



Attuned

A NEWSLETTER OF AGST ALLIANCE FOR INFORMED PRAYER | OCTOBER 2012

'Prayer requires utmost attention on our part. Attention to God is meditation on his ways and observations of his workings, and as we learn more of his works and ways, we frame our lives accordingly.' – Carroll Sincox.

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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Challenges for a regional venture

OUR AGST Alliance Governing Board held its 8th annual meeting in September, in Singapore. Reports on key aspects of our venture in post-graduate theological education over the past year were generally encouraging.

The Governing Board members took some time to address the issue of an appropriate level of centralised vs decentralised management of our regionally-spread ministry in order to be efficient and effective. Examples of the sort of practical questions that arose include:

- Where should the books and other printed resources of AGST Alliance be placed?
- To what extent might individual member seminaries host and 'own' one of our programs?
- What level of involvement might be expected from faculty members of our member seminaries?

At the heart of the concern is what co-operation and collaboration looks like in the realities of our regional setting, and whether there are alternative models of inter-seminary collegiality that will both serve AGST Alliance as an entity and at the same time best serve our member seminaries.

There are no easy answers, and this will be a strategic 'work in progress' over the next year by the Dean and Governing Board members.



Members from Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar



Governing Board members at the annual meeting

- *Thank God that 'he has brought us this far by his grace' in fascinating ways since our founding in 2004.*
- *Thank God too for specific encouragements over 2011-12, especially in student numbers and adequate financial support.*
- *Pray for discernment from God's Spirit over the coming year, as the Governing Board explores possible alternative management structures to mutually benefit AGST Alliance and member seminaries.*

IN OUR PROGRAMS

First EdD graduate



Perry is congratulated by Governing Board chair Dr Sunny Tan.

WE are delighted to have our first Doctor of Education graduate – Dr Perry Shaw.

Perry is no stranger to AGST Alliance: he is representative for MEATE on the AGST Alliance Governing Board, and member of our Education Programs Committee.

Perry's route to his AGST Alliance EdD is not typical, however. He completed an EdD some years ago through an institution that has since lost its academic credibility, something which Perry has found to be unhelpful for his continuing ministry in theological education teaching and training. His work to complete his AGST Alliance EdD entailed a significant reworking of his earlier dissertation focus, to ensure an appropriate level of creative and new work, under the supervision of Dr Paul Sanders (until recently, Executive Director of

ICETE, the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education).

Perry's dissertation focus is on congregational leadership suitable for growing Middle Eastern Arab Protestant churches: it explores the extent to which healthy church life in the Arab world is reflective of critically contextual systemic patterns of congregational leadership. [Click [here](#) for further detail.]

What to do for church?

THE on-campus sessions for some of our MTh/EdD modules span a weekend – and so the question arises: 'What do we do for church on Sunday?'

In the case of the recent MTh(Ed)/EdD module, with its on-campus sessions held at MBTS in Penang (Malaysia), one of the participants Kenny Chee wrote in his [blog](#) about what he and his peers did on their Sunday morning:



The one-time congregation of Church of the Open Air. So who's the preacher (?!)

We gathered to be the church outdoors ... We christened it the *Church of the Open Air*, a church without walls and doors. Being so interdenominational in our mix, we did a *rojak* [= 'mixture'] service. We sang *a capella*. We had a time of silence for contemplation. The scripture passage was read three times with intervals of silence. After which we shared honestly about where our lives connected with the illumined texts. It was holy ground. God was palpably present though there were no pyrotechnics, strobe lights nor professional musicians. We felt close to God, close to one another – all welded in a strange mix that defies definition but which St John hints of when he speaks of *koinonia*.

Spiritual formation in our programs, indeed!

- *Thank God for progress towards 'finishing well' by all our EdD and PhD candidates. Several are just starting their research process; some are wending their way through the middle phase; others are close to completion. But all need clear and focused thinking, energy, perseverance and good time management.*
- *Thank God, and pray for, the supervisors of our doctoral and MTh thesis research students. All are committed to their role, but are busy people who need to carve out time to read and comment on the student's writing drafts.*
- *Pray that the coursework processes of our MTh/EdD programs will enhance integrated, holistic formation in the students: academic + spiritual.*

Inter-seminary faculty enrichment afternoon

AS a consortium-based venture, AGST Alliance holds co-operation in ministry as one of our core values. This is expressed among our member seminaries, but also in opportunities with colleagues from other seminaries.

So was a pleasure for AGST Alliance to organise an inter-seminary faculty enrichment afternoon in Singapore in September. Hosted on the premises of the Assemblies of God Bible College, about 20 faculty and staff from four Singapore seminaries focused together on the topic, *A welcome guest: Pastoral formation as an act of hospitality*. Dr Perry Shaw, in Singapore for the AGST Alliance meetings, facilitated the sessions.

Listening, interacting, reflecting, eating with colleagues – and celebrating the birthday of one of the participants – seemed well-appreciated. All in all, a modest, congenial and worthwhile initiative.



- *Thank God for the dynamic power and potential of 'one another', and for small steps like this enrichment afternoon to model that.*
- *Pray for further opportunities for us in AGST Alliance to initiate on-going collaboration with colleagues in seminaries in our region.*

AGST Alliance on-line resources

WE consider it important to ensure that the fruit of our AGST Alliance programs are accessible to the Church in Asia. In mid-August we made a modest start to doing this with a new [Resources](#) section on our website.

Initially, there are three main resource areas:

- **[Theses/dissertations](#)**: here we have placed completed AGST Alliance theses/dissertations, each with an abstract and PDF copy able to be downloaded.
- **[Online databases](#)**: a wide range of e-resources, in six categories. We are most grateful to Ms Denise James (New Zealand) for her sterling work compiling this section. It's an ongoing 'work in progress'.
- **['Sharing our bread'](#)**: a section for AGST Alliance student, alumni and faculty papers/articles that are likely to have some interest for the church in Asia and beyond. This section is awaiting items (hint!). Items may be in languages other than English, but with a brief abstract in English.

Because this resources section is developed as a service to theological education and the Church in Asia and beyond, it is in a public section of our website: We want to ensure that this useful tool becomes a used tool too!

COMING MTH/EDD MODULES

MTh(THEOLOGY)

- **THEOLOGY & HERMENEUTICS**
Sept-Dec 2012; On-campus 5-9 Nov
Bangkok Bible Seminary, Thailand
Dr Natee Tanchonpongs (Thailand)
- **THEOLOGY & ASIAN THEOLOGIES**
Jan-Apr 2013; On-campus 4-8 Mar
Malacca, Malaysia
Dr Steve Taylor (Thailand)
- **THEOLOGY & SOCIETY**
May-Aug 2013; On-campus 27-31 May
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Dr Keith White (UK)

MTh(EDUCATION)/EdD

- **RESEARCH METHODS IN CHRISTIAN FAITH COMMUNITIES**
Dec 2012-Mar 2013; On-campus 28 Jan – 1 Feb
Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
Dr Jeff Pugh (Australia)
- **EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CFCS**
April-June 2013; On-campus 13-17 May
Bangkok, Thailand
Dr Pieter Theron (Mongolia)

These modules are open to both credit and audit students – suitable as refresher options for seminary faculty and church leaders.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

1. **Theological resources:** Our quest for an affordable way to get ready access for our students to key specialised theological electronic databases which require subscriptions is on-going. Discussions continue with a non-Asian seminary which is willing to assist us if the logistics can be worked out.
2. **Student management system:** We continue to try to source an internet-based student management system (for our student database) which is both suitable and affordable.
3. **Moodle for on-line learning possibilities:** We are in the process of preparing a 'virtual learning environment' (VLE) on our website, using the common (and free) Moodle application software.

▪ *Our administration and student effectiveness will be enhanced as/when we can implement these projects. Please keep praying for discernment and clear direction for those exploring the options.*

For further details about our various projects, contact AGST Alliance Dean, Dr Allan Harkness <dean@agstalliance.org>. These projects and our personnel needs have financial implications. Ear-marked finance would encourage us greatly.

Applications open for new programs

Applications are open for potential students in our two new program areas:

MTh(Bib. Studies) & PhD(Bib. Studies)

MTh(Bib. Studies) – commencing mid-2013
PhD(Bib. Studies) – commence immediately

Click [here](#) for details

Masters in Transformational Development

Commencing in early 2013.

Click [here](#) for details

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. We welcome financial support 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 (www.meansusa.org).

FOR YOUR 2013 DIARY?

AFCE2013

Space, relationships and learning: A critical matrix for theological education

3rd Asian Forum for Christian Educators
Bangkok, Thailand, 17-20 May 2013

An opportunity for interaction – encouragement – networking with colleagues in theological education who teach/train in Christian education, formation and discipleship, and others who are concerned about enhancing the formational potential of the seminary courses they teach.

Further information from Dr Allan Harkness (Forum Facilitator), asianeducatorsforum@gmail.com.

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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