



## INTRODUCING DR. JONATHAN RO, ACCREDITATION SECRETARY

*How a country is spiritually transformed with the gospel hinges on the quality and vitality of its churches, which, in turn, depends on the caliber of its pastors and leaders. The training of these leaders is shaped by the quality of their theological education in seminaries, which is inextricably linked to the effectiveness of the accreditation ministry.*

– Dr. Jonathan Ro, in his letter to his supporters

After a decade of serving as CAED Secretary, Dr. Theresa Lua, who has also been concurrently serving as the General Secretary of the Asia Theological Association, has stepped down and is passing the baton to Dr. Jonathan Ro. But who is Dr. Jonathan Ro? Get to know him through this short memoir:

*I am a missionary sent by the Evangelical Covenant Church and you may find my identity confusing. Well, I do consider myself a Global Asian. Recently, Dr. Sooi Ling Tan, Dean of AGST Alliance, asked me a question that caught me off guard: “Jon,*

*what is your identity?” I had to think about it for a minute before answering. In my mind, I was thinking... I was born in the US. My father is Korean, and my mother is Chinese-American. I grew up in*

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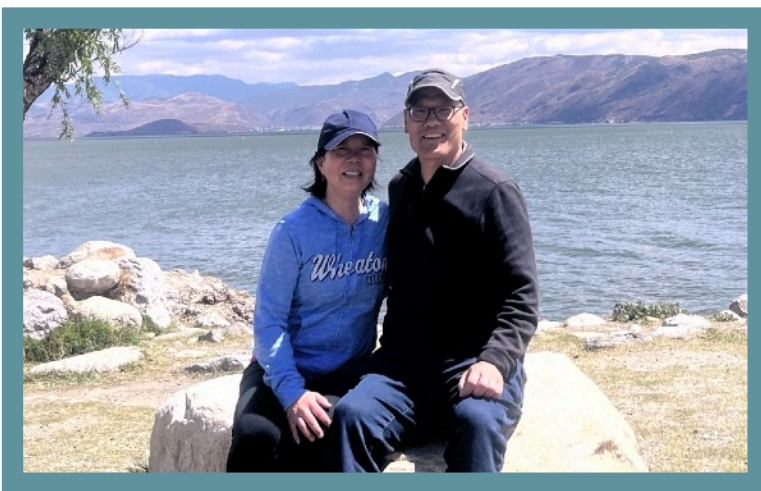
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Dr. Jonathan Ro with his wife

Singapore and Taiwan as a missionary kid. I studied and served as a pastor in the US before moving to Asia as a missionary. Now I live in Hong Kong. So, I said, "I'm confused, but I think I'm a Global Asian. Ask me in a few years and I may have a different answer."

I was called into the full-time ministry at the age of 10! I remember, right after accepting Jesus as my savior in Sunday school, I started asking the question "What do I want to do when I grow up?" Since then, I already sensed God calling me into full-time ministry. Because my parents were missionaries with OMF, I was exposed to many Western missionaries serving in Singapore and Taiwan. I was inspired by Western missionaries dedicating their whole lives to learning the Chinese language and culture to reach the unreached Chinese with the gospel. My prayer was, "One day when I grow up, I want to dedicate my life to helping reach more Asians with the gospel." And the Lord has faithfully been answering that prayer.

I attended Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and graduated with a Master of Divinity in 1994. Instead of going directly to the mission field, God called me to stay in the Chicagoland area for 17 years where I served as a pastor in several churches. For the first 5 years, I served as the English congregation pastor of the Oak Park Bible Church. My next ministry took me to the Community Christian Church where I led a single adult ministry for 3 years. I was able to use the knowledge that I gained from the previous churches to serve at Lakeview Church. At Lakeview Church I served as a co-church planter and Executive pastor for 10 years. In that time I helped the church become a multi-ethnic multi-site church. During my tenure at Lakeview church, the church joined the Evangelical Covenant church denomination. Later, I joined the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) as a Serve Global personnel. The diverse pastoral ministry experiences have helped me teach missions, leadership, and church planting classes in Chinese seminaries. This experience has also provided wisdom as I share my ministry experiences with seminaries seeking accreditation to train pastors and church leaders more effectively.

With all these years of pastoral service, I still had a sense of God calling me to serve in Asia as a missionary. This led me to enroll in the Intercultural Studies Program (ICS program) at Trinity Evangelical



Dr. Jonathan Ro with the Commission on Accreditation and Educational Development.

Divinity School, as a Ph.D. student. In 2010, my family moved to Asia so that I could research urban house churches. My dissertation title was "Globalization's Impact on the urban church in the Mainland: A case study of four churches in a major urban center." Upon graduating in 2013, I joined GETS Theological Seminary, based in LA. I traveled around Asia and Europe and taught mission courses in Chinese seminaries. I also served as the Associate Director for the Doctor of Ministry Program.

So, how did I get involved with ATA?

My father, Dr. Bong Ro, introduced me to the ministry of ATA and I started serving on VET teams in 2013. For six years, I traveled around Asia with the VET teams. In 2019, I was appointed as the Associate Secretary of Accreditation. With the help of Dr. Theresa's mentoring, I've been able to be the convener of many VET teams for the past 5 years. With the blessing of many supporters, ECC seconded me to the ministry of ATA.

While I may not have initially felt qualified for the role of Accreditation Secretary, I recognize that God has guided me step by step to this leadership position, even if it wasn't something I sought after. Trusting in God's work behind the scenes and relying on the support of wise and godly leaders in the CAED and Dr. Theresa Lua's mentorship, I am confident that He will grant me the wisdom and strength needed to make sound decisions in this position. I likewise hang on to my life verse, 2 Corinthians 12:9: But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all

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# ATA Annual meetings held in Bali, Indonesia

It was the week of January 22 to 26 when the leaders of the various ministries of the Asia Theological Association and its Executive board gathered at the Grand Livio Hotel, Bali, Indonesia for the 2024 Annual meetings. The use of the hotel and its facilities, including meals, was through a generous donation- and we praise God for how He wonderfully provided!

Well, that week was refreshing as leaders updated one another of what the Lord had done in 2023 and it was encouraging to plan and dream together for the years ahead. The board rejoiced over how the Lord added to our membership, opened doors for more partnerships and projects, and added people to serve alongside us as we move toward the vision He has given us. Of course, there was an opportunity for the leaders to bond together during the tour held in the middle of the week. It was a lot of fun and allowed for them to strengthen their relationships outside work.

Again, we praise God for His faithfulness to the ministry of the Asia Theological Association and we anticipate the many great things He will do in this new year! ♦



*Publications Committee*



*The AGST Council meeting*



*The meeting of the Commission on Accreditation and Educational Development or CAED.*



*The 2024 Executive Board of ATA.*



*ATA Leaders strengthen their relationship with one another outside work as they tour Bali together.*



# Strengthening Our Accreditation Services: The VET Convenors Training

ATA is committed to coming alongside its member institutions and so we continuously work towards strengthening our services- one of which is accreditation. So, we have organized a VET convenors training, and it was held last November 24-26, 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand. This VET Convenors Training was attended by 12 convenors, namely: Theresa Lua, Jonathan Ro, Rick Weymouth, Bennet Lawrence, Vishwas Padole, Shaiju Thomas, Arun Sarkar, Sooi Ling Tan, Chia Choon, Kwa Kiem Kiok, Jacob Li, and Nativity Petallar (joined online), with the more seasoned ones facilitating the conversations. Those three days together were filled with stories and reflections from leading evaluation visits. Everyone left sharpened.

We praise God for the opportunity to conduct this Convenors training and we hope that this will enable to better serve our member institutions through our accreditation services. ◆



Twelve VET Convenors participated in the Convenors' training held in Bangkok, Thailand. The look on the participants' faces' speak volumes about their time together.



Reflecting and learning together.

Cont... Introducing Dr. Jonathan Ro

*the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. Certainly, His grace is sufficient for the tasks ahead.*

*Before I end this memoir, allow me to let you in on bits of my personal life. I am married and met my wife, Faith, at Wheaton College. She is an American-born Chinese (ABC) who grew up as a pastor's kid in San Francisco. She is an educator and has worked as a teacher and school counselor. Currently, Faith is working as a middle school counselor at the Hong Kong International School. We have three grown children. Our oldest daughter, Caitlyn, is a teacher at the International Christian School in Hong Kong. Our two sons are engineers. Calvin is a Civil engineer working in Naperville, Illinois. Christian is an electrical engineer working in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

*What a privilege to be serving as the new Accreditation Secretary! Keep me and my family in prayer.*

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We praise God for bringing Dr. Jonathan Ro to lead CAED as secretary. Serving with him is Dr. Nativity Petallar, who will be the Associate Secretary.

We also praise God for the 16 years Dr. Theresa Lua has served with CAED- first as Associate Secretary from years 2007 to 2013 and then as CAED Secretary from 2013 to 2023! We praise God for how she has mentored these leaders she is passing the baton to!

Praise God for His faithfulness! ◆

# Get to know Dr. Nativity Petallar, Associate Secretary for Accreditation

A woman passionate about quality assurance and accountability, Dr. Nativity Petallar is not an unfamiliar face within various accreditation and quality review teams, both with ATA and other organizations. So, we are more than pleased to have her join us as one of the new Associate Secretaries for Accreditation, serving alongside Dr. Jonathan Ro. Dr. Petallar will be serving in ATA on a part-time basis.

Besides serving through quality assurance teams, Dr. Petallar has been serving through various teaching and administrative roles. Her teaching areas include Christian education, Research Methods, and Holistic Development of Children and has taught in various institutions across Asia. She has likewise been serving as Professor of Christian Education in the Asia- Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS) since 2019 where she has also been serving as the Program Director for Holistic Child Development (2010- present) and Associate Dean for PhD studies (2018- present).



On serving as one of the new Associate Secretaries for Accreditation, Dr. Petallar says the following: ... *working with ATA is an honor, a huge privilege, and a responsibility as well. I praise the Lord for giving me this wonderful opportunity for my personal and professional growth. My passion revolves around quality*

*assurance and accountability, [so,] working as one of the associate secretaries for Accreditation and Educational Development (CAED) will give me [a] platform [to exercise my passion]. I endeavor, with God's help and the guidance of the ATA General Secretary and the Secretary for Accreditation, to walk alongside member seminaries of ATA towards improving the quality of their programs and providing value-added services.*

Dr. Nativity Petallar is married to Rev. Mark Gil Petallar and they have two sons. Let us uphold her and her family in prayer as she serves alongside Dr. Ro in leading ATA's Accreditation ministry. ♦



Save the Date

## SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND STORIES

Exploring Theology and the Arts in Asia

### ATA Theological Consultation 2024

November 12-15, Chiangmai, Thailand



# Introducing our new journal: The Journal of Asian Theological Education & Spiritual Formation (JATES)

To be published annually from 2024, JATES seeks to enhance the practice and knowledge of theological education and spiritual formation in Asian theological institutions through stimulating reflective thinking, integration, and application from critical perspectives. We also provide reviews of books, dissertations, and theses in the fields of theological education, spiritual formation, and other related disciplines that impact education in Asia.

To contact the editors, Dr. Sooi Ling Tan and Dr. Justin Peter, or submit an article for the journal, please email to [jates.ata@gmail.com](mailto:jates.ata@gmail.com).



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ATA News is a bi-monthly publication of the Asia Theological Association

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