leading the church



An enjoyable non-formal learning setting for Glen Scorgie, Leona and her peers (including MBTS DMin students).

to maturity. The on-campus sessions, with students from different cultures and ministry settings, have been highly interactive, facilitated by good guides. The assignments are rigorous, but always aim at getting us to integrate the content of the module with actual situations in church and the larger community.'

- *Thank God for scholars like Glen Scorgie and Sylvia Collinson who are willing to invest so much into our AGST Alliance programs. Pray for mutual enrichment.*
- *Kenny has commented that 'the modules seem to have been intentionally thought through to facilitate transformation, not just transfer of information.' Pray that transformation will indeed mark all our programs, at both the masters and doctoral levels.*
- *Pray for our students adapting to a more participatory and interactive learning approach than they may be used to in the on-campus sessions.*

AGST Alliance offers inter-faculty seminar

In early April AGST Alliance organised an afternoon seminar for the faculty members of Malaysian seminaries, to equip and to provide a setting for inter-faculty interaction. The seminar was hosted by the Bible College of Malaysia (BCM), and attracted about 25 participants from seven seminaries.

The seminar, on the theme *Integrating our curriculum: Meeting the challenge of fragmentation in our seminaries*, was conducted by Dr Perry Shaw (Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS), Beirut, Lebanon). Perry presented some of the biblical and educational foundations for integrated theological education and outlined the process taken at ABTS. There was lively interaction among the participants on approaches which might be relevant in their seminary and challenges to be overcome.

(Perry was in Malaysia to facilitate the on-campus sessions of an MTh(Ed) module. He is the MEATE representative on the AGST Alliance Governing Board and is a member of our Education Programs Committee.)

AGST Alliance at MATS

Three AGST Alliance Governing Board members and Dean Dr Allan Harkness attended the recent biennial meeting of the *Malaysian Association of Theological Schools (MATS)*.

MATS is strategic for promoting cooperation amongst Malaysian protestant theological institutions, and all ten member seminaries were represented at the meeting. (The AGST Alliance Governing Board members were present also as representatives of their own seminaries.) The recent meeting was especially timely as it provided opportunity to discuss a particular concern currently affecting most of the institutions.

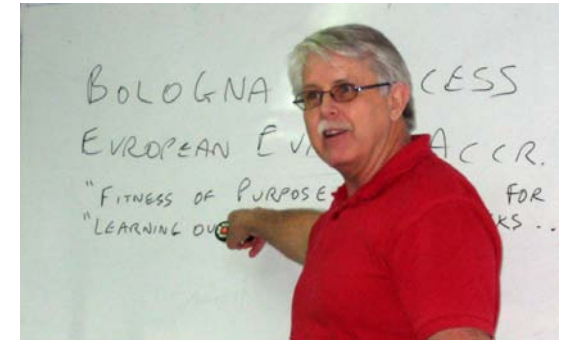
AGST Alliance represented in regional forum

Put 38 theological educators from 13-14 passport countries serving in 9 Asian nations between Malaysia and the Middle East into an intentional forum setting for three days, invite them to dialogue together around the topic *Formation and the classroom: Complement or conflict?* – and you have a fascinating and potentially potent combination.

So it was at the recent *Asian Forum for Christian Educators* (7-10 April). The forum was promoted as 'an opportunity for meeting – encouragement – networking with educational colleagues' – and the overall consensus is that the forum achieved this admirably.

One of our PhD(Ed) doctoral students who attended wrote, 'The wide spectrum of participants made it an enlightening experience... I learned to drop the 'let's hear it from the expert' mentality and to appreciate the 'learning from one another' approach of the forum.'

The forum was not specifically an AGST Alliance event, but three members of our Education Programs Committee were on the forum organising team – Allan Harkness, Perry Shaw and Jeanie Shim – and five of our students and one of our PhD(Ed) supervisors attended. The next AFCE is likely to be in 2013.



Inter-faculty seminar: Perry Shaw highlighting a point.



AFCE: Malaysian participants, including MTh(Ed) student Ladeq Mutang (4th from left) and Jeanie Shim (green striped shirt).

- *Pray for ongoing effective and reflective practice as participants take up their seminary responsibilities after these events.*
- *Thank God for opportunities like these events for AGST Alliance personnel to collaborate and network with other theological educators in our region, and for the synergy that develops as a result.*
- *Pray for further appropriate partnerships between seminaries (e.g. the modules jointly run by AGST Alliance and Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary), to avoid duplication of resources and to ensure a better use of the available finance.*

IN OUR PROGRAMS

Coming MTh modules

MTh(Theology)

Theology and Church

- May-Aug 2011
- On-campus 25-29 Jul, 2011
- Location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Facilitator: Dr Sunny Tan (Malaysia)

Theology and Contextualisation

- Oct-Dec 2011
- On-campus 21-26 Nov, 2011
- Location: MBTS, Penang, Malaysia.
- Facilitators: Dr David & Mrs Rosemary Harley (UK)

MTh(Education)

Faith Development and Expression

- Jul-Oct 2011
- On-campus 12-20 Sept 2011
- Location: Singapore.
- Facilitator: Dr George Capaque (Singapore)

- *Students need ready access to adequate resources for their MTh programs. Pray that we will be able to make good progress on developing our resources database, and that the students will use initiative to source required books and articles.*
- *Allan Harkness, in his role as Education Programs Director, is overseeing the planning of modules for the MTh(Ed) program for 2012 and beyond. Pray for a positive response from those he approaches as potential module facilitators.*
- *A number of our MTh students – in both the Theology and Education programs – are in the thesis/educational project research/writing phase. Effective time management is especially crucial, without the pressure of fixed assignment deadlines and as they face 'the tyranny of the urgent' in ministry and personal areas. They would appreciate your prayers.*
- *Finding suitable competent supervisors for our students is a special challenge, at both the MTh and PhD levels – especially those who are accessible for face to face meetings.*

Redesigned AGST Alliance website online

We are pleased that our redesigned AGST Alliance website www.agstalliance.org is now on-line. It has taken longer and absorbed much more energy than we anticipated to get to this point – no surprise, we are assured by others who have been down this track – and we're glad it's now a useable portal for potential students and other interested people.



Luke Pilkinton, our New Zealand based website designer, is now working with us to develop our web-based student management system.

- *Thank God that our new website is 'up and running'. Pray that it will be well-used to inform potential students about AGST Alliance, and as an attractive PR tool.*
- *Pray for Luke as he helps us select an appropriate student management system and then works with us to set it up well.*

WEBSITE MAINTENANCE PERSON

It's great having our new website operational – now we need to ensure it stays fresh and up to date.

Who is someone in our region with web skills (especially with Joomla) who may be willing to do this for us?

The work will be as required – probably several hours per month – and an honorarium is payable.

For further details, contact Allan Harkness (dean@agstalliance.org).

PROJECTS/PERSONNEL FOR PRAYER & PROVISION

1. **New AGST Alliance programs:** It's exciting to have a number of new program areas at different stages of development. To implement them, though, requires competent personnel able to give their time and expertise at the concept-shaping stage, and then to play a continuing role on the program committees. These people are usually very busy in their own institutions/organisations.
2. **Program committees:** Both the Education and Theology Programs Committees have had members move out of our immediate region. Communication by email/Skype is possible, but it makes committee discussions and decision-making more of a challenge. So we are looking for new local members for these committees.
3. **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. It is frustrating not having someone in place yet.
4. **Academic administrator:** While the job description has yet to be firmed up, it is clear we will soon need to appoint an experienced academic administrator, to ensure our administrative efficiency in the next phase of AGST Alliance development. Please let us know of anyone (preferably living in Malaysia or Singapore) who comes to mind for such a role.

- *Thank God for several people who have recently joined us as willing partners in new program developments.*
- *Please pray with us for further qualified people available to undertake these roles.*

5. **Theological resources:** We are still awaiting news of the start of a pilot venture for majority world theological education institutions to get an affordable subscription to one of the major theological databases. Ready access to this is becoming increasingly important for our students.

For further details – and to suggest names of people we could approach for any of the roles – please contact AGST Alliance Dean, Dr Allan Harkness (dean@agstalliance.org).

Most of these projects/personnel needs have financial implications. Ear-marked finance would encourage us greatly.

FOR DONORS

Typical of Asian theological institutions, student fees contribute only a proportion of the total operating cost of AGST Alliance. Further finance is needed for administrative and staff support, program development and to build up our research resource capacity. Financial support is welcomed as occasional or regular gifts.

- AGST Alliance bank account details for direct credit and telegraphic transfers are available from admin@agstalliance.org, or on our website (click Support us – Financial Support – How to give financial support).
- 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>).

Attuned is published three times per year in English. Please email admin@agstalliance.org to request to receive this update regularly. We appreciate your partnership.

AGST Alliance

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