



MAKING THE MOST OF THE WORST OF TIMES

***Dr. Saphir Athyal**
ATA Founding Chairperson

The whole world is a battleground! We are all under a siege! With the present swift exponential increase of Covid-19 throughout all the countries, where we are headed to this time, no one knows. Thick dark clouds covering the whole world and every nation. Suppressed anxiety and fear on most faces. Global lockdown and economic disaster. Government authorities and scientists having to balance saving lives with saving livelihood —having to choose the lesser of the evils between deaths by Covid or deaths by poverty.

Doctors and medical personnel on the frontline of this war working overtime with alarming shortage of staff and medical equipment risking their own lives. A vaccine and an effective medicine for this and their use worldwide, not in view in the immediate future. Data and statistics of people getting sick and dying showing rapidly increasing numbers every minute.

LIVING WITH QUESTIONS UNANSWERED

This is not a time to blame God, any nation, any government, or any scientist. We are in it all together as the human race. This 'enemy virus' does not know any boundaries in terms of nations, race, gender, culture, age and social status. Our usual concept of power, the power of wealth, military, titles and positions, all are bowed down to the dust before this puny little organism of coronavirus. We are forced to submit to the truth of Ps 144:4, "Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow".

Where is God when we need him the most? If he is all powerful how can he stand aside and do nothing? Has he

abandoned the world—his world, his people? We should not be presumptuous to try to explain what God is doing or not doing. Sickness, pandemics, deaths and tragedies that we experience in this shattered world are the outcome of the misuse by humankind of God's precious gift of freedom of will. Yet, he stands with us in our miseries, and he helps us to make some good come out of it all.

CORONAVIRUS AND SIN - AN ALMOST PERFECT MATCH

There are significant contrasts, but some of the similarities are noted below. Though tempted to elaborate on each, I will not do so to keep this article short.

1. The covert, secretive and stealthy way of both, in spreading from person to person
2. The source of both is alienation of humanity from God. His will for us is our wholeness and goodness.
3. Both attack the vital organs. The virus attacks the lungs, and sin attacks heart, mind and the whole person.
4. Shelter from both is in keeping a safe distance. Social distancing. "Flee from evil" (Paul)
5. Both no respecter of any boundaries—national, gender, age and status, thus leveling all.
6. The Virus needs a living cell to live and replicate. Sin is not abstract; needs a living person.
7. The sheer power of both the virus and sin on people
8. Facing the fact of the problem and its seriousness is the first step toward a cure. In virus, transparency and truth to

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people, and in sin, confession to God and to those sinned-against are necessary.

9. Even when conquered, both sticks around. Virus mutates and comes back in another form. So also, does our sinful nature unless it is overcome by the power of the gospel of Christ.

IS THERE A BRIGHT SIDE TO THIS DARKNESS?

Some good results have come out of this crisis.

1. WHO says that air pollution kills 4.6 million people globally each year— in China 1.3 million and in India 1.2 million. As industries, factories, and travel by air, train and private vehicles are curtailed, if not stopped, for a few months now, the atmosphere is significantly cleaner. So, one may say (insensitive to the loved ones of the many thousands who died) that Covid-19 is saving the lives of many times more people than those who die of it?

2. Countries with the largest economies boast of their power with a spirit of arrogance that in wealth, military and scientific knowledge lie their strength and greatness. With heavy global economic disaster and impending recession, maybe they will be more accommodative of countries with weaker economies.

3. Nations are learning in a new way how we are all interdependent and interconnected, and how we need one another. They know that they have to put aside geopolitical squabbles if they have to work together to develop medicines and vaccine for this, and save as many lives as possible. So also, the need for humane cooperation to make life on earth more livable.

4. The spirit of godlessness, irreligion, secularism and immorality has been on rapid increase in the world. Deriding faith in God as unscientific and foolish is common and in vogue. Could it be that because of this crisis, a lot of people in times of helplessness, agony and anxiety seek some power beyond them and turn to God?

Also, with the closing down of places of worship, many have come to realize that religiosity and rituals are in themselves no substitute for true spirituality.

5. Now we get to enjoy the small and simple things in life, so also, the ordinary things which in busy lives we missed. We eat simpler food which we learn as what is only necessary, cherish our environment, talk to neighbors over the fence, and appreciate colors, flowers and birds around. Now we do things such as, remembering highlights of old days, enjoying old photos and files, dreaming of our future and may be making definite goals, and learning new things about the use of internet, mobile, Zoom platform, and online business (as the world because of Covid-19 becomes more a virtual world.)

6. There have been several other collateral gains amidst losses. True, people go through serious adverse effects such as, the loss of jobs and livelihood of millions; growth in domestic violence as rise in the percentage of distress calls

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indicate; many prisoners being released by which there is an increase in thefts and crimes; and a surge of misinformation, fake news and pornography through internet. And others.

Yet, there have been several notable gains. Parties for weddings and anniversaries that normally had very large number of guests have become much smaller and wiser. With the absence of household helps all family members learn to do some chores at home—our women would like this good thing to continue. Drinking habit of many had stopped as liquor shops are closed—for their sake and of their families, we hope many of them will live free from drinking. People are learning to curtail unnecessary expenses as money is in short supply. Many volunteers have joy and satisfaction of selflessly helping those in dire needs, inspiring us to be more altruistic and follow their example—volunteers creating a precious social capital.

Also, there have been improved hygiene with all the hand washing, baths and better restroom etiquette; quitting the general habits of licking finger as we turn pages of newspaper or currency notes; preference of *Namaste* greeting over shaking hands; and significantly, much cleaner air and atmosphere everywhere.

As a new world order is emerging post-Covid, we earnestly hope a better world will develop from all this chaos we go through now— in spite of the weakening globalization (except for this global virus), rising populist nationalism and declining democracy globally.

MANAGING THIS CRISIS FOR OUR GAIN

It is adversities that make life truly richer and not riches and comforts. Suffering can produce good benefits. For most of us we are living in the worst of times. We need to find the best way to make the most of it. **We should not waste this crisis.**

With “stay-at-home” orders when weekdays and weekends look alike, office and home are merged, Sundays and the other days of the week are identical, and with no strict schedule to follow, what do we do with all the time at hand?

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Being driven in life with ‘the urgent’ we failed much too long to understand what is truly ‘the important’. What are some of ‘the important’ things?

1. Time to be honest before God—alone in his presence. Our integrity—the coherence between our real inner self and our appearance before others, our claims and our inner fears, our masks/attires and the real persons they cover. Let us take time to reconnect with ourselves, each one asking, “Who am I — who is the real me when nobody is looking except my Lord”.

2. Time to understand what is true religion. When opportunities of corporate worship are closed, we need to hear again, “Where two or three are gathered together I am in their midst”. Let us make no mistake, it is corporate worship that strengthens and sustains our faith, that is, provided that faith is there.

Without inner religion, religion becomes “opium of people”. Christian faith is primarily an inner reality without which corporate worship and outward rituals become a cop-out and escapism from the challenges of a personal bond with God through Christ—“a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim 3:5). Do we shelter ourselves from our spiritual vacuum by joining a crowd of worshippers?

3. Time for our families. In our earliest years of childhood, family was our only world. And in our last years, our world again becomes just our own families. Take time to cherish and nurture each one’s only real world. If our children and grandchildren grew up never having Sunday church worship, Sunday schools and religious activities, what would their faith be by just observing our lives and listening to our words? Let us ‘reconnect’ with our families, nuclear families and families at large.

4. Time to deepen our relationship with our Lord and strengthen our faith. This is a time we can obey his words, **“Be still and know that I am God.” To deepen our relationship with anyone, it takes time to be together: this is very much true in our relationship with our God.** We should develop a method of systematic study of God’s word, and not casual reading of it as our usual practice, but carefully listening to its message and knowing God closer. Learning the word of God is primarily by obeying it. Also, we need to spend much time in prayer, praying for the many critical needs relating to this pandemic.

5. Time to reach out to others who are aching. The comfort that we receive from “the Father of compassion and God of all comforts” can flow through us to those in trouble (2 Cor 1:3-4). This is a time to serve others through phones and online, while in a lockdown. Also, there will be opportunities to be of some service to those who cannot move around as we can. There are those who are not working and so without money and means of living.

“Fear is only natural in circumstances of crises. But our faith in our Lord should conquer our fear”

Whatever way we should be God’s instruments of help for others, let us be available to him.

6. Time to develop courage and hope to face our mortality. Death is an absolutely sure thing in life. The Easter event reminds us that this inevitable enemy should be seen as not having the last word. It appears as a snake, but one without any venom. Christ’s death and resurrection guarantees our resurrection to an indescribably glorious life forever (1 Cor 15).

GOD’S POWER, PRESENCE AND PROTECTION

The context of the very familiar Psalm 91 must have been some unusual disaster and pestilence. The metaphor used is of baby birds finding shelter under the wings of their mother bird. God is one who is very present with those who suffer. His protection is promised because of his faithfulness and love. From under his wings we get power to face tragedies. Engulfing the reality of our suffering is the greater reality of the loving presence and protection of God.

The very name of our Lord ‘Immanuel’ assures us that he stands with us in our pains and gives us his peace even when we do not understand what is happening to us and why.

The book of Job does not answer the problem of suffering, but it tells us where to go when we suffer—and have a renewed vision of God eclipsing our crises, and hear his voice.

Fear is only natural in circumstances of crises. But our faith in our Lord should conquer our fear. Our faith is that the almighty hands of God uphold us. “Underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut 33:27). The hands that created the world to start with, the hands that did marvelous miracles, the hands that stilled the storms in the Galilean sea, the hands that fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, the hands that healed the sick and raised the dead—those hands are around us and under us.

CONCLUSION

We live a broken and messy world. But this is God’s world. What is he up to, we should not be presumptuous to assume. Granted that the mess is created by us, our help should come from outside of us. Finally, are we learning that we cannot play the part of God?

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ATA begins a bi-weekly Virtual Prayer Gathering



The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a crisis that has wreaked havoc across the globe, sparing no one—and our member institutions are no exception. In response to that, ATA has been organizing bi-weekly Virtual Prayer Gatherings (VPG) in order to not only bring our concerns to the Lord as one community but also as an avenue for mutual encouragement.

Having begun last May 4, the bi-weekly VPG of ATA has brought together leaders from various member institutions from across the

globe. Each prayer gathering begins with a short update from represented regions followed by a short reflection. We've had Drs. Jason Hallig, Steve Pardue, Saphir Athyal, and Nerendra John share their reflections and each one served to encourage and also challenge the participants.

After each reflection, the large group gets into smaller groups to share their specific prayer concerns and pray for one another. After 15 minutes, each group gets back with the larger one to close in prayer and for announcements.

Each Virtual Prayer Gathering has been a rich and meaningful time for all those who have been attending. It has also been a great way to set our focus on the Lord, especially during this time of crisis and uncertainty. We hope that each one of you can join us every other Tuesday* at 4pm, PHT (UTC + 8) for a time of prayer, fellowship, and mutual encouragement.

**invites to join are sent out via email. ♦*



COVID-19: THE POWER OF PRAYER

By Dr. Jason Hallig

Faculty, AGST Philippines and
Co-Moderator, A•CROSS



ORDINARY MEN AND WOMEN, NOBLE ones, and the leaders of almost all countries call on everyone to engage in prayer. Covid-19 has reached the pandemic level. Apparently we are in need of help beyond ourselves. We are tired, the work is heavy, our resources are depleting, and many are down and discouraged. Everybody is worried about their daily needs. Financial assistance and relief goods are hard to find. We fear that we might not only battle COVID-19, but we might end up

struggling with another economic crisis and consequently fight for our lives due to lack of food and other basic supplies.

The Bible commands us not to worry but to pray. The Lord's Prayer is a beautiful and powerful model of prayer (Mt. 6:9-13):

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
Amen!

Why should we pray? Isn't prayer just a ritual we do in the church? Isn't it a religious formality of life at least once a week for a God-believing-and-fearing person? The Christian adage states that, "Prayer changes things." In the same spirit, John Wesley penned the words: "God does nothing but in answer to prayer." Covid-19 is not outside the power of prayer.

The power of prayer is anchored in three spiritual truths. First, God is behind prayer. The Bible sees God as

PERSONAL. He is transcendent, but not distant. Faith in God is anchored in our experience of Him. We believe because we experience. God reveals Himself to us not only as the holy God, but also as the loving Father (Ps. 68:5-6). As a child asks his/her father for help, so we pray (Mt. 6:8).

Second, God is the God of PROMISE. Not only does He promise to hear and listen to our prayers (Lam. 3:55-56; Isaiah 65:42), He also promises to do something: "If my people will humble themselves and pray, I will forgive their sins and heal their land..." (2 Chron. 7:14).

And third, Prayer affirms that with God nothing is impossible (Mt. 19:26). With His POWER, He can change things. He can make things happen (Gen. 18:14). He commands the winds and the waves, and they obey. Covid-19 is likewise under His power. In His mercy, He can make it stop. In His justice, He can make it wreak a havoc on us. Of course, we pray for mercy, yet not our will but His be done.

Prayer is not about our will, but about God's will. Prayer places us in the center of God's will. Hence, when we pray we leave Covid-19 in the wisdom and righteousness of God. ♦

PRAYER CORNER

Let us praise God...

...for the wisdom He has given ATA and its member institutions to navigate and shape the new normal for our respective communities.

...that the virtual prayer gatherings and webinars have all been very well received by the community.

... for the continued protection and provision.

Please pray with us...

...for member institutions affected in every aspect of their institution's life (financial, operational, etc) by the COVID-19 crisis.

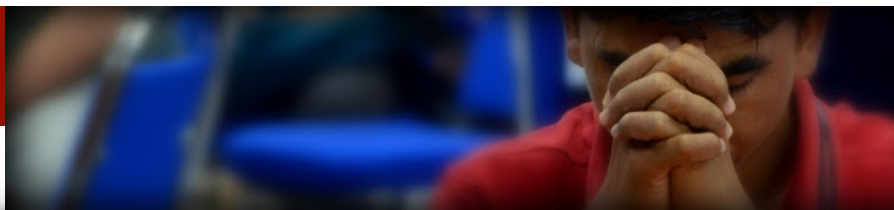
...for continued creativity in coming alongside member institutions during this time.

...that we will be faithful to embrace all that God is teaching us during this season.

...for God's wisdom upon all world leaders as they shape the new normal for the people under their care.

...that God will bring healing and put a halt to the spread of COVID-19.

...for justice and righteousness to prevail during this time of global turmoil and unrest.



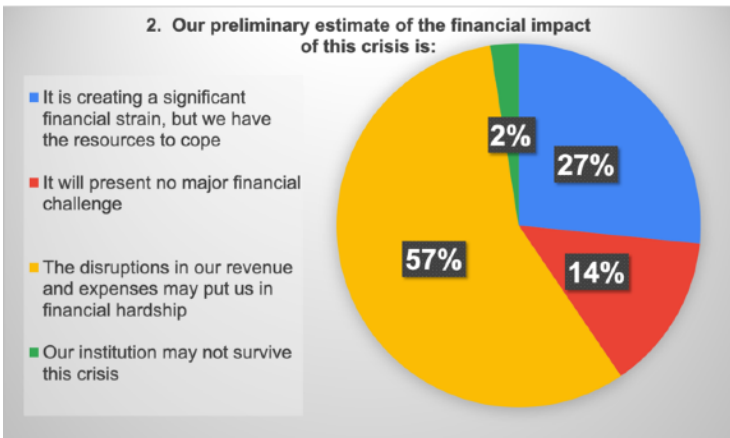
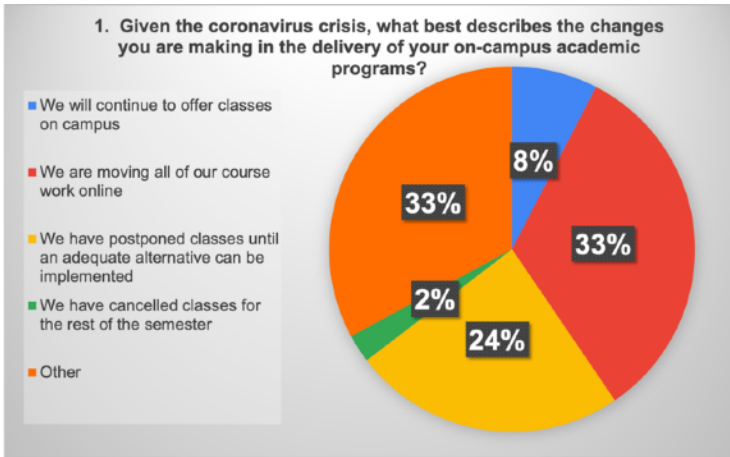
Responding to the Times

Late last March, we at ATA sent out a survey to our member schools in response to the crisis caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. Our goal was not just to find out how our member institutions were doing and adapting but also to be able to effectively come alongside them. The survey questions were adapted from the survey written by our sister organization, the Association of Biblical Higher Education (ABHE).

A total of 77 leaders, from 74 institutions and 20 countries responded to questions on how their institutions have been impacted by the crisis and how ATA can be of help, support, and encouragement.

The responses to the questions are as follows:

Given the corona virus crisis, what best describes the changes you are making in the delivery of your on-campus academic programs?



Majority of the institutions have decided to move all classes online, though there are still exceedingly small percentages of institutions that have opted otherwise- which was either to just cancel classes for the rest of the semester or continue conducting classes on campus. On the other hand, there are institutions that have opted to put their operations on hold, postponing classes until an alternative can be implemented.

What is your preliminary estimate of the financial impact of the crisis?

As seen in the above, major disruptions have taken place in the operations of every single theological institution. So, given that, financial concerns hover over. In fact, majority of institutions who responded project that the crisis will cause them to plummet into financial hardships and, sadly, a small percentage project that their institution may not even survive the crunch.

Do you have any special need in any specific area?

As with every crisis, special needs surface and each of the respondents gave their share. Yet even with the diverse answers, common themes run through. To begin with, given the projected financial strains brought about by the disruptions in the operations of most member schools, it does not come as a surprise that finances would be a theme running throughout the answers given by respondents. In conjunction to that, most institutions put forth their concern on how to get enrollees during this season. Another common theme that runs throughout the answers can be classified under the umbrella we can call "online concerns". The COVID-19 pandemic forced most, if not all, institutions to suddenly shift to online learning- and many have found themselves unprepared and left with so many questions and concerns. These concerns are as follows: (1) The hows of going teaching course using this platform; (2) developing curriculum for online courses; and (3) the library.

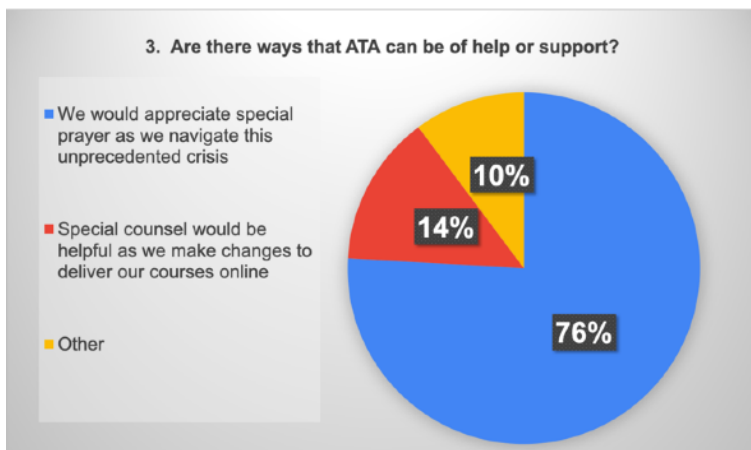
How could your institution be of special help or encouragement to other institutions?

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has opened the doors of opportunity for solidarity among institutions. While all are affected one way or another, every single institution can still be a source of encouragement and support to another. As with the needs presented by each institution, the ways by which each institution can be of help to another is diverse, and yet a common theme runs through. Majority offered to give prayer support for other institutions. While there are institutions who do need help with regards to shifting courses online as seen in the above, there are a few who, on the other hand, are willing to share their experiences. Indeed, there is no institution that is so destitute that it can no longer reach out to help. Each one can, at the very least, reach out and support another through prayer.

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Are there ways that ATA can be of help or support?



And finally, with regards to how ATA can be of help and support, most if not all respondents requested for PRAYER. Additionally, several member institutions said that it would be immensely helpful for them to have shared resources along with the sharing of best practices. So, in response to that, ATA began organizing a bi-weekly Virtual Prayer Gathering (VPG) and webinar series. The VPG began last May 4 and the series of webinars began last May 5 and has since then been blessing to so many.

There is no question that the COVID-19 crisis has wreaked havoc across the world, with no one sector of society left unscathed. Yet even so, we have hope and can find comfort in the fact that we are not going through this alone. We, as a community, are in this together and ATA is committed to doing its best to encourage, support, and be of help to its member institutions. ♦

From page 3, *Making the Most of the Worst of Times*

We cannot afford to have a world of power without principles, governance without accountability, knowledge without the wisdom to use it, science without compassion, and relationships without self-sacrifice. When will we learn, if not in this crisis, that life is very fragile, and that a person without God is only an animal that lives, eats, reproduces and dies?

When this pandemic is leveling all of us globally, nationally and locally, we need to learn, how painfully it might be, that finally we are all mere humans, one interdependent people needing every one, small and great, to make our life together possible.

If we do not relearn this lesson this time, we have 'wasted' this crisis and have lost a big chance of becoming humans as God intended us to be—reconnected in mutual justice and selfless love to the Almighty and to one another

regardless of nationality, gender, religion and class. God has provided a way for this in and through Jesus Christ, if only unconditionally we submit to him as our Savior and owner, and receive his embrace.

Oh, our Sovereign God! Have mercy on us and help us to totally surrender our lives to you and to obediently respond to your offer of "life in its fullness". Amen!

— April, 2020

**Dr Saphir Athyal, (Ph.D. cum laude from Princeton) was formerly the Principal of Union Biblical Seminary, Pune; Director of 'Faith & Development' with World Vision International; Vice-chairman of the Lausanne Movement; and Founder-Chairman of Asia Theological Association. He is a well-known speaker and author/ editor of several books. ♦*

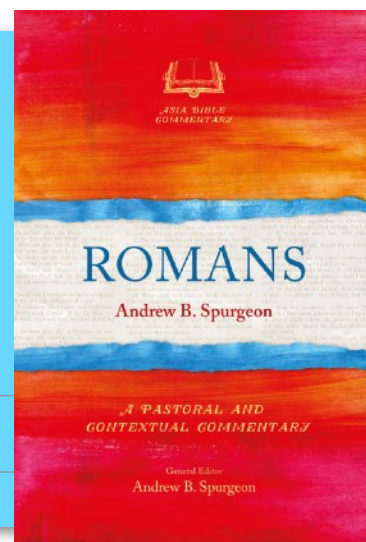
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The ATA Webinar Series

COVID-19 has changed the landscape for many sectors of society with just a snap of the finger. With the sudden and drastic change, many are left feeling their way through this new landscape. The field of Theological Education has not been spared from this reality and from navigating itself through a new landscape. In response to this, ATA has begun organizing a series of webinars to come alongside its member institutions.

The first webinar was on the topic “Theological Education during and after COVID-19”. This webinar was streamed live via Facebook last 05 May 2020, 4pm PHT (UTC+8), with resource persons representing different theological institutions from across Asia. The resource persons who shared their insights and experiences and the experiences of their institution were as follows:

Dr. Andreas Himawan - ATA Chairperson; former president, Amanat Agung Theological Seminary, Indonesia

Dr. Jessy Jason - Director of Research and Advancement at the New India Bible Seminary, Kerala

Mr. Shaiju Thomas - Dean, Global School of Open Learning at the Center for Global Leadership Development, Bangalore

Dr. Victor Lee - President, Bible College of Malaysia

Dr. Yushiuki Nishioka - Regional Secretary, ATA Japan; Academic Dean, Tokyo Bible Seminary

This webinar has reached 15,926 people with 9.1k views as of June 5, 2020.

If you want to watch it, whether for the first time or as review, please visit the following links:

ATA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AsiaTheologicalAssociation/videos/233517501196823/>

ATA Website: <https://www.ataasia.com/webinar-on-theological-education-during-and-after-covid-19/>

Online learning

ATA’s second webinar was streamed lived last May 19, 4pm PHT and it was entitled Online Learning. This webinar served as a follow up to the first one and served to address the



Theological Education During and After COVID- 19



Online learning

Having been streamed live on Facebook, these webinars have become an avenue for rich discussions among people in the field of Theological Education. Comments and questions came in real time and opened the door for interaction between the resource persons and ATA community. The webinars have been hosted and moderated by Drs. Theresa Lua (ATA General Secretary) and Paul Cornelius (Regional Secretary, India).

Theological Education During and After COVID- 19

Dr. Samuel Law - Senior Dean of Academic Affairs, Singapore Bible College

Dr. Joanna Soberano - Southeast Asia Regional Director, Overseas Council; Academic Dean, Asian Theological Seminary, Philippines

Dr. Qaiser Julius - Director, Open Theological Seminary, Pakistan

Dr. Ivor Poobalan - Principal, Colombo Theological Seminary, Sri Lanka

Dr. Dong Chan Seo - Regional Secretary, ATA Korea; Academic Dean, Korea University of International Studies

questions put forth regarding the said topic. The webinar tackled the different aspects of online learning, the educational rationale, elements in designing online courses, as well as the resources and technical and support skills needed to run a good online program. It likewise addressed some concerns related to holistic formation of students, assessment of student learning, along with issues in quality assurance. To make the webinar more interesting, the resource persons, whose names are enumerated below

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shared their institutions' journey in using this platform:

Dr. Marvin Oxenham- General Secretary of the European Council for Theological Education and Director of the ICETE Academy.

Dr. Havilah Dharamraj -Head of the Department of Biblical Studies and former Academic Dean at the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) in Bangalore, India.

Prof. Ronnie Poon Shi-kai- Associate Professor of Biblical Studies and Director of Online Theology Program at the Alliance Bible Seminary (ABS) in Hong Kong.

Dr. Jean Lee-Dean and Abundant Grace Associate Professor (Theological Studies) at the China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong.

Mr. Jacob Li-Resident Faculty at the East Asia School of Theology in Singapore.

As of June 3, this webinar has reached 12,019 people with 6.7k views.

If you want to watch it, whether for the first time or as review, please visit the following links:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AsiaTheologicalAssociation/videos/547189872893179/>

ATA Website: <https://www.ataasia.com/webinar-on-online-learning/>

Good Practice in Situations with Limited Connectivity

The third webinar was streamed last June 2, 4pm PHT and was entitled "Good Practice in Situations with Limited connectivity". While online learning has become a viable solution to the problems caused by social distancing measures, it leaves those who have limited access to the internet behind. This is the issue that this webinar seeks to address and focused on good practice in terms of (1) the big picture of instructional design, which is important whatever the delivery system; (2) TEE as an example of an approach to Theological Education; and (3) non-digital modes of learning. The following



Good Practice in Situations with Limited Connectivity

served as resource persons for the webinar:

Rev Dr Graham Aylett- Associate General Secretary (and General Secretary-elect) for Increase. He is also vice-Chair of the Trustees of SEAN International, and on the Commission for Accreditation and Educational Development of the Asia Theological Association.

Dr. Finny Philip- Principal of the Filadelfia Bible College in North India. He also serves as Mission Director for the Filadelfia Fellowship Church of India, Pastor at Rajasthan Pentecostal Church, and member of the International Board of the Lausanne Movement.

Dr. Samuel Sidjabat- President of Tyrannus Biblical Seminary in Bandung, Indonesia. He is the Chairperson of the ATA Publications Committee and is a Member of the ATA Board. He is also the Chairman of the Association of Evangelical Theological Seminaries in Indonesia.

Rev. Wailes Rangsa- Principal of the College of Christian Theology Bangladesh (CCTB) since June 2019.

Rev. Victor Sadek -Executive Director of the Program for Theological Education by Extension (PTEE) in Jordan since

December 2019. For the past 25 years, Victor served as a pastor in the Evangelical Church of the German Mission in Aswan, Egypt.

This webinar has reached 3,418 people with 1.4k views as of June 5.

If you want to watch it, whether for the first time or as review, please visit the following links:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AsiaTheologicalAssociation/videos/248831352878671/>

ATA Website: <https://www.ataasia.com/good-practice-in-situations-with-limited-connectivity/>

The leaders and staff of ATA have been blessed and encouraged to know that the webinars have thus far been well received by the community. Rest assured, the team is working hard at coming along side our member institutions especially during this time of crisis and uncertainty as best as we can. The ATA community can definitely look forward to a webinar every two weeks to address pressing issues and needs in theological education during this season. So, please do stay tuned. ♦

Praise for the ATA Webinar series

The webinars have been well received by the ATA community. In fact, there were a number of positive comments from the online community, some of which are as follows:

Theological Education During and After COVID- 19

Thank you, ATA, for the wonderful discussion on the pressing issue. Thank you all the resource persons for your valuable contributions.~Rajendren Johnson

Thank you for opening this discussion for us to have a future glimpse of theological education!~ Mejie Constantino

Great sharing and discussions, appreciate the initiatives. ~ Lily Hsieh

Thank you Dr Lua and ATA for the webinar. Good to know how COVID impacts the seminaries in Asia~ Joseph Tan

Thank you ATA for hosting this. Looking forward to thr next fb live.~ Edward Neil Benavidez

Online learning

Thank you very much for this webinar. Looking forward to more~ Ernie Aragon

This is so good, just in time for everyone of us. Thank you ATA.~ Siew Qin

Thank you for answering my query awhile ago. This webinar is very helpful and encouraging. Thanks ATA for organizing this.~ Mrv Mau

Thank you ATA for this enriching conversation!! ~ Mithun Borde

Thanks, ATA! Stimulating and encouraging discussion.~ Hermie Baldoza

Thank you Asia Theological Association (ATA) for another excellent webinar! Such a timely topic for many of us who are struggling to figure out the best way forward. Much appreciated! ~ Richard G. Hutchison

Great to see ATA team coming together with their creative ideas towards a relevancy of theological education in the context of Corona epidemics.~Hruda Ranjan Lohora

Thank you ATA for your initiative in the furtherance of a quality theo educ in these pandemic times. ~ Amor Chavez Ibanez

Good Practice in Situations with Limited Connectivity

Thank you for this informative collaborative webinar.~ Shereen Salameh Karadsheh

So glad to listen to the panelists as we together imagine the new normal with our calling, with our churches.~ Jessy Jaison

Glad to hear your strategic responses to the coronavirus challenge in your area Finney. Creative and careful. Terrific. ~Judithlan Payne

Thank you to all the speakers. We learned a lot.~ Doreen Alcoran Benavidez-Edwardneil Benavidez

What a helpful and inspiring presentation. Thank you! ~Rachel Green

EMBODYING THEOLOGY IN A COVID-19

Embodying Theology in a COVID-19 Quarantine Center - Oriental Theological Seminary, Dimapur, Nagaland, India

Across the globe, the fight against COVID-19 has led government leaders to lock their countries down, a measure

that has led to countless migrant workers to return to their hometowns and villages. India is one of those that adopted this as their strategy to contain the spread of COVID-19. This measure, while thought to curb the spread of the virus, has also brought about immeasurable problems upon its migrant workers across all its states. Quarantine facilities for those returning home were insufficient and sources for testing and treatment of those tested positive with the virus are scare. No state was spared and Nagaland, a state of roughly 2 million people, is no exception.

Weighting the enormous need of the context, Oriental Theological

Seminary (OTS), offered the government of Nagaland its two most significant spaces- the chapel and the administrative complex- to host the returnees for observation under quarantine. Within a fortnight, the Seminary community converted our campus into a hundred bedded institutional quarantine facility. Presently, OTS center has 83 persons under her care.

The decision to temporarily convert the facility at OTS as a quarantine center is an extraordinary step taken by the seminary community. Given the fear and stigma of the pandemic of Covid-19, our first challenge was from our well-wishers of OTS who termed our

Continued on the next page

decision as impulsive, even foolish. Furthermore, our limited resources (financial human, infrastructure) and lack of professional training in managing a pandemic situation offered us many convincing reasons to opt out of this situational calling. But in what we lacked, we more than made up for it with our willing spirit that was fully committed to place OTS as an ecclesia in the center of the pandemic. The entire OTS community, including 20 stranded students are sacrificially taking turns round the clock to serve the quarantined inmates at OTS.

Despite the government's efforts in providing needed support their assistance does not add up to even a quarter of the requirement for running the quarantine center. The faculty, staff, and our own families have solicited help from our personal social circles to provide gloves, masks, sanitizers, toiletries etc. Scholar Leaders International and its partners have come heavily to assist us as well. Churches and villagers from the vicinity of OTS have also provided us with vegetables and dry rations on several occasions to aid our food supply. All these acts of generosity continue to boost the morale of our community and enable us to see the visible hand of God at work in our midst.

When we first committed to this cause, we knew that we were risking ourselves, our families, and even the extended members of the community by becoming vulnerable and exposed



to the probability of the infection (especially in the face of insufficient medical safety equipment). Despite these risk factors, our faith in God called out loudly to respond and serve our people during this difficult time. We choose to do this, believing that Jesus Christ was calling our community to serve as a channel of healing and comfort.

For a small community like OTS, responding to such a colossal task provides us experiences of setbacks,

challenges and lessons on a daily basis, nonetheless, we have also gained much in the deepening of our relationship as a team, coupled with the generous acts of grace and kindness that continues to pour in from many corners of our local communities. We covet and solicit your prayers as we continue to engage during this unprecedented times to serve our living God by reaching out to our brothers and sisters. ♦

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