



## MYANMAR ONE YEAR AFTER:

### AMID THE DEEP DARKNESS, THE LORD IS WORKING

By Angelica De Vera  
Research and Communications Officer

It was the early morning of February 1, 2021 when a nation's dream of democracy was shattered. A coup, orchestrated by the Myanmar Military, broke out, leading to the arrests of civilian government leaders, including State Councilor, Aung San Suu Kyi. This birthed protests and the Civil Disobedience movement which were initially peaceful but were then met with violent crackdowns, arrests, and airstrikes.

It's been a little over a year since that fateful morning- and it has been turbulent. Thousands have already been arrested and killed and the nation is enveloped in devastation. One year after, the ravaging continues- and each day the people live with the constant threat of hunger or being arrested or killed. The young have a big chunk of their youth stolen from them as their gatherings can be labelled as subversive and rebellious even if they are not. This is because it was and continue to be the young who stand up against the repressive Junta. All these alongside an ongoing pandemic which only served to exacerbate the devastation.

Amid all that, many Theological Institutions have stopped operating, but we praise God that our two

accredited member schools continue to press on. So, we at ATA decided to check on these schools: Bethany Theological Seminary (BTS) and Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (MEGST). In an interview with the leaders of both schools<sup>[1]</sup>, we

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<sup>[1]</sup> For security purposes we will not name the leaders of each school.

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asked not just about how things generally are in Myanmar but also about how their school is doing, what changes have happened since the take over, the challenges they are facing, and how the Lord enabled them to overcome these challenges. But more importantly, we also asked how they see and discern how the Lord is working in their midst and how we, their ATA community, can pray for them.

### **Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology: The Lord works even in the darkest night**

“The coup that happened was a nightmare,” narrates one of the leaders of Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (MEGST).

While Myanmar is not new to coups and take overs, this is a different generation. After having enjoyed relative freedom for a decade now, it has become unthinkable to return to the old system... but it happened... and it took the people of Myanmar by surprise.

All areas of life have changed: social, political, and economic. When the coup happened, even the simple things many of us take for granted have been taken away- everyday simple things like sending messages. People need to be careful with messaging and make sure that they are deleted. There is a need to remove the APN (Access point Name) the very moment one steps out of the house. The risk of getting caught is always present- and once caught, it's straight off to prison. Everyday life is a risk. Alongside all that, hunger is on the rise. Although humanitarian aid came in when the coup began, that is now, in a sense winding down. People have done what they could, but the economy continues to spiral down and life is uncertain. The

hearts of the people of Myanmar are filled with real life questions...

On the other hand, for MEGST, the pandemic had already begun to take its toll even before the takeover because its student body was already scattered throughout the country. Then the coup happened and young people in the country found themselves involved in the political situation, one way or another. Students in regional areas were affected by the attacks of the military and it has been very difficult to connect with them. Connectivity continues to remain a challenge and in addition to that electricity is also a problem. Each day the people of Myanmar experience 3-6 hours of no electricity and generators are not allowed to operate. Prior to the takeover, power was subsidized by the government- but the government collapsed, and the subsidy was cancelled. At this point, the only thing each sector of society wants and strives for is to survive. The same can be said for the students of MEGST and its community with the economy spiraling down. Life has become exponentially difficult. With the difficulty caused by the coup partnered by the persistent pandemic, the enrolment numbers, without a surprised, dropped.

Yet the real challenge for MEGST at this point is how we move from here to the next. Online education has its advantages, but because of the issues in Myanmar, the leaders of MEGST want their students back on campus. The real challenge to doing so is political. Gathering young people together is a sensitive issue. In addition to that the leaders of MEGST did admit that they can never know if their student did get involved politically. Yet again, the need to start gathering for in person classes is there- and so are the dangers.

Nonetheless, good risks need to be taken. There's no knowing how long this rule will go on; and the need to make sure the school is run properly is there- and so is the fear. It's a challenge indeed-but a bigger challenge is convincing colleagues to make a wise risk. Intimidation and suppression have been part of the life of Myanmar for six decades and so the need to overcome the fear not something new to its people. It

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is a familiar obstacle that the leaders of MEGST need to get across in the next couple of months as they prepare for a new academic year.

Challenges and difficulties indeed abound for MEGST, but the Lord has been faithful nonetheless! In fact, the Lord has used ATA to enable the school to overcome the challenge of shifting to online education. When the pandemic began, the leaders of MEGST were reluctant to launch an online program which they've never had before. With the Lord's help, the school jumped in, even if they didn't know much about it. And at that time, ATA also held a Webinar on Online Education, and it was very helpful.

As the Lord has helped MEGST overcome the challenge of having to shift everything online, the leaders of the school know and are confident that the Lord's hand is there to enable them to overcome the challenges brought about by the coup. So, they will take wise and reasonable risks and will do so believing that the God who has helped them thus far will continue to help them.

The Lord has been faithful to enable his children to overcome the challenges brought about by both the coup and the pandemic. MEGST community continues to look to the Lord, hanging on to the fact that there is a God behind all these and believing that He has a plan. They also believe that while the coup may be unbelievable- something even more unbelievable may come out of this! The people of Myanmar have been wanting freedom and democracy for decades now- and people are looking into unity and in that hope that one day change will come. Furthermore, this season has caused Christians in Myanmar to rethink how they will continue to exist in the country, especially as they continue to operate underground. The sadness of this season will be turned into good because God can change evil men and turn mess into good. MEGST does pray that the Lord will lead them into that end.

The situation in Myanmar continues to be heartbreaking and so the leaders of MEGST invite us to pray with them for their school and their country in the following ways:



Photo by Saw Wunna on Unsplash

## For MEGST

- a. We need to regroup- not only in terms of personnel and students, but also in terms of our thinking. It is difficult to do anything when one is distracted, emotionally distracted. Please pray that we can refocus on what our priority is- as a community, as learners, as lecturers.
- b. We need to resume in person classes, if not, a blended set up. But the purely online situation is not the best option for us. That is what we really need prayer on. Please pray that we can pull the MEGST community together.
- c. Financially, we're okay but also not okay. We do have funds, but it is not accessible at this moment. Additionally, while support from overseas continues, we have less students, our income has dropped. Please pray for the Lord to continue to provide and meet all our needs.
- d. There has been much sadness here. We have lost leaders and lecturers in our community. We have lost 3 key leaders in 3 years' time. We have been down emotionally. Please pray that we have the strength to move on and that the younger generation can take over.

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## For MYANMAR:

- a. The coup has caused the Christian community to be worried. Apart from the political situation, the radicalization of people is also there. The last 5-10 years, we have enjoyed relative freedom in terms of the Christian movement. We have been worried that things will go back that way it was during the previous generation. Please pray that the Myanmar Christian community can [continue to] do their ministries in such a way that would glorify God's name.
- b. Please pray for economic recovery and meeting of financial needs. Inflation has skyrocketed, and income has not gone up. It has affected a huge percentage of our grassroots community. We really need more prayer.
- c. We want change, we want freedom. We know one day we will get it. Please pray that this change will come with the least cost of human lives. We have been losing young people's lives every day.

## Bethany Theological Seminary: Pressing on in the Lord's presence

"Everything changed, with no stone left unturned" was the picture painted by the leaders of Bethany Theological Seminary (BTS) as they narrated how things are in Myanmar one year after.

While the military had the power, they didn't have control and the country seems to have no government over it. Every sector of the society has been paralyzed and continues to spiral down. With doctors taking part in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and only a few have been left to serve in hospitals, the health sector was left in bad shape. The same can be said of Public Education.

Only a few schools are open and only a few students can go to school, mostly those whose families are close to the Junta. Several teachers have also joined the Civil Disobedience Movement. The price of gasoline has doubled, and the prices of basic goods has gone up by 30 to 50 percent. Power supply has also been cut short and black outs happen 1 to 3 times a day.

Zooming into BTS, it's not hard to see that the changes and challenges have been massive too- and it is most stark when one looks at the enrolment numbers. Before the pandemic, the school had 80 students. When COVID-19 came into the picture, that number dropped to 60. When the takeover happened, that pre-pandemic number was cut in half to 40. While none of their students or teachers are part of the CDM, several factors have prevented the students from enrolling. For one, the takeover has made it difficult to travel. Some places have no transportation and if there is, it is very limited. In addition to the difficulty in travel, accommodating students is a huge challenge. Even if the students were indeed able to come, it will be dangerous to accommodate more young people. The government does check on several campuses. There a few students housed in the campus though, but they are limited to only 20; and even if they are housed on campus, they still attend classes via zoom.

While Online Education can always be an alternative and has in fact, since the pandemic, "forced the school" to shift much of its classes to Online Education via zoom, the takeover has created problems with access to the internet. Where the People's Defense Force, the people's army who also protest the government, move around, the internet is cut.

On top of all that the school also struggles financially. Though there is regular support from outside Myanmar it has been difficult to get hold of it. The Junta has put limits to the transaction amount and many banks are closed.

Amid the insurmountable difficulty the Lord has enabled BTS to overcome and press on. In fact, the

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Lord has continued to allow the school to thrive! Even if there were many students who dropped, BTS will have a total of 7 graduates this year- 6 in the BTH and 1 in the Mdiv. There is good news amid the non-stop bad news!

As BTS continues to be faced with insurmountable challenges and difficulties, its leaders continue to believe and hang on to the Lord's presence with them. At every turn and step of the way, the leaders of Bethany Theological Seminary are on their knees in prayer and as they press on, they continue to see the Lord is, has been, and will be with them.

As the Lord continues to grant them his presence amid the chaos, the leaders of BTS continue to see him at work as many churches use zoom to take care of their church members and theological students. The leaders of Bethany Theological Seminary have seen the Lord open a new means by which to communicate the gospel and they are amazed at how many evangelists freely preach the gospel online! Yes, the gospel is still preached and is done so freely online! The leaders have seen how the Lord continues to draw people back to Himself even if churches have been closed since the pandemic. The mission of the Lord continues, and nothing can hinder it. Furthermore, churches are fervently praying to the Lord that a new and good government may emerge.



Photo by Pyae Sone Htun on Unsplash

Given that situation, the leaders of Bethany ask that we pray for their school and Myanmar in the following ways:

### For BTS:

- This academic year, we are considering opening again, but we are not yet sure how we will accommodate our students on campus. We are not sure about our future. But we still want to continue this school year. Please pray for us in this endeavor and ATA schools in Myanmar.
- Please pray for financial provision
- Please pray that we are able to recruit more students.
- Please pray for safety in our school. Please pray that we don't have any issues with the government so that we can run the school safely and smoothly.

### For Myanmar:

- Please pray we get and have PEACE in Myanmar very soon.
- Please pray that communication and transportation will be accessible.
- Please pray for the economic situation of Myanmar. Economic Experts say that within this year many millions of people may starve because the economy is in a very dangerous situation.
- Please pray for the restoration of public education.
- Please pray that Christians in Myanmar will become stronger spiritually.

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Nobody knows for sure how long the Junta will be in power. Nobody knows how much more suffering and how much more blood will be shed before the people of Myanmar will get the freedom that they have so desired. But one thing is for sure: the Lord is at work. Despite the deep darkness, the Lord is working.



# A Developing Conversation: The ICETE Consultation on Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education



By Shaiju Thomas

Secretary, Value Added Services, ATA India

Beginning in November last year, the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) has been holding a global conversation with the theme: *Formal and Non-*

*Formal Theological Education in Dialogue*. This conversation has been planned to attract participants and presenters from both the sectors of theological education. Four of these conversations have been planned to go live on zoom, culminating in an in-person meet on November 2022.

The conversation aims to learn ‘what the Church needs from theological education in this milieu and the role of the whole of theological education – formal and non-formal’ in addressing that. To achieve this goal, ICETE has invited theological educators, church and mission leaders, and leaders from related sectors to gather and strategize, collaborate, and develop a community in addressing the need of the Church. The global conversations have thus far witnessed a global interest, with about 300 participants conversing on zoom and the ICETE Academy portal. It’s been historic and really exciting!

## The First Conversation (November 2021): A Review

The first online event, held in November 2021, set the stage for the dialogue by discussing common misconceptions, generalizations and caricatures of

both formal and of non-formal theological education. A pre-event survey which was conducted to give shape to the conversation indicated that there is a lack of trust between Formal (F) and Non-Formal (NF) form of theological education (TE).

The lack of trust and the gap between FTE-NFTE got further traction during the presentations of the speakers on the first day, including the inaugural pitch made by Dr. Michael Ortiz, the International Director of ICETE. He also observed dominant suggestions such as collaboration and building bridges from the survey. The sessions that followed then further explored the theme of formal and non-formal theological education.

Dr. Manfred Kohl of Overseas Council International (OCI) in his presentation pointed to the global need for 1 million trained church leaders every year. This would be impossible with around just 900 evangelical degree-granting formal universities or seminaries in the world today. He proposed that, if there are ‘globally recognized guidelines or standards for non-formal training programs for evangelical church leaders, focused on biblical based outcomes’, it will answer the critical need of the Church, regarding leaders. To this effect, Dr. Kohl points to the ministry of Reforma, which has crafted 35 outcomes, recognized by World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), that will help evaluate a person’s preparedness for biblical ministry, regardless of whether they were trained in a formal or non-formal setting.

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Taras Dyatlik, the regional director of Overseas Council - United World Mission for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, explored the differences between FTE and NFTE and proposed that theological educators and administrators must aim to build bridges to capitalize on the strengths of each form of TE by recognizing the shared goal and aim of TE, the unique possibility of each, and by developing a common vocabulary or glossary.

Dr. Lisa Anderson-Umana of Christian Camping International (CCI) brought in the perspective of experiential learning in NFTE from the Latin American context. Dr. John Jusu, of African International University in Nairobi spoke on the transformational issues in the formal and non-formal education settings in Africa. Dr. Qaiser Julius, Director of Open Theological Seminary in Lahore, Pakistan presented the perspective on NFTE from the persecuted church perspective in the South Asia context.

Further to this, the participants were able to dialogue with one another in breakout rooms and discussed the need and the gap; and many helpful suggestions and thoughts were captured. All these discussions could be observed in the resource section of the ICETE Academy C21-22 course section.

On the second day, November 17<sup>th</sup>, the discussion and presentation revolved around the impact of FTE and NFTE on the Church. Bishop Efraim Tendero who serves as the Global Ambassador of the *World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)*, talked about TE impacting the church and society, emphasized the need for 'contextualized, church-based training, developed participatorily with FTE, which will raise the level of discussion and application regarding the relationship between the secular and sacred calling'.

Elesinah Chauke, who works with More than a Mile Deep project in Africa presented her experience with NFTE and spoke about the positive impact that it had on the society and by that in the church. She also talks about the contextual relevance of curriculum to have an impact. In conjunction to that, Dr. Graham Aylett spoke on the need for partnership between FTE and NFTE to be impactful and for the graduates to have access to a wider set of tools, as they minister. He also brought the perspective of what we devalue by not valuing in the seminary classes

and by that discrediting other forms of education. And finally, Dr. Waghee Mikhail talks about the need for the church to be in the focus, which will then not only overcome the gap but also create space for collaborative partnership efforts.

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### **February 2022: Quality Assurance in Non- Formal Theological Education**

The second online gathering took place just last February 11, 2022. This edition took the conversation a step further and explored the aspect of quality in the non-formal theological education (NFTE) context. The breakout room discussions also brought in the topic of accreditation and its relevance for NFTE.

Dr. Jessy Jaison, speaking from the South Asian context presented the story of her student who had to design an NFTE program to meet the needs of the church in the context of central India. From this story, she was able to note down several observations of the good and bad qualities of NFTE. As points of good quality, she noted the following: (1) ownership of local church and the society, (2) in-service learning, (3) affordability, (4) accessibility, (5) engaging in the society, and (6) continuous learning. On the other hand, (1) limited exposure to the socio-cultural and theological worldviews, (2) lack of training for the facilitators, (3) lack of introspection on the validity and truthfulness in interpretation and adherence to a particular ideology, (4) limited scope to rise in mainstream leadership, and (5) lack of accountability in assessing the programs were presented as the bad qualities observed in NFTE from this context.

In response to the story, Dr. Reuben Van Rensburg shared the following observations from his own experience of Research Based Curriculum

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Development (RBCD). He observed that a good NFTE will keep to the original mandate of church-oriented, church-based and church-enabling, advance evangelism, and church planting. It can develop disciples and multi-level leaders across the different sections and professional fields in the society. He also observed that a good NFTE can become the bridge between the church and FTE, while maintaining its uniqueness of philosophy, delivery, and design.

In discussing quality, Elesinah Chauke presented a contrast between two FTE institutions. The first one has resources, is structured, controlled and maintained by the bishop of the church; but lacks balance of application, as it is text-book focused. The second institution on the other hand, does not have resources or the backing of a strong person who has the resources like the first but has an inclusive board, open to learners from other denominations and invites the local church's partnership in training people. So, by that it harnesses the philosophy of NFTE to their advantage.

Furthermore, various other good qualities and challenges of NFTE were brought to focus during the engagement in the breakout rooms. Apart from what was already pointed out, participants offered the following good qualities of NFTE: (1) context-based and immediacy of application, (2) closer to the context of application, (3) offers anonymity or personal space for those who desire so, especially in an online learning format, and (4) provides impetus to further church's vision. On the other hand, the few challenges that were mentioned were: (1) the difficulty to maintain quality as there is limited oversight, (2) casual attitude of the learning-teaching community in NFTE, and (3) that its value is more recognized in a society where there is rapid church growth and there is need for more leaders regularly.

Apart from identifying some good and bad qualities, suggestions were also made for growing the quality of NFTE. A few of those include the following: (1) the presence of trained theological educators who would model and showcase authentic life, (2) learning itself as dialogic, (3) a mutual and collaborative, learning environment as relational or with hospitality framework, (4) design that integrates andragogical learning principles, (5) resist temptation for standardization but create standards in all domains of

**The ICETE conversation on Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education in Dialogue in short is about engaging theological educators, church leaders, mission leaders, and leaders of other associated agencies to consider the times and interact dynamically, focusing on the need of the church and the unique contexts of the church, in preparing the saints of God.**

learning, in consultation with local FTE and church, and (6) establish parameters for dynamic parity of credit that will facilitate international and national credit transfers.

The ICETE conversation on *Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education in Dialogue* in short is about engaging theological educators, church leaders, mission leaders, and leaders of other associated agencies to consider the times and interact dynamically, focusing on the need of the church and the unique contexts of the church, in preparing the saints of God. *Instead of preferring one over the other, the ICETE dialogue invites us to consider both forms of education in a dynamic relationship, to address the need of the church and the role of theological education in keeping with the rapid invasion of all spaces by technology, growing intolerance in the society, failing economies, wars, pandemic, and other eventualities. Let's think together, engage with one another globally and make theological education an experience - relevant and meaningful, that will result in a mature church. The next two online gatherings are planned for 13 May 2022 and 12 August 2022. If you have not already, we invite you to join this dialogue and engage both during the zoom session as well as on the ICETE Academy portal. Those interested may join the programme by registering at <https://icete.info/equipping/consultation/c21-22>. ♦*



# Praise Amid the Challenges: The 2022 ATA Annual Meeting

Most, if not all, of us entered 2021 with high hopes that the pandemic, and all the challenges that came with it, would come to an end. Unfortunately, the pandemic persisted, and the challenges even multiplied. Yet even with the continued pandemic and multiplying challenges, the Lord has been steadfast in His faithfulness- and that was evident in the many ways He has grown the ministry of ATA and opened so many new doors to better serve our member schools and the Asian Church. His faithfulness was celebrated over the Annual Executive Board meeting held last January 13-14 via zoom- and we continue to give Him praise for all that He has done and all that He will be doing- and we invite you to join us in praise for the Lord has been and continue to be faithful!

**Let us praise Him for leading us to new ways in which we can serve the Asian Church!**

The Lord continues to be faithful to honor our desire as a ministry to serve the Asian Church better and more effectively in ways most relevant to the times. The rapid digitalization of the world has allowed for more opportunities to serve the church- and the Lord has opened doors and allowed us to seize the opportunities before us- and has also richly provided for it, which came through First Fruit, Inc.

Through First Fruit, we have been blessed with an additional \$60,000 which we will be using to expand and deepen the reach of our publications. Through this two-year grant, we plan to create podcasts, videos, and other digital resources connected to ATA's catalogue of resources.

This expansion in our Publications ministry has given birth to a new ministry within ATA: ATA Digital. The goal of ATA Digital is two-fold: first, to expand the impact of ATA's current publications with creative, digital formats; and second, to develop new resources for the next generation of leaders that will be serving the needs of our members and the Asian Church. This ministry was launched last 01 March 2022 (see more details on [page 13](#))

And of course, with a new ministry, comes a new face. So last year, we also welcomed Mr. Matthias Gergan who will be serving as our Digital Publications

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*ATA Executive Board*

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*ATA Publications Committee*

Editor. He will oversee this new ministry and the team behind it.

But apart from these digital resources, the grant will also be used for the translation of Asian Christian Theology (ACT) and the upcoming Asian Christian Ethics into Hindi, Tamil, Bahasa, and Nepali. Each translation project is done in partnership with Langham Publishing and various local partners: Open Doors Publications through Dr. Finny Philip (Hindi and Tamil); Southeast Asia Bible Seminary or SAAT through Dr. Rahmiati Tanudjaja (Bahasa); and Samdan Publishers through Mr. Keshav Mainali (Nepali).

The rapid digitalization of the world has also created windows of opportunity to help equip the church for God's mission; and in 2021, we have been able to embrace a number of them. From the Asia New Scholars Webinar to the Theological Consultation to engaging in dialogue online via A.CROSS, we have seen that, while in person engagement and conversation is great, equipping the church is readily available anytime and anywhere.

Other than being able to stage events and reach father and more, the fast digitalization of the world has made a plethora of resources available- and through ICETE, these resources more accessible to our smaller member schools in developing nations. A group subscription to the Global Digital Library (GDTL) was facilitated by ICETE and this allows for the institution to access the library at a highly discounted rate. A survey was sent out to invite qualified ATA member schools to avail of this offer- and 59 ATA institutions joined the group subscription, most of them

from India. While ICETE facilitated the subscription, we at ATA will bear the administrative tasks of issuing the access codes, collecting the fees, and paying the total fees to ICETE.

Furthermore, the rapid digitalization of the world has allowed us to conduct visits to various institutions despite the closed borders. Through technology, we have been able to visit 14 institutions. In addition to that, once the country opened up, ATA India was also able to conduct in-person visits to a number of its institutions, apart from the online visits. We are looking forward to another fruitful year as we already have 25 institutions requesting for an accreditation visit this year!

A highly digitalized world is indeed the new normal and while it cannot replace the beauty of in person activities, it has opened a whole new world of possibilities to serve the church- and for that we are thankful!

Let us praise Him for faithfully strengthening and growing ATA both as a ministry and as an organization!

Amid the continued challenges, the Lord has added to the membership base of ATA. The Lord has given us 7 new member schools and they are as follows: Leader Source (USA), Connect All Bible Institute Limited (Hong Kong), Asbury Theological Seminary (Kentucky), Chiang Mai Theological Seminary (Thailand), Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injil Indonesia (STTI, Surabaya), The Salvation Army Officer Training College (OTC, Sri Lanka), and Every Nation Seminary (Philippines). Excitingly, we continue to even receive more applications! Let us praise Him for growing our community!

The Lord has not just been growing our membership base, He has also been growing ATA as an organization- and this has been through the Vital Sustainability Initiative (VSI) Planning Process. This endeavor is done through Scholar Leaders International (SLI). This Planning Process has allowed ATA's various ministry teams to engage in identifying the organizations strength's and weaknesses, along with the opportunities open to it and the threats that it is facing and could face. Furthermore, this engagement has opened an opportunity for each team to discuss and draft their strategic initiatives, objectives, and activities for the next four years. Each team was later on represented in a separate meeting

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with SLI to further refine their strategic initiatives and objectives. We have streamlined and combined the Strategic Initiatives and Objectives from the CAED, Value Added Services and Publications/Consultations. The SLI team led by Dr. Emmanuel Bellon patiently led us in refining these initiatives and objectives. The planning committee is now drafting the Strategic Activities for each objective. This group along with a few invited people will hold an in-person meeting on June 27-30 in Indonesia to finalize the full strategic plan including financial integration and budgeting, and to brainstorm on possible project proposals. Then the ATA leadership will present the full strategic plan to the Board for review and approval before the General Assembly in September.

As the pandemic continued to rage, challenges continued to abound. But He has been steadfast in His faithfulness, and we continued to see how He continues to make this ministry thrive and flourish!

**Let us praise Him for both growing partnerships!**

Last year, our very own General Secretary, Dr. Theresa Lua began concurrently serving with the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) as the Director of the Global Theology Department. This role will be considered part of Dr. Lua's work in ATA. So, in taking Dr. Lua in as part of their leadership, WEA and ATA came into a more formal partnership- and we pray that it will be one that bears much fruit!

Being the Director of the Global Theology Department comes with its own set of challenges, yet Dr. Lua doesn't dive into them alone. WEA has provided for a paid staff to support her in her role. Serving alongside Dr. Lua as Coordinator of the Theological Commission is Mr. Rei Lemuel Crizaldo, a brilliant young theologian and creative thinker and writer. This partnership has benefited not just Dr. Lua but will be benefitting the ATA institutions and the Asian Church too.

A new door for collaboration also opened through Rei - this time with Tearfund. Rei serves part time as the Theological Education Network Coordinator of Tearfund, an organization whose vision is to see people freed from poverty, living transformed lives, and



*Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST) Council*



*Commission on Accreditation and Educational Development (CAED)*

fulfilling their God-given potential. Through this collaboration, we hope to embed Integral Mission Theology more deeply into the training of leaders for the holistic mission of the church. We plan on moving towards this end by equipping faculty in sharpening courses and programs to support the holistic mission of churches. In addition to that, local theological resources will likewise be developed to support the objective.

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much” says Helen Keller- so the need to keep building relationship and collaborate with others. And we are thankful that the Lord continues to bring ministries and organizations our way to collaborate with in order that we may better serve the Asian Church.

**Let us praise Him for the many things to look forward to in 2022!!!**

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While 2021 was challenging, the Lord surprised us with so many wonderful things! We trust that the Lord has even bigger things in store for us in 2022! As the pandemic is seemingly coming to an end and borders are slowly opening, we hope that we can once again gather as one community, face to face. God willing, our Triennial General Assembly will be held at Bayview Beach Resort in Penang, Malaysia. The theme for the upcoming General Assembly is The Digital Turn in Theological Education: Impact, Opportunities, and Challenges. With the plenary sessions and topics for breakout groups already lined up, there is much to be excited about! But the continued uncertainty brought about by the pandemic does make finalizing the plans for the upcoming GA very difficult. We ask that you continue to pray for the Lord's guidance as the GA

committee continues to make plans amid the uncertainty.

**Let us praise Him for his persistent faithfulness!**

While the challenges persisted through the continued pandemic, the Lord has also been persistent in His faithfulness to the ministry of ATA. He continued to lead us to new ways in which we can better serve the Asian Church. He continued to strengthen and grow ATA, both as a ministry and as an organization. He continued to grow our network, our partnerships, and opened doors for more collaboration! As uncertainty continues to loom over the horizon, we are sure that He will continue to be faithful and continue to enable ATA to faithfully serve the Asian Church- and so, we continue to step forward in praise! ♦

Do you sense the need for more? A better grasp of how Christian theology is developing in the Asian context? A deeper awareness of how Christian teaching fits together? A clearer sense of how the legacy of the Christian tradition can help the church of the 21st century?

2022 Admissions Now Open

# Master of Theology (ThM) in Theological Studies and Church History

The ThM forms **scholar-theologians for the Asian church** by equipping them to apply the insights of Christian theology in the Asian context and to tell the largely untold story of Asia's Christian communities.



*"My studies at AGST have enabled me to think critically and to do contextual theology for the church in Pakistan. God provided wonderful teachers, well-equipped libraries, and excellent training which helped prepare me for a challenging and exciting ministry in ZBS and in Pakistan."*

- Shahbaz Masih  
ThM Graduate  
President, Zarephath Bible Seminary



Application Deadline: May 1, 2022  
For more information visit [www.igsl.asia](http://www.igsl.asia)



## Our New Ministry Has Finally Taken Flight: ATA Digital!

Last March 1, we finally saw our new ministry take flight: ATA Digital. Born out of a desire to not just more effectively serve our member institutions and the Asian church but also to deepen the impact of our publications, ATA Digital aims to produce and release podcasts and videos that will help our readers connect with our growing catalogue of theological books and commentaries. We began by uploading an explainer video<sup>[1]</sup> to introduce the wider community to this new ministry. As of the time of this writing there are 3 videos already uploaded, including one full length podcast<sup>[2]</sup>- and if you've missed any one of them, go check them out our channel (see the links below).

We are also excited to share that in the first two weeks of its launching, ATA Digital has already received a number of positive feedback and reviews. The following are just some of them:

*Nice work!! Looking forward to the content!!*

*I like the [explainer] video a lot! Really well put together, good speed, word flow good, captivating and appropriate graphics. Nice work!*

*Professional and full of good info.*

*Wonderful work 🙌. I look forward to the digital resource material from ATA.*

*ATA-Digital looks like a great initiative. That's really wonderful.*

We are excited to see how the digital media we produce will be a blessing and an encouragement to the you, our ATA Community. So, we invite you to subscribe to our YouTube Channel and follow us on Facebook and Instagram through the following links:



Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCs7P02fz4Dsh\\_RSG4gpwByg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCs7P02fz4Dsh_RSG4gpwByg)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ATADigital.Asia>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/atadigital.asia/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ATADigitalAsia>

Also don't forget to like each video you enjoy and hit the bell for notifications because we will be releasing new content every Tuesday!

Looking forward to seeing you in our upcoming videos and podcasts! ♦

<sup>[1]</sup> Title: "Get to know ATA's new ministry: ATA Digital"

<sup>[2]</sup> Title: "ATA Digital Episode 1- A conversation with the editors of Asian Christian Theology." The podcast will be cut into different segments over the next couple of months. So, stay tuned as we upload these segments every week !

# Mark your calendars for the 2022 Triennial General Assembly!

We are excited to announce that this year we are once again gathering for our Triennial General Assembly. This year's Triennial General Assembly will be held on September 26-30 in Bayview Beach Hotel, Penang Malaysia. And here are some things that you should know...

## THE DIGITAL TURN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: IMPACT, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

THE KEY QUESTION AS THE CHALLENGE FOR THE GA: SHALL THE DIGITAL TURN IN TE LEAD TO A NEW KIND OF TE OR IS IT JUST AN UPGRADE OF THE OLD?



### PLENARY 1: INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF THE DIGITAL TURN

BY A PANEL OF RESOURCE SPECIALISTS FROM THE IT WORLD, FROM THE CHURCH, THEOLOGIANS, THEOLOGICAL EDUCATORS, OFFERING DIFFERENT UPDATES ON CONTEXT, DIGITAL WORLD, WWW DEVELOPMENT, THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.



focus:

- What are the important changes in digitality & technology that are happening in the world today?
- How is it affecting the ways people interact/communicate with each other? Is it altering the sense of presence and relationships in digital communities?
- Which of these changes will churches and religious communities need to pay attention to and actively engage?



### PLENARY 2: DIGITAL EDUCATION AND HOLISTIC FORMATION

Focus:

- Understanding the theology of holistic formation
- Revisit and explore the role of theological education in holistic formation
- Understanding the process/practice of holistic formation in the context of digital education or an increasing digital community.
- Discuss some best practices, concrete examples?

### PLENARY 3: THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH IN THE DIGITAL AGE

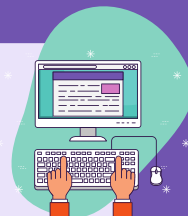


Focus: Shaping a holistic theology of church in a digital age

- What is the theology of "church"?
- How is church done in the digital age and how does that inform or contribute to the present theology of "church"?

### PLENARY 4: THE LANDSCAPE OF WITNESS AND DISCIPLESHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE

FOCUS: SHAPING A HOLISTIC THEOLOGY AND PRAXIS OF WITNESS AND DISCIPLESHIP IN A DIGITAL COMMUNITY AND AGE. (GOING BEYOND THE DEFAULT MODE OF USING DIGITAL AS A TOOL OF MISSION, ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT WE ARE SHAPED IN – BEING REAL FOR EXAMPLE).



- What is a biblical and theological understanding of witness and discipleship currently?
- How does this apply to the digital community?
- What can we learn from discipleship and witness in the digital age that can inform our biblical and theological understanding of witness and discipleship?
- How is witness and discipleship nurtured in the digital community?



Questions:

- Who is your community?
- How do we create a broader and sustainable learning community in Asia?
- How do we expand our thinking and vistas and reshape the understanding of community and context in digital education
- Developing a theology of healthy partnership. What are some examples of practices of collaboration and partnership in the bible and in church history?
- How do we develop healthy partnerships, networking and collaboration within ATA?
- What are some present day healthy practices of collaboration and partnership?
- With digital education, the geographies have changed. Seminaries can offer programs to students in other countries. The reality also is that this is an uneven playing field. Established seminaries have more resources to develop digital education. What are the implications?

### PLENARY 6: A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE DIGITAL AGE: UPSET, UPDATES, OR UPGRADES?

AN ANALYTICAL APPRECIATION AND CRITIQUE OF PRE-DIGITAL AGE;  
AN ANALYTICAL APPRECIATION AND CRITIQUE OF DIGITAL AGE.  
MOVING FORWARD HOLISTICALLY IN A DIGITAL AGE.



Answering the key question: Shall *the digital turn in TE* lead to a new kind of *TE* or is it just an upgrade of the old?

**PLENARY 7: LEARNING FROM DIGITAL EDUCATION CASE STUDIES**



Several schools will share about their journey in online TE.

Focus:

- Impact of the digital turn
- Challenges
- Opportunities
- Best practices

**CLOSING PLENARY**

ASK THE QUESTION:

**SHALL THE DIGITAL TURN IN TE LEAD TO A NEW KIND OF TE OR IS IT JUST AN UPGRADE OF THE OLD?**



HEAR from what people are saying

Summary conclusion

Communion and close.

**ADD TO ALL THAT THESE EXCITING ACTIVITIES:**



- SEVERAL BREAKOUT GROUPS ON VERY INTERESTING AND RELEVANT TOPICS
- FREE TIME ON EVENINGS FOR FELLOWSHIP AND NETWORKING (EXCEPT ON THE GA'S OPENING NIGHT)
- SIGHTSEEING ON WEDNESDAY AFTER LUNCH

**THE DIGITAL TURN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: IMPACT, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**



**REGISTRATION DETAILS**

**conference fees:**

**STAY- IN PARTICIPANTS:**

**SINGLE ROOM**

hotel room/meals\*: US\$ 290

registration fee: US\$ 120

**TOTAL: US\$ 410**

**TWIN SHARING**

hotel room/meals\*: US\$ 205

registration fee: US\$ 120

**TOTAL: US\$ 325**



\*Inclusive of meals starting dinner on 26th September to lunch on the 30th. No dinner on the 28th, Wednesday as participants are free to go for sightseeing after lunch

**conference fees:**

**NON STAY-IN PARTICIPANTS:**

US\$ 190.00

(Inclusive of lunch & snacks starting on 27th September to lunch on the 30th, without dinner)

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE: AUGUST 1, 2022**

Please note that the Malaysian government has announced that Malaysia will open borders on April 1, 2022. There will be no quarantine requirement for those who are fully- vaccinated with negative Covid test results.



**SCAN TO REGISTER**

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