



# Attuned

A NEWSLETTER OF AGST ALLIANCE FOR INFORMED PRAYER | AUGUST 2013

*"When we pray for a person or situation, we are praying for God to open our eyes so that we can see that person or situation as God does, and then enter into the stream of love and care that God is already directing toward that person or situation."* – Philip Yancey (adapted)

**AGST Alliance** is a theological training venture offering specialised post-graduate theological programs for church leaders and theological/Bible college faculty in SE 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.

For a better reading experience, we suggest you view this copy in Full Screen mode. Go to View in your Adobe Reader (or other PDF reader) and select Full Screen Mode.

[www.agstalliance.org](http://www.agstalliance.org)

## First AGST Alliance PhD in Theology awarded

**Dr Paul Woods was awarded his PhD in Theology, at the Singapore Bible College (SBC) graduation ceremony in May – his second PhD, but AGST Alliance's first PhD(Theol). Paul is on the SBC faculty, where he teaches mainly missions-related subjects.**

Meanwhile, the same weekend, **Dr Alex Tang Tuck Hon** was awarded his PhD in Education at the East Asia School of Theology (EAST) graduation ceremony. This setting was chosen because Alex is an EAST adjunct faculty member.

Hearty congratulations to Paul and Alex on their achievements, a milestone in their continuing journeys to make a difference for God's kingdom in our region and beyond.

Our doctoral dissertations are examined by three competent academics external to AGST Alliance, and as a result the quality of both Alex's and Paul's research may be considered to be benchmarked well against equivalent work internationally.

Paul, from the UK, is representative of a number of our students who are non-Asian partners in cross-cultural mission in our region. They confidently choose to complete their studies with AGST Alliance as a natural outworking of their commitment to service among and with Asians. We welcome further such applications.



Paul receiving his award from Dr Sunny Tan, AGST Alliance Governing Board Chair and Theology Programs Director.



Alex with his two research supervisors, Drs Jennifer Turner (Perth, Australia) and Allan Harkness (Singapore).

## AROUND OUR PROGRAMS

### Encouraging doctoral candidates



Doctoral candidates and supervisors/  
faculty at the colloquium

**Our annual doctoral colloquium took place in Bangkok, in May.** This was an opportunity for our PhD and EdD candidates to interact with faculty and doctoral supervisors, to review their progress and to re-calibrate direction.

Dr Graham Cheesman (from N. Ireland, and supervisor of two of our PhD(Ed) candidates) contributed a particularly helpful session, *Key Issues For Doctoral Students and Their Supervisors – 12 Things That You Will Not Find In The Books*. Subtitled *Having Fun With A Doctorate*, this session highlighted the importance for doctoral candidates to work at integrating the personal (including spiritual) and academic in their research process.

Dr Samuel Sidjabat (PhD(Ed) candidate, Indonesia) articulated a common response from his co-participants about the colloquium: "... significant critics, ideas, suggestions have enriched my understanding how to continue writing the dissertation. It was an encouraging time."

- *Thank God for his grace that enabled Alex and Paul to finish their doctoral studies well.*
- *Pray that the fruit of their research may result in significant missional impact – in Asia and beyond.*
- *Pray that our PhD and EdD candidates will continue to persevere with their research through discouragement, tiredness, and diverse commitments.*
- *Remember especially Casey and McLean, who are aiming to submit their PhD(Ed) dissertations by the end of 2013.*

## PHD DISSERTATIONS FOCUS

Paul's Woods' PhD(Theol) dissertation title is ***The Migration Phenomenon In East Asia: Towards A Theological Response From God's People As A Host Community.***

At the heart of Paul's dissertation is a vigorous theological response to the extensive migration throughout East Asia. He details the phenomenon of migration in this region and the application of migration theory to it, bearing in mind particularly the cultural and historical context of migrants and their host nations. This laid the foundation for a theological response, beginning with a consideration of migration and the Old Testament faith community, through the expanding faith community of the New Testament, and concluding with a response anchored in current theological scholarship. The whole is seen missiologically in such a way that the implications of this research will provide a valuable resource for the East Asian church.

Alex Tang's PhD(Ed) dissertation title is ***Till We Are Fully Formed: A Conceptual Investigation Of A Christian Spiritual Formation Paradigm In The English-Speaking Presbyterian Churches In Malaysia.***

Alex's dissertation is an inquiry into the current spiritual formation paradigm used in English-speaking Presbyterian churches in Malaysia. Drawing on the biblical record and the literature on Christian spiritual formation, Alex proposes a more holistic approach that has as its aim persons becoming like Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit in a formative community for the sake of the world. He shows how being formed in Christ's likeness in community enables the restoration of both the lost *imago Dei* (the image of God) and the biblical concept of *shalom*. Alex's work has application within and beyond the Malaysian churches surveyed. His emphasis on formation in community is at the forefront of current interest in the processes of spiritual formation.

Further details of these dissertations – and others – may be found on [www.agstalliance.org](http://www.agstalliance.org) at [Resources – Theses & Dissertations](#).

## Learning leadership a fun way

A feature of the learning processes of the recent MTh(Ed)/EdD module, *Educational Leadership for Christian Faith Communities*, was an extensive simulation game played during the intensive on-campus week. The module was facilitated by Dr Pieter Theron (S. Africa/Mongolia).

The active learning process of the game required teams of participants to transform their (theoretical) school/community through three 'school years' to become a more effective learning community. The simulation provided the basis, framework and reference point for processing how to lead and manage organisational change, and the sort of leadership required to do it well.



Participants making decisions in the simulation game.



Meanwhile, learning may have been more sedate but no less effective at the on-campus sessions of the recent MTh(Theol) module, *Theology and Society*, facilitated by Dr Keith White.

- *God is the ultimate encourager of our students. Pray all will be open to insights from him, to enthuse them to 'keep on keeping on' to a good conclusion in their programs.*
- *This is especially needed by our students entering the thesis/dissertation research phase of their programs, when the 'tyranny of the urgent' and alone-ness lead to procrastination. Pray for effective time management.*
- *Applications for our new MTh(Bib. Studies) program have been low and slow. Pray for potential students to become aware of the program and to see their way clear to apply. Coursework modules are scheduled to begin in May 2014.*

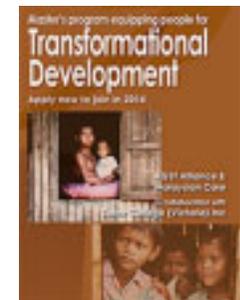
## Appreciation of masters program for transformational development

The 15 students in the MAVP(Aid & Development) program which commenced earlier this year are now into their second semester course, *Community Organisation and Development*. It has been most encouraging to read some of the students' experiences in the program so far:

- "The combination of theological reflection and practice makes this a unique course and helps me develop a more blended approach to development and leadership."  
– Daniel, Sri Lanka
- "My wife has reminded me that in our country the higher one goes in education the more likely it is that one forgets one's about responsibility to God and neighbour... I am happy that this program has challenged me to integrate faith with my study and my work as a manager in a development NGO."  
– Sophal, Cambodia
- "Joining this program is the best decision I have made in helping me lead a growing organisation. The assignments are mind-expanding and force me to delve deeper into theological reflection than I have in many years."  
– Steve, Myanmar/ Norway
- "This program is theologically grounded, yet deals with very practical ministry issues. The readings challenge my paradigms and open up new ways of learning and doing ministry."  
– Margaret, Malaysia

Due to the program's immediate popularity, a new intake of students will commence in 2014.

In our website click on [Home – Programs – Transformational Development](#) for a program overview and application details.

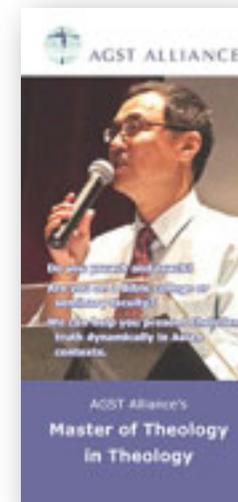


# Apply for AGST Alliance programs

- MTh(Bib. Studies) – commencing mid-2014
- PhD(Bib. Studies) – candidates may commence as soon as they are accepted
- MTh(Theol) & PhD(Theol)
- MTh(Ed)/ EdD/ PhD(Ed)

Accepted applicants for these on-going programs may commence anytime.

Visit [www.agstalliance.org](http://www.agstalliance.org) for program and application details.



Click on each brochure for a program overview. Copies of these brochures may be downloaded from the [www.agstalliance.org](http://www.agstalliance.org).

## 3rd Asian Forum for Christian Educators

**AGST Alliance students and faculty comprised half of the participants in the third biennial Asian Forum for Christian Educators, in Bangkok in May.** Joining them to create a fascinating synergy were theological educators and leaders from various other Asian seminaries and Christian ministries.

The content focus was *Space, Relationships And Learning: A Critical Matrix For Theological Education*, and this was explored in an intentionally relaxed setting, expressing a sense of mutuality which a genuine forum of peers can enhance. Times for unhurried and creative prayerful reflection and response—individually and together—were appreciated as an integral part of the forum which, one AGST Alliance participant commented, “refreshed the person, encouraged fellowship, and stimulated thinking.”

Another participant, a long-time academic dean and AGST Alliance faculty member, spoke for many when he commented, “It was one of the most enjoyable and relaxing ‘official’ academic meetings that I have ever attended.” We are exploring the possibility of several more local ‘mini-forums’ to allow other faculty and Christian leaders to have a similar experience.



Dr Graham Cheesman (N. Ireland) provided stimulating, clear and relevant contributions at AFCE2013.

## AROUND OUR MEMBER SEMINARIES

**Recent notable events and milestones from our AGST Alliance member seminaries include:**

- **EAST (Singapore)** is celebrating its 20th birthday. As part of the celebrations new students may take their first course free of tuition fees – and this initiative has been well received.
- **MBS (Malaysia)** has recently celebrated its 35th anniversary.
- **MBTS (Malaysia)** has farewelled Dr Mark and Mrs Barbara Terry, after eight years of service. Mark pioneered the masters and doctoral missions program, and Barbara helped strengthen the MBTS Library.
- A number of **MEATE seminaries (Middle East)** are in particularly volatile socio-political settings, especially in Egypt, Palestine and Sudan/South Sudan.
- **MEC (E. Malaysia)** principal Dr Eddy Ho continues to face significant health challenges. He is scheduled to undergo heart surgery in early September.
- **PPBS (Cambodia)** recently farewelled Rev. Timothy Ith as principal; and inducted Mr Tep Samnang as the incoming principal.

▪ *Ask God to open your eyes so that you can see each situation as God does, and “then enter into the stream of love and care that God is already directing toward that situation.”*

### Coming MTh/EdD modules

#### MTh(Theology)

- **BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**  
Sept-Dec 2013; on-campus  
11-15 Nov  
*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*  
Dr Peter Lau (Malaysia)

#### MTh(Education)/EdD

- **SPIRITUALITY AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT**  
Aug-Nov 2013; on-campus 9-17 Sept  
*Singapore*  
Drs George Capaque & Allan Harkness  
(Singapore)
- **CREATING LEARNING FAITH COMMUNITIES**  
Dec 2013 – Feb 2014; on-campus 13-17 mid-Jan (to be confirmed)  
*Location to be confirmed*  
Dr Allan Harkness

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

## 21 September: Governing Board annual meeting

**Bangkok Bible Seminary is hosting the 2013 annual meeting of our AGST Alliance Governing Board on Saturday 21 September.** A representative from each of our consortium members is invited to attend.

Under the leadership of Governing Board Chair Dr Sunny Tan, the meeting will review our current and proposed programs, and effectiveness and development of our organisational structures. We will also discuss plans for our 10th anniversary in 2014.

- *Thank God for this opportunity for 'time out' to review and plan.*
- *Pray for prayerful discussion, careful listening and consensus in decisions – between one other, and between us and the Holy Spirit.*

## PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Still in our sights, but with no firm outcomes to report, are these three key projects which will enhance our effectiveness, once they get in place.

1. **Theological resources:** Our quest for an affordable means to get ready access for our students to key specialised theological electronic databases which require subscriptions.
2. **Student management system:** Sourcing an internet-based student management system (for our student database) which is both suitable and affordable.
3. **On-line learning possibilities:** Preparing a 'virtual learning environment' (VLE) on our website, probably 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](mailto:dean@agstalliance.org)>.

These projects and our personnel needs have financial implications. Ear-marked finance would encourage us greatly.

## FOR DONORS

### Financial matters

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 welcome, whether as occasional or regular gifts.

- *Thank God for his gracious provision for our financial needs to date – mainly through student fees and several regular support partners' gifts.*
- *Pray with us to continue to trust that 'God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply' (Hudson Taylor) – and for people who will respond to God's nudging to mediate his supply.*

- AGST Alliance bank account details for direct credit and telegraphic transfers are available from [admin@agstalliance.org](mailto: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](http://www.meansusa.org)).

**Attuned** is published three times per year in English. Please email [admin@agstalliance.org](mailto:admin@agstalliance.org) to request to receive this update regularly. We appreciate your partnership.

### AGST Alliance

My Mail Box 886642, Singapore, 919191 | Tel/Fax: +65-6219-7855 | Email: [info@agstalliance.org](mailto:info@agstalliance.org)

Visit our website

**[www.agstalliance.org](http://www.agstalliance.org)**