



Attuned

A NEWSLETTER OF AGST ALLIANCE FOR INFORMED PRAYER | SEPTEMBER 2014

"The true spirit of prayer does not consist in asking for blessings, but in receiving him who is the giver of all blessings, and in living a life of fellowship with him." Sadhu Sundar Singh

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 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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www.agstalliance.org

Happy birthday, 10 year old!

AGST Alliance celebrated its 10th anniversary in August.

Back in 2004, we didn't dare wonder what AGST Alliance might look like 10 years later – but now in 2014 we are a testimony to God's grace as we seek to *'prepare scholars and leaders for the Church and society in Asia'* through the variety of our programs.

It is fascinating, amazing and humbling to observe where our youthful (some suggest 'upstart') SE Asian regional venture in postgraduate theological education has come in our first decade – and we acknowledge that ultimately it is only what God has done.

Our anniversary was celebrated at a dinner in Kuala Lumpur on 10 August, attended by students and alumni, members of the Governing Board, seminary faculty and friends. The evening provided opportunity for us to look back with gratitude and to look ahead with confidence.

We worshiped. We heard God's word to us through a keynote address by Dr Camille Melki, Executive Director of the Middle East Association for Theological Education (MEATE – an associate member of our consortium). Camille challenged us to keep our vision clear, *'that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which [God] has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe'* (Eph. 1:18-19). We rejoiced. We prayed. What better way to celebrate!

- *'Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us' (Eph. 3:20, Common English Bible).*
- *Thank God for bringing AGST Alliance through our first decade by his grace...*
- *... and ask him for his resources to ensure that we align ourselves clearly with his purposes as we move ahead.*





Long-serving Governing Board members recognised



At our anniversary dinner, we honoured three founding members of the AGST Alliance Governing Board with a certificate and token of appreciation.

Rev Wendy Ching (BCM), and Dr Sunny Tan (MBTS) have represented their seminaries and served in leadership roles continuously since 2004. Both are directors of our company AGST Alliance Sdn Bhd. Currently Wendy is secretary of the board, and Sunny is chair and director of our theology programs.



The late Dr Eddy Ho (MBS/MEC), who passed away in September 2013 (and represented at the dinner by his son Enoch), held similar roles.

- *Thank God for the faithful, diligent and competent service of Wendy, Sunny and Eddy – as well as our founding Dean Allan Harkness.*
- *Thank God too for numerous other partners who are generous with their time, academic competence and wisdom in the myriad aspects of AGST Alliance.*

Witness God's faithfulness... watch our AGST Alliance presentation

Participants at our 10th anniversary dinner saw the 'premier' of a simple PowerPoint presentation on the history of our AGST Alliance venture, its impact, and how people can partner with us as we move into our second decade.

The presentation has been converted into an 11 minute video (.mov) format, and may be downloaded and viewed from this [DropBox link](#). The video is 14.4MB in size, and has an embedded music soundtrack – so connect your speakers.



We honour also the contribution of **Rev Derek Tan**, the key person in establishing AGST Alliance. In the early 2000s Derek, General Secretary of the Asia Theological Association, sensed the need for such a

venture, and encouraged ATA member seminaries in Malaysia and Singapore to collaborate. Derek was the first chair of the Governing Board. He passed away in mid-2006, leaving in AGST Alliance a legacy for God's kingdom.

New consortium agreement signed

The AGST Alliance consortium presently comprises ten seminaries in SE Asia, along with MEATE in the Middle East with associate member status.

The commitment to the consortium is renewed every five years.

All ten SE Asian seminaries have agreed to renew their commitment for 2015-2019 – and it was fitting to recognise this at our anniversary dinner, as we looked forward in confidence at what God is planning to do through AGST Alliance. It was heartening to witness the Governing Board representatives present sign the new agreement on behalf of their seminaries.



Maurice Bilung (MEC), Tony Lim (MBS) and Keith Shubert (EAST) sign the new consortium agreement.

- *Thank God especially for his grace – the cement that holds the consortium together, when it is natural for seminaries to want their own programs rather than to give up some of their independence to work collaboratively.*
- *Pray that each of our member seminaries will initiate practical ways to demonstrate their commitment to AGST Alliance.*
- *Natee, Wendy, Daniel, Keith, Sunny, Tony, Maurice, CK, Samnang, Manoosak and Perry... these are our Governing Board seminary representatives. Commit them by name to God. Invariably they are busy with their seminary responsibilities, and need to create space to respond to AGST Alliance matters (mostly via email).*

Coming MTh/EdD Modules

MTh(Theology)

■ THEOLOGY & HERMENEUTICS

Oct 2014–Jan 2015;
on-campus 8–12 Dec 2014

*Bangkok Bible Seminary,
Thailand*

Facilitator: Dr Natee
Tanchanongs

■ THEOLOGY & WORLDVIEWS

Feb-May 2015;
on-campus 7-11 Apr 2015

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Facilitator: Dr Tan Kang
San

EdD(Child & Family Development)

■ CHILDREN, FAMILY & COMMUNITY: BIBLICAL & THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Jan-Apr 2014;
on-campus 9-14 March
2015

*MBTS Klang Valley Branch,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

Facilitator: Dr Glenn Cupit
(Australia)

These modules may be suitable as refresher options for Christian leaders and seminary faculty – for audit or credit.

AROUND OUR PROGRAMS

Contextualising theology

One of the greatest challenges facing the Church today – in Asia and elsewhere – is how to communicate the gospel in a multicultural and pluralist society. So the present module *Theology and Contextualisation*, facilitated by Dr David and Mrs Rosemary Harley, is a strategic one in our MTh(Theol) program.

The students have been introduced to contemporary issues of contextualisation, examining the keys to the effective communication of the biblical text in the cultures and communities in which they live and minister.



Challenged, stimulated – and still smiling! Barnabas, Albert and Andry at work during the on-campus *Theology and Contextualisation* sessions.

EdD(Child & Family Development) launched

In September students in our new *Doctor of Education in Child & Family Development* program have commenced their first module – reading and preparing a case study ready for their on-campus intensive week in late October.

Dr Rosalind Lim-Tan, our EdD(C&FD) program director, is thrilled to see the program finally start. Applicants are from Cameroon (Africa) Hong Kong, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines and USA – all are involved in leadership in organisations focusing on advocacy, development and/or social welfare with children and families.

New DMin in Leadership in mid-2015



Applications for our new *Doctor of Ministry in Leadership* are now being received, prior to the program commencing in mid-2015.

The DMin is targeted at senior church leaders and Christian organisation staff who are seeking the next level of professional development to enhance their leadership skills.

The program is jointly offered by AGST Alliance, Bible College of Malaysia and Malaysia Bible Seminary. Students apply through one of the three partner seminaries, and will graduate with an award from that seminary. Dr Tan Sooi Ling (Penang, Malaysia) is the program director.

Program details may be read [here](#) on our AGST Alliance website (also on the BCM and MBS websites).

- *Thank God for those who are investing effort into the development of our programs – that they will sense the appropriate content and processes to meet the needs of the niche target participants.*
- *Pray for our two new program directors – Rosalind Lim-Tan and Tan Sooi Ling – as they 'find their feet' to administer their programs well.*
- *Pray that information about our new programs will reach those who will benefit from knowing about them, as ministry enhancing options.*
- *Students need to invest significant effort in pre-campus and post-campus reading and study. Pray that they will be able to carve out quality time to do so.*

New intake for Masters for Transformational Development – Feb 2015



In response to demand, a new intake of students will commence in February 2015 for the Masters program for transformational development, a partnership between AGST Alliance, Tabor College (Victoria, Australia) and Malaysian Care.

The stimulating way in which theological reflection is integrated with professional practice in this program appeals to the students, motivating and equipping them in their demanding arenas of justice and development.

Program details may be read [here](#) on our AGST Alliance website.

Doctoral candidates gather

In mid-August nine doctoral candidates from our EdD, PhD(Theol) and PhD(Bib. Studies) programs met on the campus of Bible College of Malaysia for our annual doctoral colloquium.

The purpose of the colloquium is to provide a setting for candidates to be encouraged to 'keep on keeping on': they have opportunity to talk through the direction and progress of their research with 'critical friends' (their peers and faculty), and to enhance their research ability with sessions on skills and resources.

Most candidates leave encouraged; some are daunted and a bit bruised by the critique of their research. Kenny Chee, commencing his EdD dissertation research, later wrote in his blog:



'The most helpful session [was the one in which] each of us had to present the research they had done thus far and receive specific advice and input from the experts and their peers.... I saw what was expected in concrete cases and what was taught as general principles became clearer as it was set in the specific context of each person's research question.... Now that the colloquium has ended I need to process and apply it to my research idea.... [The way ahead is] going to be a test of endurance and faith, but I am going to replicate what I have always done with trekking: take a deep breath and move my feet one step at a time.'

- Remember our doctoral candidates back home after the colloquium, as they continue to hone up their research and writing. Pray that they will draw on God's resources to be able to 'take a deep breath and move their feet one step at a time', at whatever stage of the journey they are.
- Pray that those who returned home discouraged by aspects of their research process will be encouraged as they interact with their supervisors and other 'critical friends'.
- Several of our MTh and doctoral candidates are at the 'final write-up' phase of their thesis/dissertation – and struggling to keep momentum. 'Energy and focus for them, please Lord.'

AGST ALLIANCE DEVELOPMENTS

Governing Board looks ahead

The AGST Alliance Governing Board annual meeting was held on Monday 11 August, directly after the anniversary dinner, hosted by the Bible College of Malaysia.

It was fitting for the meeting to begin with a reflection on Psalm 127. Wendy Ching reinforced the focus of the anniversary celebrations – the encouragements of seeing God’s hand over our first decade gives us confidence as we move ahead.

Much of the meeting was routine (but don’t read ‘boring’), for example reviewing each of our programs and dealing with regular academic and administrative matters. Several of the more significant discussions and decisions from the meeting included:

- We explored ways to enhance research skills competence in our students, to better prepare them for their thesis/dissertation phase, and so to finish well.
- We plan to undergo our five-yearly program re-accreditation process with the Asia Theological Association in 2015.
- The process is picking up pace to determine an appropriate leadership structure for AGST Alliance, in the light of our dean Allan Harkness stepping down in late 2015. A proposal is being developed, for the Governing Board to consider and act upon.

- *Annual program reports can disguise what God may be doing in the lives of individuals being equipped for more effective ministry. Thank God for the present 70+ students in our various programs, and for his enabling that they may be able to use the fruit of their studies for his kingdom and his glory.*
- *In the lead up to the Governing Board meeting we prayed that there would be clear listening – to each other and to the Spirit of God – and decisions made that are wise, creative and forward-looking. We trust that we heard well. Thank God for his insights.*
- *Pray for Sunny Tan and Allan Harkness, tasked by the board to develop the revised leadership-shape proposal. Ask God to point them to the people who may be available to take up roles.*

AGST Alliance office bearers: 2014-15

The Governing Board confirmed the present office bearers in their roles for the coming year:

- Chair: Sunny Tan (MBTS)
- Secretary: Wendy Ching (BCM)
- Treasurer: Keith Shubert (EAST)

The directors of our Malaysian company AGST Alliance Sdn Bhd stay unchanged: Wendy Ching, Allan Harkness, Sunny Tan and Steve Taylor (BBS).

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 and faithful provision for our financial needs.*
- *Pray with us to continue to trust that ‘God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply’ (Hudson Taylor)*
- *The new AGST Alliance leadership structure will likely require increased financial support. Pray for generous donors – individuals, churches, and/or trusts/foundations.*
- 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 MYR/SGD/USD 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).

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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