



## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH DURING CRISIS

**By Dr. Andrew Spurgeon**

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*(Reprinted from Helix Research Center Resources for COVID-19 Response Project, Singapore Bible College)*

Christians have always stood at the forefront of any social, physical, and spiritual warfare. Like David before Goliath, they stand not on their might. But, drawing their strength from God, they fight: William Wilberforce against slavery in England, Florence Nightingale for the wounded soldiers in the Crimean War, William Carey against sati (burning of widows on the pyre of their husbands) in India, and Joni Eareckson Tada for the physically challenged throughout the world. Asian Christians are no exception – they are fighting to save the dignity of the migrant workers, fighting to preserve God’s creation, and fighting on behalf of those who can’t speak for themselves (those with special needs). [1] Similarly, as Singapore faces the threat of the microscopic enemy, the COVID-19 virus, the role of churches and Christians is clear: stand at the forefront and fight for the fainthearted.

The Jerusalem apostles’ fight against social oppression and Paul’s

fight against poverty give the biblical precedent for us to be socially active. Since Alexander the Great’s time in the Middle East, Jews struggled with their identity. Those in Jerusalem spoke and read the Torah in Hebrew. Those in Egypt and Asia Minor (modern Turkey) spoke Greek and read the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. So, at an early gathering of the Christians, tensions arose between Greek-speaking Jewish women and Hebrew-speaking Jewish women. One group felt they were cheated in the provision of daily food; they felt as if the Hebrew apostles were partial to the Hebrew-speaking Jews (Acts 6:1). The apostles didn’t sweep this complaint under the rug but addressed it (6:2). They instituted the first official ‘division of labor’ between the apostles and other servants: whereas some ministered God’s word, others waited on tables (6:3–4). Since waiting on tables was equally important to preaching God’s word, they chose

“men... full of the Spirit and wisdom” (6:3). [2] The apostles laid their hands of approval on them and commissioned them to the ministry of waiting on tables, for the sake of the Hellenistic Jewish widows (6:6; cf. 6:2). The result was astonishing: “the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (6:7).

Paul is often known as ‘the greatest theologian.’ But, equally important to him was caring for the poor. When he heard Agabus’s prophecy that there would be “a severe famine... over the entire Roman world” (Acts 11:28), he collected the funds that disciples in Antioch had gathered and took them to the Christians in Judea (11:29–30). While he defended the gospel before the Jerusalem apostles, they were speechless, except to make one request: “remember the poor” (Gal 2:10a). Paul didn’t need this request because he “had been eager

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to do [this] all along” (2:10b). When other Christians joined him in this endeavor, as did those in Philippi (Phil 1:5; 4:18), he couldn’t stop praising them and thanking God for them. He dedicated two chapters in 2 Corinthians to challenge the Christians in Corinth to participate in caring for needs, after challenging them and outlining how to gather funds to give to the poor in 1 Corinthians (16:1–4). Giving to the poor was so important to Paul, in fact, that he used a multitude of terms for it: “fellowship” (2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; Rom 15:26), “service” (2 Cor 9:1; Rom

15:31), “grace” (2 Cor 8:6–7, 19), “blessing” (2 Cor 9:5), and “divine service” (2 Cor 9:12; Rom 15:27). [3]

So, whether in times of racism, prejudice, injustice, poverty, or illness, Christians and churches have always stood at the forefront and fought against evil and preserved good. Even now, when we are faced with an invisible enemy, COVID-19, let’s stand strong as the apostles and the cloud of witnesses ahead of us and fight by offering calmness and care to the troubled and fainthearted.

[1] Calvin Chong, ed., *The Servant at the Fringes: Christian Serving Foreign Workers in Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore Bible College, 2018); Melissa Ong and Prarthini M. Selveindran, ed., *God’s Gardens: Creation Care Stories from Singapore and Malaysia* (Singapore: GraceWorks, 2020); and Leow Wen Pen and Anne Wong-Png, ed., *Call Me by Name: Stories of Faith, Identity, and Special Needs* (Singapore: Family Inclusion Network, 2018).

[2] All scripture quotations are from the NIV.

[3] See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1st edition, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 812.

## RECAP, REJOICING, AND ANTICIPATION: 2019 HIGHLIGHTS AND HIGH HOPES FOR 2020

The ATA annual meetings this year took a different turn this year as it will be done in two parts. The first part was held last 17 January 2020 where updates were made in an online meeting (via Zoom cloud meetings) and they are as follows:

### Recap and rejoicing!

A huge part of the meeting involved a recap of what had transpired in 2019 and it is impossible to do that without rejoicing for so many wonderful things had transpired in the life of ATA! From the progress we’ve been making in many of our endeavors in the various regions to new developments in the ministry and of course to our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary kick off celebration, the year that went by was grace upon grace.

Indeed, 2019 has allowed us to see much progress in many of our

endeavors. For one, the second phase of Vital Sustainability Initiative (VSI) engagement in the India cluster has been completed. The schools involved in this initiative are Shalom Bible Seminary, Kohima; Oriental Theological Seminary, Bade; Asian Christian Academy, Hosur; Center for Global Leadership Development, Bangalore. The process required two visits, each with different objectives. The first visit happened in March of last year and during that visit the schools were engaged in clarifying their mission related to formation of leaders and their prophetic role in the Church and society. As part of the outcome of the visit, each school was furnished with a brief summary of the situation analysis, potential opportunities, and questions for strategy planning. On the other hand, the second visit, which happened in 26 August to 06 September of last year, the team composed of Drs. Theresa Lua (ATA General Secretary), Emmanuel Bellon (Vice President, Scholar leaders International), Linzay Rinqwest (Principal of Cape Town Baptist Seminary), and Paul Cornelius (ATA regional secretary) assisted each of the schools in expressing their strategic initiatives and set their priority goals and activities for the next 3 to 5 years.

Additionally, year two GATE workshops have likewise been

conducted in Nepal, North India and Mongolia. Alongside that, GATE workshops for this year have already begun in Nepal which had its year 3 workshop last January 29-31.

Apart from moving forward with many of our endeavours, there have likewise been many new developments in the ministry of ATA- from leaders moving forward to new seasons in their life to exploring new frontiers.

It was last year that ATA had seen our leaders move into new seasons in their lives. Dr. Rico Villanueva resigned from his role as Publications Secretary and General Editor of ABC while Dr. Ng Peh Cheng retired from her role as Associate Secretary for Accreditation. We are very thankful for the service and contribution of both Drs. Villanueva and Ng. And as they have moved on to a new chapter of their lives, they have passed the baton on to equally gifted individuals. Dr. Andrew Spurgeon, our former Publications Chairperson, now serves as the Publications Secretary and General Editor of ABC; while Dr. Jonathan Ro will be serving as the new Associate Secretary for Accreditation.

On the other hand, it was last year that work on the comprehensive revision of the accreditation manual was undertaken by a committee composed of Drs. Graham Aylett, Rick Weymouth, Paul Cornelius, and

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Theresa Lua (assisted by the CAED Chairperson, Ronnie Poon). The first draft was presented during the business meeting at the General Assembly in Singapore last August and the committee hopes to finish the manual by the first quarter of this year.

Alongside all that, it was last year that ATA released a first of its kind book, a systematic theology textbook that caters specifically to the Asian Context: "Asian Christian Theology". It was edited by Drs. Timoteo Gener and Steve Pardue. It was launched in the opening night of last year's General Assembly.

And of course, one of the biggest highlights of 2019 was our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary kick off! Indeed what grace it was to have been able to begin our 50<sup>th</sup> celebrations last year through our Triennial General Assembly held in

Singapore, the birth place of this ministry. In the GA, pertinent questions with regards to reaching out to and discipling the millennials and post millennials were put forward and discussed. The event not only reaped a lot of praise from the participants but was developed into an ICETE Academy Course entitled "The Future Church". This course includes not just the videos of all the sessions, both plenary and panel discussions, and the opening night, it likewise has follow up work. This course is made available free of charge to all the faculty of ATA member institutions.

### Anticipation: High hopes for 2020

This year, 2020, is our 50<sup>th</sup> year! So, there is certainly so much to look forward to! For one, we can look forward to a series of celebrations. There will be three regional

celebrations: May 15 for ATA Korea<sup>[1]</sup>; June 2/3 for ATA Japan<sup>[2]</sup>; and July 30 for ATA India. To cap off these celebrations, a dinner celebration will be held during the Theological Consultation in Kuala Lumpur. This will certainly be a special part of the upcoming Theological Consultation.

Without a doubt, what an exciting year 2020 will be! Despite the seeming rough start for many globally, we know that our God is at work. We anticipate only the best and look forward to even bigger things as a ministry.

<sup>[1]</sup>Celebration is postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19.

<sup>[2]</sup>Leaders of ATA Japan will determine later this month or early next month whether celebrations will push through.

## Update on the 2020 ATA Theological Consultation.

ATA is monitoring the COVID-19 situation very closely. However a decision has not been made yet whether to postpone the Consultation. As such we will definitely update you when a decision has been made. So don't book your tickets yet but keep this event on your calendar.

 <p><b>2020 ATA Theological Consultation</b> <i>Ethics in Asian Societies: an Evangelical Conversation</i></p>		<p><b>Ethics in Asian Societies: An Evangelical Conversation</b></p> <p>August 3-6 2020 Pearl Hotel, Kuala Lumpur</p> <p>Registration Deadline: 30 June 2020</p> <p>Registration Details: <a href="http://www.ataasia.com">www.ataasia.com</a></p>	
<b>Plenary Speakers</b>			
<p>Dr Timoteo Gener <i>Asian Theological Perspectives on Ethical Issues in Asia: An Overview</i></p> <p>Dr Ivan Satvarata <i>Living as the People of God in 21st Century Asia</i></p>			
<b>Panel Conversations</b>			
<p><b>Panel 1</b> <b>Justice and Ethics in Society</b></p> <p><i>Panelists</i> Dr Aldrin Penamora Dr Denison Jayasooria</p>	<p><b>Panel 2</b> <b>Family and Sexual Ethics</b></p> <p><i>Panelists</i> Dr Bernard Wong Dr Shang Jen Chen Dr Anna Sui</p>	<p><b>Panel 3</b> <b>Ethics in Creation Care</b></p> <p><i>Panelists</i> Dr Lawrence Ko Dr Calvin Loh Dr Liza Storey</p>	<p><b>Panel 4</b> <b>Ethics with a Human Face</b></p> <p><i>Panelists</i> Dr Kwa Kiem Kiok Dr Tabita Kartika Christiani Ms Joy Pring (and others)</p>
<p>Summary and Conclusions Dr Dick Eugenio</p>			



# A GLOBAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR WITH ICETE ACADEMY



## By Shaiju Thomas

Dean, Global School of Open Learning, Center for Global Leadership and Development, Bangalore

I am Shaiju Thomas from Bangalore, India. I serve as the Dean of the Global School of Open Learning, the Open and Distance Education School of CGLD. I was formally introduced to ICETE Academy (IA) at the ATA General Assembly, Singapore held in September 2019.

A quick browse through the learning site of IA got me excited at the collection of bite-sized courses for theological educators. I could immediately tell this is a real treasure for any educator and an answered prayer of a theological educator who wants to be relevant and effective in fulfilling their call.

These courses have been curated by the best in the field of theological education (TE) and carefully crafted by experts in the world of TE.

### Course and Platform Design

Here are a few facts I found about the learning management system and the course design, once I enrolled myself to one of the courses:

- The design of the course is direct and pulls you into the matter/competency concerned, without beating around the bush
- Pain felt in modern education is not so much in learning, as in learning the technology or the framework of the learning system. IA has done well to eliminate this challenge mostly. The framework for each course in the IA platform is on an uncluttered 3-section (Introduction-Learn-Test) design, and can be rather easy-to-use for any person who uses emails to communicate
- What I found most exciting about the course design is the time taken for course completion. It is less than 15 hours, and therefore can easily be managed through a month. I personally found the courses quite engaging and found them rather hard to set aside, once started. It is designed to help achieve the course objective in a minimal time-frame.

### IAF and International Recognition

Since November 2019, I have personally enrolled and completed 5 courses from ICETE Academy. I also received the ICETE Academy Fellow (IAF) status after achieving 30 points.

I had always dreamt of a system of international validation for the educators of TE, as there are, in all the other disciplines of learning – most commonly in the field of pure science and medicine. It is my joy to share that ICETE Academy which has the world's most credible accrediting agencies for theological education as its partners, offers this validation.

While the Academy has not yet received the due attention, it is fast becoming a tool for faculty validation for many accrediting agencies world-over. I am delighted to be one of the few IA Fellow and I hope many more of us from the Asia region will be found on this list.

### IA Learning Path and More...

I started taking the IA Courses for personal competency enhancements and upon looking back I can assuredly say that it has influenced the way I think of education and on my role as a leader in Theological Education. With over 40 courses already written and many more getting crafted, ICETE Academy covers most, if not all areas in the TE domain; and you could choose to work on one or many of these forte, within the domain.

As an administrator, I highly recommend these IA courses to the leadership in theological institutions for competency enhancement and faculty development. As leaders of institution, you may want to create a learning path for your faculty and members of the administration, to achieve institutional goals.

The flexibility that IA offers to faculty members, administrators and stakeholders to create learning path based on their interest and requirement is one of its uniqueness and deserves a special mention.

### Overcoming Challenges

As in most of the professional development programs the flexibility of time, accessibility of content and ease of choosing deadlines though an advantage also poses challenges. Timing my own learning pace and staying self-motivated were the few challenges of discipline I faced.

Since IA courses are self-paced and self-directed, the discipline of self-motivation (of setting aside a regular time and constantly asking oneself 'What will I be able to do better at the end of this?') is the key to overcome

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drag in successful completion of course(s). The good news however is, once you are done with the first course, it will be hard to resist taking on another one.

Cost of the program could also be a potential challenge usually but while IA has tried to keep the fee very low, ATA

has offered to wholly subsidize the same and offer it to its member institutions as a value-added service. Thanks to ATA, we can learn all we want and become a better internationally certified educator, while being a subject-matter expert.

I am hopeful that each of us will take advantage of this opportunity and become competent educators and IA Fellows, in the coming days.

God bless!

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## FREE COURSES AT ICETE ACADEMY!

We are happy to announce that all the faculty of the ATA member institutions can take UNLIMITED COURSES FOR FREE in the ICETE Academy! This offer is available throughout the year 2020.

The ICETE Academy (IA) is an educational development platform providing certified professional training for theological educators. The Academy is formally linked with the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education and works with a number of partner providers. To learn more about the ICETE Academy and the courses offered, please do visit their website: <https://icete.academy/>.

We encourage you to make use of the IA courses as part of your faculty development program. To avail of the courses, please email [ataasia@gmail.com](mailto:ataasia@gmail.com) for details. ICETE Academy Fellow status will be conferred to everyone who completes at least three courses over three years.

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## Prayer Corner

### Let us praise God...

...for the healing from COVID-19 of Rev. Dr. Wilson Teo, former ATA Board Member and Senior Pastor of Grace Assembly of Church in Singapore

...for the amazing things he has been doing in the life and ministry of ATA.

### Let us pray...

...for God to intervene and bring the spread of the COVID-19 to a halt. Please pray for those working behind the scenes- from the medics to the scientists developing a vaccine, that God will strengthen them and bring clarity of mind. And more importantly, please pray that God uses this to turn hearts back to him.

...for the Church to discern what is God doing through this COVID-19 pandemic and what our response should be.

...for the rescheduling of all the accreditation visits that have been postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

...for theological schools as they face the impact of COVID-19 in their training programs and operations. This crisis has serious implications on the delivery system, enrolment, finances, etc.

...for wisdom and guidance concerning the regional celebrations of the ATA 50th anniversary. ATA-Korea celebration in May has been postponed; the ATA-Japan celebration in June and ATA-India celebration in July will be determined later this month or early next month.

...for the ATA Theological Consultation on August 3-6 in Kuala Lumpur.



## In Remembrance of Dr. Teresa Chai, wonderful colleague, sister, and friend

It is with a heavy heart that we announce that our colleague, sister, and dear friend, Dr. Teresa Chai, has gone to be with the Lord in the morning of March 09, 2020, after battling with cancer. Described as a wonderful person through and through, loved and respected by both colleagues and students, Dr. Chai remained cheerful despite physical pain.

A faithful servant of the Lord, Dr. Chai served Him through various ministries in the field of Theological Education. She served at the Alpha Omega International College in Malaysia from 2003-2012 first as faculty, then as Academic Dean, and finally as President. In 2013 she was sent as a missionary of Assemblies of God to serve in various capacities at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary or APTS in Baguio, Philippines. She



first served as faculty member at the same time also as director for the Global Missions Center and the John Bueno Chair for Intercultural Studies then later on in 2018, as Academic Dean.

Dr. Chai has served as member of the ATA Visiting Evaluation Team for many years. She also served as Associate Secretary for Accreditation and Educational Development from 2016 to 2017. She stepped down when she was appointed as Academic Dean at APTS but continued to help with accreditation visits.

Dr. Chai also served as missionary and pastor in Bangladesh from 1991-1999. She received her PhD in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary in 2003.

Last year she was diagnosed with cancer and went home to Malaysia for treatment. We, the ATA community, mourn the loss of a wonderful colleague, sister, and friend, but rejoice that she is now home, free of pain. We all look forward to the sweet day of our reunion in heaven.

## ATA has launched its online forum: A•CROSS

Last 31 January 2020, ATA officially launched its online forum named Asian Christian Reflections on Society and Spirituality or A•CROSS. A•CROSS is a space for ongoing dialogue on key issues in Asian

societies and how the church through Theological Education can address them.

One of the priority goals of ATA is the formation of “hermeneutical communities” of Asian Scholars from different disciplines working together to provide a prophetic voice to the burning issues in Asia. It is our hope that A•CROSS will be one tool in which we can achieve this. Furthermore, we hope that this will be a platform for dialogue on relevant issues.

To join the community, please visit <https://across.ataasia.com> and register. We also have a public group in facebook and to join please visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ATA.ACROSS>.

So, come and be part of this exciting new endeavour. Be part of this growing on line community. Be part of the conversation. Be part of A•CROSS!



## Visiting Evaluation Teams sent out to two continents in the first quarter of 2020

Several Visiting Evaluation Teams were sent out in the first quarter of the new year- and to places and institutions in two different continents at that: North America and Asia.

The team sent to North America visited the Chinese Online School of Theology (COST), a ministry of the New York Theological Education Center (NYTEC), and was composed of Drs. Rick Weymouth, ATA Convenor, e-Learning Director for PTEE, Jordan, and CAED Member; Jonathan Ro, ATA Associate Secretary for Accreditation and Educational Development; and Minfu Hsu, Adjunct Professor, Christian Hakka Seminary). The visit was to two of the three administrative centers located in Toronto, Canada and New York, USA and was done in response to the request of the institution to re-accredit programs first accredited in 2012 and they are: Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theological Studies (with majors in N.T. Studies, O.T. Studies, Theological Studies), and Master of Divinity.

COST, true to its name, employs purely online media for its courses and programs. More specifically, the institution makes use of Moodle for its course materials, readings, and online discussion forums along with Adobe Connect for lecturer presentations- be it the occasional synchronous live classes and recorded presentations. NYTEC and COST believe that *“the world is our campus”* and embrace *“an educational model that strides across centuries; a learning style that is pertinent to the*



ATA VET at the Chinese Online School of Theology



ATA VET at Bethany Theological Seminary

ages” as their motto. NYTEC/ COST was co-founded in 1992 by Rev. Dr. Timothy Chiu, its current president, and his father, Rev. Andrew Chiu, who led the ministry from 1992-1996.

Following the visits in different parts of North America, teams were sent to schools in Asia. The visits were to Yangon, Myanmar and Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.

On February 17-19 a team composed of Drs. Theresa Lua, ATA General Secretary; Jonathan Ro, and Tomas Zatel, Principal of Bethany Theological Seminary, Myanmar, visited Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology. This was a response to the request to re-accredit their Master of Divinity Programs (Biblical, Theology, Intercultural and Pastoral Studies) and Master of Theology Programs (Theology and Intercultural Studies).

During the period of the visit of the team, the Graduation Banquet and



ATA VET at the Myanmar Evangelical School of Theology



ATA VET at Anglican Training Institute

Ceremony was held and, on both occasions, Dr. Theresa Lua was given the privilege to be guest speaker. The Graduation Banquet was held last February 21 and it was attended by 500 guests representing different tribal groups and churches under the Myanmar Evangelical Christian Alliance (MECA) and a handful international guests, namely Dr. Tony Plews along with other leaders of LeaDev- Langham and Dr. Jane Overstreet and other leaders of Development Associates International. Dr. Jonathan Ro, ATA Associate Secretary for Accreditation was also present. The day after, February 22, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Graduation Ceremony was held and during which 42 graduates received their MA, MDiv, and MTh degrees.

MEGST aims at training and equipping *Christians to be Christ-like leaders who build up the church and the nation of Myanmar and beyond.* Founded in 1996 by the Myanmar

## VISITING EVALUATION TEAMS FOR THE QUARTER

Evangelical Christian Alliance (MECA), MGST was born out of the need to train leaders locally rather than sending them to North America or Europe as Myanmar has lost many theological educators in the process of training them in first world countries. Having

This visit was to the Bethany Theological Seminary (BTS), also in Yangon, Myanmar, and occurred in February 20-22. The visit was done in response to the request to re-accredit its Bachelor of Theology program and accredit its Master of Divinity program.

BTS is under the wing of Bethany Independent Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.

Finally, last March 4 to 6, a team was sent to the Anglican Training Institute (ATI) in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia. The team sent out to ATI was composed of Rev. Drs. Jonathan Ro, Associate Accreditation Secretary (Convenor), Tony Lim, Vice Principal and Academic Dean, Malaysia Bible Seminary, and Dr. Rahmiati Tanudjaja (via Zoom), Chair of Academic Senate, STT SAAT. This team visited as a response to the request to reaccredit the Certificate of Theology and Diploma of Theology Programs and accredit the new Bachelor of Theology Program.

ATI went through several changes from the time of its founding in 2010 up until recent years. In its early years, ATI was a correspondence training initiative and made use of the Th.C modules of Moore Theological College and came under the wings of the diocese's Training Committee. In 2011, it was named as School of Ministry and Mission and along with

that came additional components to its curriculum and a program named Diocesan Certificate of Ministry (DCM) was introduced. It was in 2013 that the school got its name as we know it now, Anglican Training Institute and its objective is to train pastors/ leaders to be faithful Christians and fruitful ministers who are effective in ministry and deep in theological foundation.

Let us uphold these institutions in prayer as they seek to fulfil God's unique calling for each of them.



*Dr. Theresa Lua was guest speaker in both the MEGST Graduation Banquet and Ceremony*

begun with 13 students in small rented apartment in Sanchuang Township in Yangon, MGST has grown and now has 40 apartments for classrooms, offices, chapel, library halls, dormitories for students and residences for teaching and non-teaching staff. All that alongside a student population that has grown exponentially.

One more visit to an institution in Yangon was done by a team composed again of Drs. Theresa Lua and Jonathan Ro, but this time with Dr. Ronald Laldinsuah, Academic Dean of the Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School.

The vision of BTS is “where disciples display the mind of a scholar, the heart of a pastor, and the spirit of a prophet” and its mission is “training people in faith and life within a model of authentic Christianity where God is touching lives and people care for people.” The institution aims at seeing its graduates expound the Holy Scriptures in a systematic manner and able to communicate the word of God to others. BTS was founded in 1995 as a pastoral institute but this changed in 1996 with the number of students seeking theological studies and thus became Bethany Theological Seminary.





## Blessings from Fellowship with ATA

**By Dr. Masanori Kurasawa**  
Former President  
Tokyo Christian University

Congratulations on ATA's 50th anniversary! Tokyo Christian University (TCU) cannot fully measure the immensity of the blessings we have received through our fellowship with ATA.

Firstly, we have improved our theological education and developed our programs at TCU thanks to ATA. For instance, this has come through meaningful interactions with other Asian theological institutions (such as periodic theological symposia jointly held between ATA/Korea and ATA/Japan), through the establishment of sister relationships with other schools (such as ATA member schools in Sri Lanka), and through faculty exchange.

Secondly, we received countless blessings as TCU contributed to ATA through CAED and serving on the Board. At one point, I had the privilege of serving as the CAED Chairperson,

and the late Dr. Takanori Kobayashi served as the ATA Board Chairperson. Through these opportunities, we enjoyed close fellowship with the leaders of ATA member schools, and we greatly expanded our network.

Thirdly, through ATA's degree accreditation process every 5 years, TCU's predecessor schools received incentives and opportunities to keep reforming and improving its theological education. Thanks to our connection to ATA, TCU grew to become the only evangelical theological university to receive accreditation from Japan's Ministry of Education. We remain grateful to ATA!

Once again, congratulations on 50 years of service! May the name of our Lord Jesus be lifted high because of ATA!



## ATA: An Instrument of Blessing

**By Dr. Mona P. Bias**  
Academic Dean  
International Graduate School of Leadership

Although a number of colleagues at IGSL have also benefitted from various trainings offered by ATA, I will share a little of what it has meant to me personally. It began with the writing workshops sponsored by ATA enabling me and a colleague to contribute a book in the Asia Bible Commentary series.

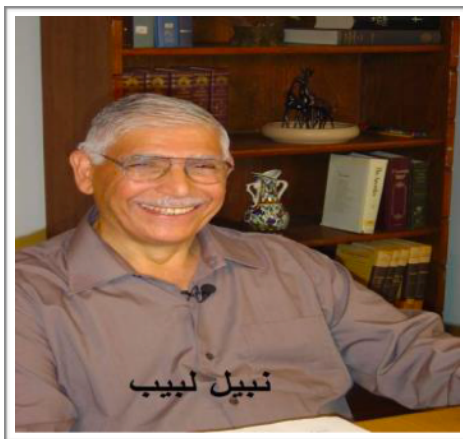
Then I was asked to join the workshops conducted by GATE in partnership with ATA to help facilitate learning. My teaching has never been the same since that workshop. Over a period of time I applied what I had learned in my Biblical Hebrew language classes. Though Biblical Hebrew is usually a challenge and a hurdle for students, my aim is for them to value and apply what they learn from the class. To help make this happen, I created monologues and wrote scripts of texts covered in class like the story of Ruth and Boaz, Job, Joseph, and Daniel. I then let the students dramatize these and perform them in Chapel for our weekly gathering for worship and

prayer. The impact of this in their studies and most evidently in their lives, has been deep and lasting.

Additional trainings with GATE were an advantage. It prepared me for the task to serve as Academic Dean without any prior relevant mentoring or coaching. Moreover, it was an ATA seminar that gave me the impetus to pursue the development of a Research and Archives Center at the school.

The Workshop for Doctoral Supervisors have helped several of the Faculty to improve their research and writing skills. For other Faculty members, the Theological Consultations have given them ample opportunity to grapple with issues affecting Asia, to present papers, and contribute in the discussion.

I give thanks to the living God for ATA's contribution to the school in accrediting all its programs and to my own personal and professional development in relation to teaching, research, and writing.



## PTEE's Story

My name is Nabil Abdel Malek.

When I was the academic director for the Program of Theological Education by Extension. I remember receiving an invitation from ATA (Asian Theology Association) to attend the conference of Academic Deans in Bangkok, Thailand. Its purpose was to support and strengthen academic directors and deans working in educational institutes that are members of ATA. Dr. Theresa Lua from the Philippines was leading the conference alongside others. I learned so many new things about the role of academic directors and deans, how to measure academic levels, and how an academic department becomes distinguished. I continue to benefit from this conference today. That conference was also, where I met Dr. Paul Sanders, the academic director at

ABTS (Arab Baptist Theological Seminary) in Beirut, Lebanon. At that time, he was the chairman of the accrediting committee of MENATE (Middle East and North Africa Association for Theological Education). We had some good conversation in which I explained the philosophy behind the PTEE, the meaning of 'education by extension', how the program prepares its programmed courses, measuring academic standards, and the four divisions of the curriculum, to show him that the PTEE meets MENATE academic standards. Later in the same year, PTEE received accreditation from MENATE.

I also met with a convert to Christianity from a Jewish background for the first time in my life. He was the academic director at the Christian Messianic Seminary in Jerusalem, and we have been good friends since then and there is continuous cooperation between his seminary and the PTEE. We thank ATA for all their printed newsletters and magazines which are regularly sent to us, enriching our school and the knowledge of our staff, we are also grateful for their technical support that enables us to continue functioning as an open theology college that serves all Arab people everywhere in the world, especially in places there are no Christian colleges. Thank you again for everything.



## Call for stories

In celebration of our 50th anniversary, we are collecting stories of how God has used the ministry of ATA to bless those it has come in contact with. If you have a story to share on how God used the ministry of ATA to bless you or your institution, please send it to [ataasia.research@gmail.com](mailto:ataasia.research@gmail.com) on or before 22 April 2020 so that we can include it in the next issue of the ATA news.

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