



Attuned

AN E-NEWSLETTER OF THE AGST ALLIANCE FOR INFORMED PRAYER AND ACTION



Recently, I stumbled across a book chapter entitled, "*Shakespeare in the Bush*." [1] In a visit to a West African village, Laura Bohannon told the story of *Hamlet* to a group of Tiv elders. Her account is interesting and at times, humorous as the listeners interpreted Shakespeare from their perspectives. The outcome was, "a very different version of the classic play and an excellent example of cross-cultural miscommunication" (Bohannon in Spradley and McCurdy, 2012, p.41). The reading left me thinking, "*What would it take for the Tiv elders to think the thoughts of Shakespeare?*" and "*How could it be done?*"

Back to real time, I am reminded that our world has just experienced the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the experience, there were questions of why God allowed such "testing" on His creation. While pastors and church leaders explored answers, the congregations meandered through their own understanding, searching to make sense of reality. "*Is God punishing us for our disobedience?*" "*Why Lord? Why?*" "*What about the Bible promises that God's faithful will not be harmed?*" "*Wish we know what God is doing.*" When death occurs, we excused His inaction, "*God did answer our prayers, but in His way.*" "*The deceased is in a better place.*" Unless, the congregations are guided to know and think along the Storyline, they will be listening but misinterpreting the events as deemed fit and at times, sprinkling it with naïve realism. *What will it take for God's people to think His thoughts? How could it be done?*

The Apostle Paul answers us in 1 Cor 2:16, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." God in creation stamped the knowledge of His existence in humankind. The ability to know Him and His intent is not far-fetched, but a promise. The process of knowing is a dynamic interplay of human development and God's Spirit working in individuals (Loder, 1981). [2] Our congregations can grow in understanding and mature in faith. They have the potential to go beyond the *bush* to know God's plan, purpose, and the ways He works. But they need someone to lead them forward (*educere*) [3] and direct them to think God's thoughts; a person (or persons) who is equipped with knowledge and process – both a theologian and an educator.

... and this is the AGST Alliance's education aim. We equip pastors and church leaders in knowledge to lead their people forward. We journey with pastors and church leaders to craft creative education, discipleship, and spiritual formation approaches for their congregations. That, when the congregations encounter their "*Shakespeare in the bush*," they are ready to think with the mind of Christ.



About the author:

Dr Rosalind Lim-Tan, PhD(Education) directs the AGST Alliance Education programs. Her passion is in designing education curriculums, reflective practice, community development, and contextual training. She designs training curriculums for education and community development programs. Rosalind has co-edited two publications, and researched for the National Economic Empowerment Coalition (NEEC) Malaysia. Her papers include: "Our Legacy: Understanding the Impact of Church Advocacy on the Orang Asli Community in Peninsular Malaysia" (2017); and "The Sabah Report" (2019), both qualitative research projects on the indigenous people in Malaysia.

[1] Bohannon, Laura. 2012. "Language and Communication: Shakespeare in the Bush" in *Conformity and Conflicts: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*. Ed. James P. Spradley and David McCurdy. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Education.

[2] Loder, James. 1981. *The Transforming Moment*. Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers and Howard Publication.

[3] *Educere* (Latin) is the root word for education.

AROUND OUR PROGRAMS

Theology, Contextualization and Asian Theologies



Notably this was the last "face-to-face" on-campus module for AGST Alliance till now. The bold and the brave made the dash to Bangkok Bible Seminary, Bangkok before the lockdown occurred in Malaysia and Thailand. Competently facilitated by Dr Steve Taylor, students engaged actively (through class presentations and group discussions) with the major works already written within the Asian context and the process of developing biblical contextual theology. It is our hope that they will begin to adequately and appropriately think through theology in their own context.

Introduction to Research



This was well facilitated by Dr Brainerd Prince who led (and pushed) us to think and write academically at a more rigorous level. It was challenging to say the least, but it left an indelible impact. As this seminar-course was jointly offered by AGST Alliance and Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, we enjoyed diversity on three counts: (1) among the students from various disciplines: theology, biblical studies, missiology, and ministry, (2) the faculty as well as program directors from both institutions, and (3) the diversity of research topics on the table which augurs well for future Asian academic scholarship. Finally in an increasingly polarized world, (and even in theological education) the diversity represented in this event was indeed very refreshing.

UPCOMING MODULES

2020 DOCTORAL COLLOQUIUM

7-8 August 2020

Web-colloquium via Zoom

PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND ISSUES

Facilitator: Dr Tony Lim

(Vice Principal, Dean of English Department, Malaysia Bible Seminary)

1 August to 30 November 2020

On-campus: Web-based instruction via Zoom (Thursday Oct 15 to

Tuesday Oct 20)

Combined Module for the following programs: MTh(Theology), DMin

EDUCATIONAL THEORIES AND INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Facilitator: Dr Debbie Kramlich
(Post Doctoral Research Fellow, Payap University)

October 1 to December 30, 2020

On-campus: November 17-21, 2020

Venue: Penang, Malaysia (subject to travel impositions)

PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING POINTS



Featuring our recent
graduate:

Leona S Boey, MTh
(Theology)

Her thesis:

An examination of Kierkegaard's concept of the biblical duty to love your neighbour as yourself in the context of modern Singapore

The command to love God with all of one's heart and to love the neighbour as oneself is said by Jesus to be the summation of the revealed will of God (Mt 22:36-40). In the context of a multiracial, multireligious and economically diverse society such as Singapore, what does it mean for Protestant Christians to love our neighbour as ourselves? This thesis first examines significant Asian "neighbourology" theologies and proposes an interpretation of the parable of the Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). Next, the thesis describes historical and contemporary forces shaping the definition of "neighbour" in 21st century Singapore, before proposing that the deliberations of the Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) on a distinctly Christian love, centred on the schema "I-God-You", and offers a robust basis for Singaporean Protestant Christians to relate to "others" (outside the Church) in true Christian love.

If you would like to read a copy of the thesis, please contact Leona Boey directly at: leobie2@yahoo.com

Her reflections:

Question: From your coursework and thesis, share one insight that has changed the way you think theologically?

A perspective that I've acquired from my coursework and thesis at AGST Alliance is the importance in Asia of doing theology in a communal context. This perspective came to me through my valuable interchanges with fellow students and lecturers during the residential lecture sessions. In my thesis, the core area of enquiry into Kierkegaard's theology of love took on new meaning in the light of living as an Asian Christian in a multi-religious and multi-racial context.

Question: How has your life changed as a result of this programme?

It's more a case of my life changing with the programme, as I've gone through a whole stage of life with my children going from Primary 1 to Pre-university! Thank you, AGST Alliance, for understanding and supporting me through the years and allowing me to grow theologically and spiritually at my own pace.

Question: What will you say to encourage current students in the programme?

Persevere and don't give up! Completing the thesis is the capstone to hours of hard work in other modules. It will help you to consolidate your theological thinking and give you the confidence and qualifications to advance in serving God.

APPLY

AGST ALLIANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

AGST Alliance offers three levels of post-graduate study in Christian education.

The Doctor of Philosophy in Education program (**PhD [Edu]**) is an advance research of an original interest in the Asian context. Our graduates include seminary lecturers, education consultants, researcher, or writers who provide significant leadership in the wider Christian community.

The Doctor of Education program (**EdD**) has two majors: a) *Spiritual Formation and Discipleship*, and b) *Child and Family Development*. Our graduates are lecturers, trainers, pastors, or key leaders in churches and faith-based organizations.

The Master of Theology (**MTh [Edu]**) focuses on practical theology. Our graduates are people of academic ability with practical competence in areas of educational involvement. Most students move on to a doctoral degree.

Since 2004, AGST Alliance has been offering quality post-graduate programs for church leaders and seminary or Bible college faculty in mainland South East Asia, to equip them for more effective Christian ministry and mission. See <http://www.agstalliance.org> for more information.

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 welcome, whether as regular or occasional gifts.

- AGST Alliance bank account details for direct credit and telegraphic transfers are available from admin@agstalliance.org, or on our website [here](#).
- Please make MYR/SGD/USD cheques payable to 'AGST Alliance Sdn Bhd'; and Thai Baht cheques payable to 'Bangkok Bible Seminary'.

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