



## UNHINDERED

By: Dr. Sooi Ling Tan

Dean of AGST Alliance/Presiding Dean, AGST Council



*“Unhindered:”* This is the last word from Luke in the book of Acts, profoundly describing the unrestrained freedom experienced in preaching and teaching the Kingdom of God despite being hampered by physical restraints. It accentuates the boundless, unstoppable, unrestricted nature and potency of the Kingdom of God. Similarly Paul recognizes that while he is physically in chains, the word of God is not bound (2 Tim 2:9) and possesses an inherent power to accomplish its purpose. Such is the nature of this pulsating and vibrant gospel that we are all called to be stewards of.

*“Unhindered:”* Sadly this has been contrary to our own experience of limitations over the last year: pandemic restrictions, movement controls, classroom limits, and political upheavals and controls. I am currently teaching a class with students living in urban as well as rural areas. For those in rural areas, they drift in and out of zoom sessions. I keep getting text messages: “The wind is too strong,”... “there’s heavy rain,”... “Teacher, we are... cut off.” Indeed, “cut off” aptly summarizes our current experiences.

In Rome, Paul experienced being “cut off,” as his movements were largely restricted. His usual modes of teaching, traveling, visiting churches and preaching long sermons had ended. Likewise for many of us, we mourn the derailment of our wonderfully crafted plans for the academic year and the ambitious projects in 2020. We lament the inability to travel and to engage in the “usual” things for “effectiveness.” A striking example is how VET

visits in ATA have been postponed and only slowly regaining momentum today.

However despite these constraints, our hope is anchored on the truth that the essence of what we are stewards of is not and cannot be bound. Paul experienced that liberty as he creatively used different modes of communication, pastoring and mentoring. His pastoral letters written during that time remain timeless masterpieces.

In the same way, for the ATA family, it is encouraging to know that learning is not bound. It takes place unhindered albeit using different delivery modes. Teaching and learning moments are plentiful during this pandemic. Theological reflection thrives with rigor as our community wrestles with current realities. Spirituality flourishes, spurred on by the enforced reality that we have to literally stop and listen, in solitude, silence and meditation. Service for others overflow as the Christian community faithfully and concretely demonstrate God’s love and care for the needy in innovative ways. Priorities are reordered with family, friends and relationships taking precedence.

Let me conclude with this quote by Father Richard Rohr. “Faith does not need to push the river. Because faith is able to trust that there is a river. The river is flowing. We are in it.” This is the firm hope we have. There is a river flowing through our location, our churches and our institutions. Let us go with the flow. Our prayer is that we are able to discern the shifts in currents, to embrace the required changes and to creatively innovate as we move forward. ♦

# UNHINDERED AND UNRESTRICTED: REJOICING OVER GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN 2020

Last February 4 & 5, the Executive board of the Asia Theological Association had its annual meetings held via zoom. And if there was one sure thing that everyone agreed on, it was that 2020 was one challenging year! But amid the challenges, no one could deny seeing our faithful God at work. In a year that was filled with disruptions and plans put to a halt, we have seen how our God remained unhindered and unrestricted by anything, not even a global pandemic.

## He brought us to new horizons

There is no doubt that most of the activities we undertake as a ministry have been put to a halt in 2020. After the pandemic was declared, accreditation visits were put to a halt, the theological consultation was postponed, and in person meetings were moved online. But as these doors closed, God opened new ones and brought us to new horizons, none of which were in the plan when 2020 began. Yes, in a year filled with difficulties and challenges, God led us to do things we never did before- and were met with success!

Another new endeavour we undertook last year was our bi-weekly Virtual Prayer Gathering. These Virtual Prayer Gatherings were organized not only to bring our concerns to the Lord as one community but also as an avenue for mutual encouragement. Short reflections were shared by different leaders- both young and seasoned- to spur us on during these challenging times. Joining us in those prayer gatherings were leaders from different member institutions from across the globe- and this allowed for us to receive updates and prayer requests from various regions.

Both the webinar series and the Virtual Prayer gatherings were held from May up until July.

The third new endeavour was our online 50th anniversary celebration with the theme "Towards a mature Church: Celebrating God's faithfulness". The pandemic may have prevented all the planned celebrations both on a regional and Asia-wide level, but it did not prevent us from celebrating this significant milestone. While celebrating online was far from what we had in mind, we found that it was equally rich. It likewise allowed more people from different parts of the globe to celebrate this momentous occasion with us. We received a lot of positive feedback from the online celebration and our hearts are encouraged! We continued to celebrate our golden year through the last quarter issue of the ATA news, as you may have seen and read, and through the joint issue of the Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology (JAET) and the Journal of Asian Missions (JAM).

We praise God for these open doors- doors we never have imagined opening to us!



The ATA Executive Board

And one of those things is our Webinar series. The objective of the webinar series is to come alongside our member institutions and help them navigate this "new normal". These webinars were streamed live on Facebook and because that was so, we had comments and questions to come in real time. This further allowed for real time engagement between the resource persons and the ATA community online. All the webinars were hosted by Drs. Paul Cornelius and Theresa Lua and had various resource persons share their expertise on various topics.



The ATA Board and staff during the board meeting

## God continues to grow the ministry!

With the downsizing of economies worldwide, it's natural not to expect any growth in the organization of ATA. But God exceeds all our expectations. Amid the difficulties of 2020, God added 9 new Associate members to our community,

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most of them from the west. Our 9 new members in 2020 are:

1. Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary of the East (New York, USA)
2. Houston Bible Seminary (Texas, USA)
3. Tao- Sheng Theological Seminary (Taiwan)
4. The New International University (Washington, USA)
5. ITEE University (Illinois, USA)
6. Virginia Christian University (VA, USA)
7. Believers Church Theological Seminary (Myanmar)
8. Sarwangin Aguwa Nirman Kendra (Center for Wholistic Leadership Development, Nepal)
9. Teleo University (Minneapolis, USA)

With the 9 new members, the ATA Community is now composed of 361 members from 33 countries. God is indeed faithful to grow this ministry, His ministry!

### Shaping new norms in accreditation

The first quarter of 2020 was business as usual. ATA sent out Visiting Evaluation Teams to 6 institutions in 5 different countries in those three months. But when the pandemic was declared and borders were closed, there was no other choice but to postpone the remaining scheduled visits. But as schools shifted to online learning, there was a need for accrediting bodies to follow suit. To come alongside accrediting bodies in this challenge, ICETE and the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) organized a webinar on Online Site Visits. Drs. Theresa Lua, Paul Cornelius, Jonathan Ro, and Arren Bennet Lawrence participated in the said webinar. As a result, the Guidelines on Online Site Visit (OSV) has been prepared to guide the institutions and the Visiting Evaluation Team (VET). An OSV has already been done in institutions in India, Singapore, and Jordan. More OSVs have been lined up in the coming months.

But apart from creating a document on guidelines for onsite visits, the revision of the accreditation manual has finally been completed! The revised manual has gained the approval of the CAED and the executive board and is ready to be used to better serve our member institutions! (For more on this, please see page 6 for the full article.)

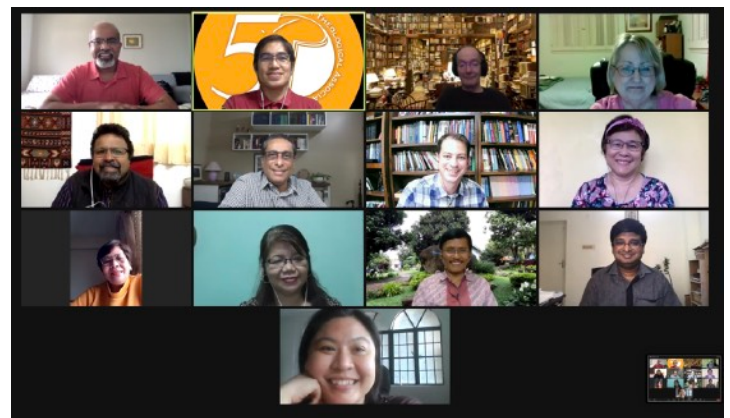
### Waiting, trusting

While God has allowed us to flourish in new spaces in the year that went by, there are still some areas of the ministry that are left hanging- areas that have given us the opportunity to stretch our faith and just really trust God and his ways.

One area of the ministry that has been left hanging is our GATE workshops. All GATE workshops except for the



Commission on Accreditation And Educational Development (CAED)



Publications Committee



AGST Council

year 3 workshop in Nepal held last January 29-32, were postponed. While, as with majority of activities, going online seems to be an alternative, several significant challenges make it less of a viable option. The following challenges were identified during the meetings of the GATE Global Team held via zoom: (1) maintaining the GATE philosophy and ethos that leads to transformational learning; (2) the accessibility and availability of an internet connection,

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whether via Wi-Fi or data, for majority of the participants; (3) during this time of crisis, most institutions have their focus on how to continue offering their educational programs as against faculty development- which in turn could lead to significantly fewer participants; (4) lastly, which must be the biggest concern, is the time required to develop a curriculum suited for online platforms. We do hope and pray for the possibility of being able to meet physically again to materialize towards the end of the year, but for now we wait in trust.

Another area of ministry that is left hanging is our Vital Sustainability Initiative (VSI) processes in different parts of Asia. In India, the third segment of the VSI process, related to Financial Integration, had to be cancelled, although the VSI team have been engaging with the 4 institutions, keeping the conversation going and are hopeful that they will be able to wrap things up in the upcoming months. On the other hand, in Southeast Asia, it is the start of the process among select institutions that has been put on hold.

And finally, we have our Theological Consultation on "Ethics in Asian Societies: A conversation". We immediately

moved to postpone the consultation as soon as the pandemic was declared. But given the rate of inoculation against COVID-19, it does not seem feasible to gather in person this year. But we do hope that we can possibly have a sort of hybrid for the said event- part of it done online this year and part of it during the General Assembly next year.

Please pray for us as we seek God's guidance and timing for these hung-up ministries.

### **We step forward in confidence.**

The pandemic has made clear to us that nothing can hinder God from pursuing His purposes for us and His ministry. While not minimizing the pain and the suffering brought about by the ongoing pandemic, we celebrate what the Lord has done, how He has been faithful, and how He works unhindered and unstoppable. It is Him on whom we place our confidence as we move forward to a future filled with uncertainty. ♦

## PRAYER CORNER



# Pray for Myanmar

Over the past few weeks, the situation in Myanmar has been filling the news. The recent military coup, the protests, unrest, and bloodshed has grieved our hearts and we cry out to the Lord for the nation of Myanmar. During this tumultuous time in the life of the nation of Myanmar, we want to stand with our member institutions, both accredited and associate: Myanmar Evangelical Graduate school of Theology (MEGST) and Bethany Theological Seminary (BTS); Believers Church Theological Seminary and Myanmar Christian Preachers Training College.

Let us lift the nation of Myanmar up to the Lord.

Please pray...

- ...for peace and reconciliation to prevail.
- ...for the political situation, leaders, military, and insurgent groups.
- ...for internally displaced persons who are facing difficult times.
- ...for safety, strength, wisdom, and hope for believers.
- ...for the security of our member schools along with other organizations and individuals working in the country.
- ...for Christian witness to flourish during these tumultuous times.



Asia Theological Association  
Asia Graduate School of Theology

# ASIA NEW SCHOLARS RESOURCES WEBINAR

March 30, 2021  
4pm-5:45pm  
Philippine Time

LIVE



<https://www.facebook.com/AsiaTheologicalAssociation>

<https://www.youtube.com/AsiaTheologicalAssociation>



## PRESENTER 1

**Dr Jimmy Jiamah V. Adil Jr, D Intercultural Studies  
(AGST Phiippines, Asian Theological Seminary)**  
**Worldview, Aspirations, Folkways, and Perceptions of The  
Maguindanaoans : Promising Pathways for the Christian Mission**

*Dr. Jimmy V. Adil, Jr. is currently the Adventist Mission Director of the South Philippine Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists. He is an ordained pastor, and is a Registered Guidance Counselor.*



## PRESENTER 2

**Dr Lau Ying Kheng, EdD (AGST Alliance)**  
**Encouraging Singaporean Seminary Students to Use Reflexivity  
in their Ministry Practice**

*Dr Lau Ying Kheng serves at the East Asia School of Theology (EAST), Singapore where she teaches "Research and Writing" and "Soul Care", and guides students in ministry practicum as Field Education Director. She is active in teaching lay people as well as mission workers in East Asia, India, and Indo China on topics like "Margin", "Soul Care", and "Inner Life."*



## PRESENTER 3

**Dr Villo Naleo (PHD in Peace Studies)**  
**(AGST Philippines, International Graduate School of Leadership)**  
**From Humiliation to Christlike Humility:  
A Phenomenological-Theological Study on the Naga Experiences  
of British Colonialism, American Western Christianity, and Indian  
Political Statehood**

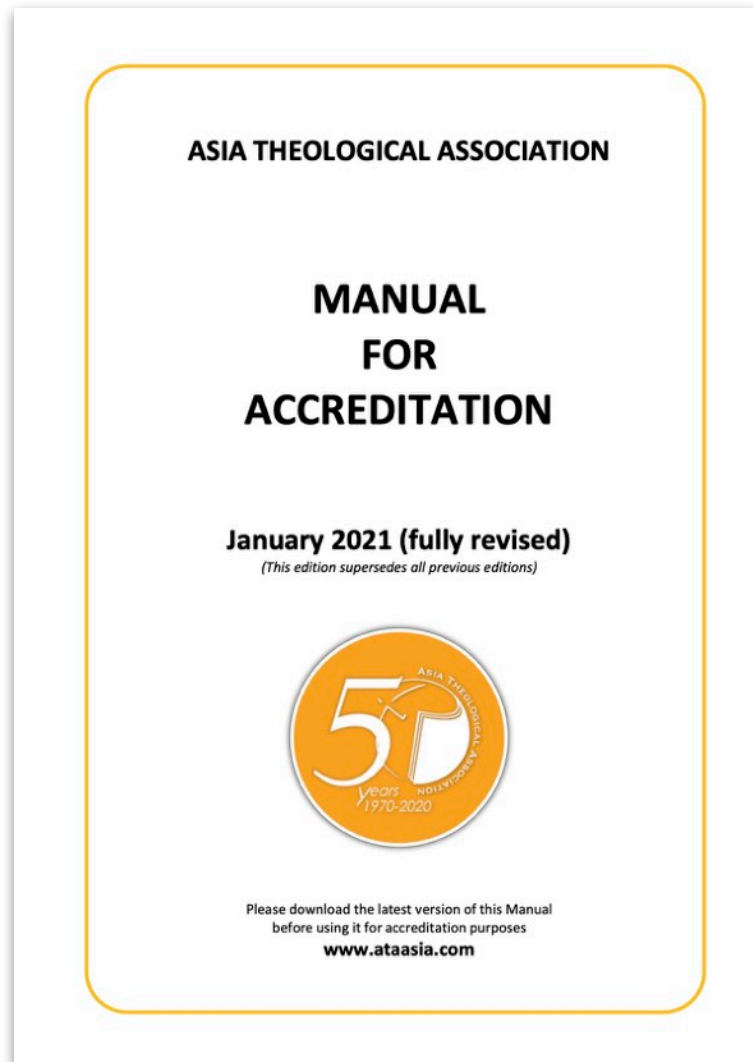
*Dr. Villo Naleo is an Assistant Professor at Shalom Bible Seminary, Kohima, Nagaland where he teaches Peacemaking, Theology and Ethics.*

# THE NEWLY REVISED ACCREDITATION MANUAL

The CAED, particularly the revisions committee, has completed a two-year process of comprehensive review and improvement, for what has become the most significant revision of the ATA Manual ever! Last February 6, 2021, the ATA board, during the annual meeting, approved the revised accreditation manual.

Among the main revision highlights are the following:

- incorporates the ICETE Standards and Guidelines for Global Evangelical Theological Education (SG-GETE)
- articulates ATA's view of the task of Theological Education, along with our philosophy and approach to accreditation.
- provides clearer and more detailed explanations of ATA accreditation procedures and policies
- ATA's emphasis upon holistic learning and holistic integration has been strengthened, with holistic integration defined further as whole-life discipleship.
- recognizes that institutions now utilize up to six (6) different categories or types of educators to offer 21st Century education
- additional quality measures and standards for Online Learning
- offers a flexible Credit Unit based on learning hours, which allows for 21st Century education practices.
- a new policy on the Recognition of Previous Learning and on Credit Transfer
- a completely new Self-Study Report Questionnaire based on the expanded Quality Measures and Standards, to allow institutions to share and demonstrate how they are



responding to and complying with each of ATA Quality Measures and Standards.

- the Stakeholder Study is now renamed as a “Stakeholder and Institutional Impact Assessment,” to allow institutions to seek and respond to stakeholder feedback about the IMPACT that institutions, programs and graduates are having in the churches and wider society.

This newly Revised Accreditation Manual was recently circulated via email and we, at ATA, hope to go through the changes with you. Additionally, we also want to give you the space to air your questions on this newly revised accreditation manual. So, we've organized a webinar wholly dedicated to that.

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## Webinar on NEW ATA Manual

**Facilitators:** Drs. Graham Aylett, Rick Weymouth, Paul Cornelius, Ronnie Poon, Jonathan Ro, and Theresa Lua

**Participants:** Presidents, Academic Deans, and Accreditation Coordinators

**Dates:** This webinar which will be held on four different dates. You may choose one according to your availability and convenience. The available dates for the webinar are as follows:

April 12 (Monday), 4pm, PST  
April 14 (Wednesday) 4pm, PST  
Deadline for registration: April 7

**For Schools in India and Nepal:**

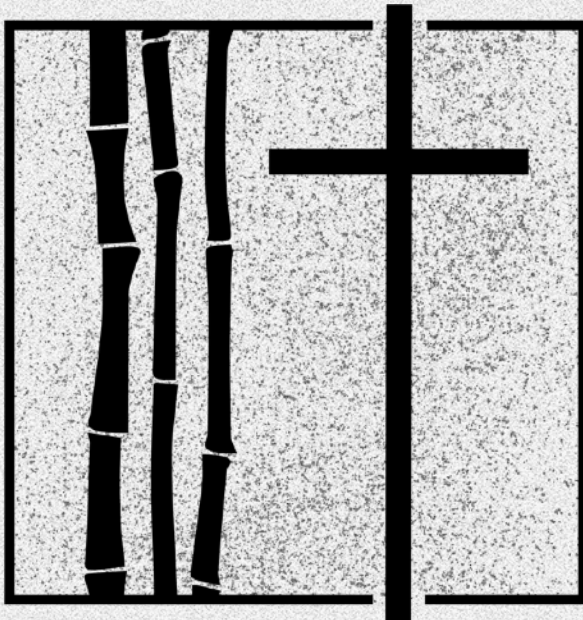
April 19 (Monday), 1:30, IST  
April 21 (Wednesday), 1:30, IST  
Deadline for registration: April 14

Each webinar is limited to 200 participants, so please do register early.

Should you wish to attend, kindly register through the following link: <http://bit.ly/2OFcal2> . Or you may use the QR code below:



Looking forward to seeing you then! ◆



## Conversations on Asian Christian Ethics

(2021 ATA Theological Consultation Webinars)

THURSDAYS, 4:00PM TO 5:15PM  
PHILIPPINE TIME  
SEPTEMBER 9, 16, 23, 30.

# PARTNERS IN SERVING THE GLOBAL CHURCH

It is with great pride and joy that we would like to announce that our very own Dr. Theresa Lua has been appointed as Director of Global Theology, and in that capacity will be part of the Senior Leadership Team of the World Evangelical Alliance. She will succeed Bp. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher who was also recently inducted as Secretary General and CEO of WEA last February 27. Dr. Lua was appointed to this position last March 01, 2021 but even so she will continue to serve as the General Secretary of ATA.

Dr. Lua says of her appointment, “I consider it a great privilege to be appointed as Director of the Global Theology Department of WEA. I accepted this role with the full support of the ATA Board knowing that ATA and WEA will be partners in serving the global body of Christ.” She adds further, “I envision a Global Theology Department that facilitates a greater regional and global collaboration in addressing the theological concerns of the Church today and in meeting the need for adequately trained pastors and workers. We will work at implementing and complementing all available tools and ways of theological education through the different training networks in WEA.”

The leaders of WEA are excited to have Dr. Lua serving on their team. In fact, Bishop Tendero, former WEA



Secretary General and CEO, and now its Global Ambassador, comments, “...as evangelicals, the Bible and theology are core to everything we do. And with Theresa, the department will be led by someone whose life has been marked by deep theological reflection coupled with a desire to practically apply our faith and conviction to everyday life.”

Let us, as one community, remember to pray for Dr. Lua as she serves both through ATA and WEA. May the Lord use her mightily in advancing His Kingdom and in strengthening the church. ♦

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Address all correspondence to the editor:  
**Angelica De Vera**  
[ataasia.research@gmail.com](mailto:ataasia.research@gmail.com)