

PENTECOSTAL EDUCATION

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Movements and Associations for Pentecostal Theological Education

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Aims and Scope

Pentecostal Education (formerly The Pentecostal Educator) semiannually e-publishes scholarly and practical articles related to theological education within the Pentecostal tradition to encourage the continuing maturation of Pentecostal theological education. It is intentionally practical, applied, and international.

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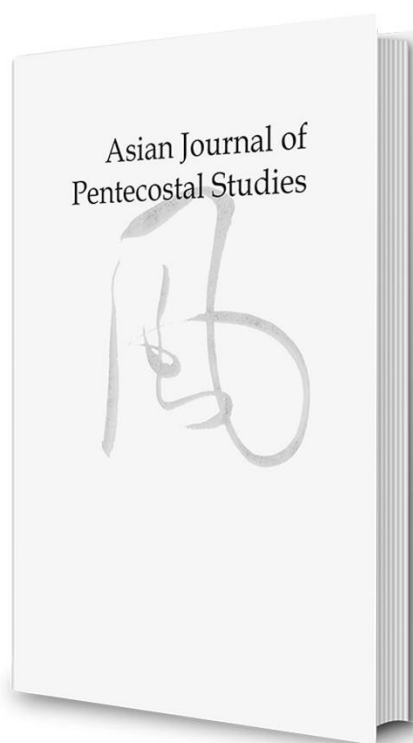
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Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies

The Pentecostal Education: Editorial

The World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education has served the global Pentecostal community for nearly eighteen years. Along the way, there have been annual meetings for the Board, conferences, and workshops that coincide with the Pentecostal World Conference, and many editions of this journal.

It was felt that a more comprehensive overview of our constituency was long overdue. Thus, this is an edition with a difference. What it might lack in scholarly articles is more than compensated for by insightful essays representing our rich and diverse Pentecostal heritage. I am sure you will find this informative and helpful.

Pentecostals have had an ambivalent relationship with education and scholarly activity. Each of our constituent fellowships represents a somewhat different level of commitment to higher education and seminary-level training. Despite this apparent ambivalence, these same fellowships have generally excelled at opening Bible Colleges across the globe. Now we are seeing an ever-increasing commitment on behalf of our fellow Pentecostals who were the beneficiaries of this early missionary activity. It is very gratifying to see excellent Pentecostal scholarship being published by Asian, African, and Latin American scholars.

In this regard, it is my great delight to introduce the new Executive Editor of this journal. Rev Christian Tsekpoe serves at Pentecost University in Accra, Ghana. He holds a PhD degree from the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (in collaboration with Middlesex University). In addition to an impressive educational and academic career, he has served in a number of faculty positions in Ghana. He is currently a member of the Editorial Committee of the Church of Pentecost worldwide. He has served as a fellow of the research faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary and as an adjunct faculty member at the Pentecost Theological Institute and the Birmingham Christian College, amongst others. He has enriched our Pentecostal

theology by his insightful contribution to understanding African traditional religion and its impact on Christian communities. We welcome Dr. Tsekpoe and I wish to express my appreciation to him for taking on this important role.

It would be remiss of me to introduce Dr. Tsekpoe, not to mention the extraordinary contribution of Dr. Miguel Alvarez, who has served as Executive Editor for the past four years, and Dr. Wonsuk Ma, who has served and continues to serve as the Managing Editor. They have remarkable abilities to get the job done in an efficient and timely way. Wonsuk and Miguel, we are very grateful for your service and are grateful that you continue to serve on the WAPTE Board.

The journal welcomes the submission of material from the wider Pentecostal fellowship, and I invite you to become more familiar with the work of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education.

Paul R Alexander
Senior Editor, WAPTE Chair

Guest Editorial

When I joined the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE) in 2019 as its Executive Director, I was immediately struck by the diversity in its membership and the breadth of its reach. WAPTE is a global community, made up of regional associations of theological schools as well as theological education initiatives within Pentecostal movements. Our aim is to foster interaction and collaboration among those dedicated to advancing Pentecostal theological education on a global scale. It is only through these movements that WAPTE's purposes can be realized.

In this volume, we have highlighted the origins, history, impact, and vision of various associations that make up WAPTE. While we have not been able to collect articles from every member association, we are excited to be able to share some key contributions.

First, this volume features contributions from two regional Pentecostal theological associations, the Association for Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (APTEA) and the Asia-Pacific Theological Association (APTA). These associations were fundamental in WAPTE's founding, as these regions saw the need for "developing an umbrella organization to provide greater credibility to the work of the regional associations." Their histories contained here demonstrate that the care for quality assurance among our schools began at a regional level and progressed toward today's world alliance. We are grateful to these associations for their visionary leadership from our beginnings through today.

Second, this volume features contributions from theological initiatives within the Pentecostal movements represented on the WAPTE board. These include the Church of God, International Church of the Foursquare, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and the Assemblies of God (USA). These offices represent missional theological education initiatives from core Pentecostal movements within the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF). We are grateful that these movements are

actively working with our other member associations to empower and strengthen Pentecostal theological education around the world.

Last, this volume features a contribution from a global partner in the Spirit-empowered world, the Global Network for Spirit-Empowered Scholars (GNSES), which serves as the scholarly network of the Empowered21 movement. The GNSES and WAPTE have worked together previously, presenting a joint scholarly consultation in advance of the 2022 Pentecostal World Conference in Seoul. We are again planning a joint consultation leading up to the Helsinki Pentecostal World Conference in June of 2025. We are grateful for the work that GNSES is doing in the broader Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Neo-Pentecostal communities, and for the opportunity to collaborate with them in advancing and promoting Spirit-empowered scholarship.

Each of these associations plays a vital role in the world of Pentecostal theological education, and it is my pleasure to share their histories and visions with you. Although it has been challenging to gather the histories of all the associations actively involved with WAPTE, I hope those collected here are an honorary representation of the good work being done around the globe in Pentecostal theological education. As you read these short histories, I pray that you will be informed, encouraged, and, most of all, challenged to consider your part in training the next generation of Pentecostal leaders through sound theological education.

Barry L. Saylor
Executive Director, WAPTE

APTEA — Serving Pentecostal Bible Training Programs across Africa

Douglas P. Lowenberg

Abstract

The Association for Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (APTEA) is a full-service educational organization serving Pentecostal training institutions and individuals on the African continent in the pursuit of excellence. Its three commissions focus on accreditation, faculty certification, and scholarly writing. The strength of the organization is its triennial conferences where the Bible school leaders are challenged to pursue excellence as they equip the next generation to lead and serve the Church of Africa in fulfilling the Great Commission. From its inception in 2011, APTEA has been a member of WAPTE. The association has a rich heritage, dating back to the late 1980s, and continues to actively impact training programs in many of Africa's nations.

Keywords: Decade of Harvest, Africa Theological Training Services, Commission for Theological Education, *missio Dei*

Beginning out of the Decade of Harvest

The conceptual spark and precursor for the Association for Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (APTEA) began in 1989 with two men, Rev. Don Corbin and Dr. John V. York. Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM),¹ working collaboratively with national churches around the world, stood at the brink of launching the “Decade of Harvest” (DOH) which was a concerted effort of the global fraternity of Assemblies of God churches, in the last decade of the second millennium, to

¹ The global mission outreach of the Assemblies of God (USA) adopted the name Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) in 2001. Previously it was called the Division of Foreign Missions (DFM).

see people of every nation evangelized and discipled, accompanied by aggressive church planting. The AG Church dedicated itself to work and pray “until we witness the evangelization of the entire world.”²

Leading and coordinating the efforts in Africa was Africa Regional Director, Don Corbin, with his team of missionaries serving in Africa. Corbin worked diligently to partner with and mobilize the leaders of national churches from 26 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. By the end of the decade, the number of AG adherents globally nearly doubled.³ At the beginning of the evangelistic effort in 1989, the Assemblies of God worldwide numbered 128,307 churches with 18.5 million adherents. At the end of 1999, there were 212,522 churches and 34.6 million adherents.

According to Jerry S. Jester,⁴ the growth of the African church was unprecedented. From 1989 to 1999, the number of churches grew from 11,700 to 24,800. Church ministers increased from 9,827 to 24,881. The number of Bible schools multiplied from 53 to 205. Enrollment in those schools expanded from 4,055 to 13,109. Adherents burgeoned from 2.1 million to 8.8 million people.

Corbin was keen on enhancing the mission’s partnership with national church leaders to one of a “relational fraternity,” which he labeled “the friendship bond.”⁵ The collegiality and trust developed between the mission and national churches, along with a deep reliance on the leading of the Holy Spirit,

² Joe Hewes, “History of World Missions in the Assemblies of God,” 4, accessed August 12, 2024,

<https://pastorjoeheves.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/missions-week-5.pdf>.

³ AG General Secretary’s Office, Statistics: “AG Worldwide Churches and Adherents, 1987-2015,” June 1, 2016, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://ag.org>.

⁴ Jerry S. Jester, “Empowered Belonging through Identity Transformation: Assemblies of God Church Planting Narratives from West Africa since 1990” (PhD diss., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2014), 66, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.proquest.com/openview/4fedbfc3ab856e36e85d63bb41a029d2/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>.

⁵ Jester, “Assemblies of God Church Planting Narratives,” 57.

resulted in this unparalleled growth. He implemented a two-pronged strategy for church expansion and sustainability: 1) plant strong and healthy local churches; and 2) train men and women from indigenous national churches to lead the new church plants.⁶

The second key player who took the lead in the training component for the DOH in Africa was John V. York. York and his family began their missions service in Nigeria in 1972 where he taught and directed Bible schools until 1989. When a new initiative of AGWM/Africa, Africa Theological Training Service (ATTS), was founded in 1989, York was appointed to lead the training effort. He moved to Malawi and then Togo establishing regional offices for ATTS. York constantly emphasized the need for the theological training of African pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and educators, and at the heart of their preparation was the cultivation of a commitment to the mission of God (*missio Dei*). “The Lord wills that the Bible schools of Africa shake the world.”⁷ Every individual, local church, and the national church was responsible for being filled with the Holy Spirit and participating in fulfilling Christ’s Great Commission of “discipling the nations” (Matt. 28:19-20). For York, the Bible schools that already existed needed to pursue excellence in all aspects of their training operations to ensure that graduates would be grounded in Scripture, filled with the Holy Spirit, committed to God’s global mission, and serve as faithful shepherds of God’s flock, the local church. York moved to the States in 1997 due to declining health but continued directing the ministries of ATTS.

If scores of new churches were to be planted, multitudes of new men and women needed to be trained to pastor these communities and conserve the spiritual harvest. This required the establishment of new Bible schools and extension programs, and the accessibility of training for all called to ministerial leadership. Efforts for launching new Bible schools that would perform at a high level of effectiveness would demand the participation of the entire mission working in full collaboration with national church leadership. The underlining

⁶ Jester, “Assemblies of God Church Planting Narratives,” 60.

⁷ John V. York to Norman D. Anderson, April 23, 1997, personal letter.

presupposition of Corbin and York was that Bible schools needed to maintain symbiotic relationships with their national churches. Schools relied on the support of their national churches and were accountable to the church for their performance and productivity. Church leaders needed to cultivate valued relationships with graduates so that upon finishing their studies, they would be assigned a place of ministry.

With the rapid growth of churches and schools during the DOH, it quickly became apparent that a mechanism was needed to assess the operational systems of schools and evaluate the ministry effectiveness of graduates as the outcomes of the Bible school training process. To assess meaningful training, a recognized standard of excellence had to be determined, and then schools needed to be encouraged to work to measure up to these thresholds. Initially efforts were made to associate with Evangelical accrediting bodies operating on the continent, but these advances were met with resistance due to the strong and uncompromising commitment of AG schools to train their students in biblical and Pentecostal beliefs and practices. The Africa Office and ATTS (Corbin and York) called for the formation of the Commission for Theological Education (CTE) in 1992, and the body was formally recognized in 1995. York called on missionary educators in Africa, such as Dr. Marvin Gilbert, Rev. G.L. Haggard, and Dr. Norman D. Anderson, to develop a set of standards by which schools could be evaluated. Along with an assessment tool, a procedure was developed for schools to engage in the appraisal process. While York led the training and development efforts of ATTS and CTE, he emphasized that these organizations needed to provide the structure, encouragement, support, and validation for Bible schools and function to assist schools in reaching their full potential as Pentecostal training institutions.

Ten standards were established against which schools would first examine themselves through a rigorous self-study.⁸

⁸ The ten standards include a concise mission statement, goals, and objectives; educational programs; faculty and staff; student development; learning resources; governance and administration; physical resources; financial resources, and student outcomes.

The first and most important standard required the articulation of a clear and concise statement of mission and purpose. From there, the school conducted a self-assessment to measure its compliance with the remaining nine standards. Once drafted, the report was submitted to CTE, followed by the visit of an international team consisting of national church and mission's personnel to confirm the self-study report and offer recommendations on ways to improve the institution's effectiveness.

The first Bible school on the continent to be endorsed was Instituto Bíblico de Angola das Assembléias de Deus, whose director was Rev. José Carlos, in 1997. The visiting team consisted of Jean Bandé (Burkina Faso), Bill Johnston (Swaziland), and Norman Anderson (USA). York gave them these instructions: "Each of the ten standards should be meticulously applied to the self-study, strengths and weaknesses noted, and a clear plan of action understood and committed to by all."⁹ The self-study report and the team's onsite evaluation were sent to the chairman of CTE who continued to communicate with and monitor the progress of the school as it addressed deficiencies in reaching the standards. When all the standards were met, or the institution presented a clear plan on how each weakness was being addressed, the endorsement was awarded to the school for a 5-year period.¹⁰ Endorsement was an ecclesiastical award acknowledging that a school was operating effectively, efficiently, and spiritually in fulfilling its mission. The endorsement was presented by both ATTS/CTE and the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance (AAGA), an alliance of all national Assemblies of God Churches in Africa. Involving AAGA in the award served to keep the AG indigenous churches alert to the critical nature of training, to stay aware of the progress their schools were making across the continent in achieving

Explanations and objective indicators of each standard are detailed in the *Bible School Leadership Manual*, 2nd ed., edited by John Easter and Carl Gibbs (Springfield, MO: Africa's Hope, 2021).

⁹ York to Anderson, April 23, 1997, letter.

¹⁰ If there were noted deficiencies, the endorsement was limited to 3 years with additional site visits to insure conformity to the standards.

excellence in their training programs, and to bond together national churches and Bible schools from across the continent for a greater purpose — the fulfillment of the Great Commission.¹¹

From CTE minutes throughout the 1990s, it appears that Corbin sat in on many of the CTE committee meetings to keep abreast of the progress of Bible schools seeking endorsement. He mobilized his entire African missionary team, including area representatives, team leaders overseeing individual countries, and local missionary personnel, to encourage every Bible school on the continent to pursue endorsement with the CTE. The schools engaged in the process were to be visited by AGWM workers to inspire school leaders to achieve their goals. To further encouragement the quest for endorsement, Corbin enlisted the participation of other ministry arms of AGWM who could provide learning resources, especially library books, for those schools which achieved endorsement. A key contributor of books for Bible school libraries was Rev. Jerry Flokstra and his ministry, “Africa Library Services Office” (ALSO).¹² Throughout the DOH, Flokstra used the funds provided by the Africa office to purchase books at discounted prices multiplying the library resources for endorsed schools.

The Years from 2000-2011

Moving into the new millennium, other mission organizations and their affiliated national churches noted the quality work of ATTS and CTE and inquired about developing and formalizing inter-missional and interdenominational agreements with this endorsing body. One such mission was the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) and their fraternal churches in Africa. As of 2001, the PAOC operated 13 institutions across Africa providing ministerial training for 5000 students. Led by Dr. Irving Whitt and Dr. Kirk Kauffeldt, the PAOC’s educational initiative in Africa, the Theological Education and Leadership

¹¹ York to Anderson, April 23, 1997, letter.

¹² Under the leadership of Flokstra’s son, Gary, and his wife, Glenna, ALSO has morphed into “4 The World Resource Distributors” and continues to be a strong supporter of training in Africa. See <https://4wrld.org/>.

Training Advisory Council (TELTAC), requested to have their schools included in the CTE endorsement process for the purpose of achieving a recognized level of standardization and professionalism.

By early 2002, CTE developed an *Endorsement Resource Manual* and worked to refine the composition of its visiting teams. The number of residential training programs had grown to 73 AG and 14 PAOC campuses. With the expectation that every school would pursue endorsement, the concern of the CTE chairman, Rev. Jerry Spain (missionary educator having served in Tanzania and Kenya, at this time resident in the States), and the other committee members, Bill Kirsch (South Africa), Jean Pawentaore (Burkina Faso), John Ikoni (Nigeria), and John York (USA), was how they would have the time and finance to visit all the schools. Their plan was to recruit educators from the PAOC to provide additional personnel for the envisioned site visits.¹³

Schools pursuing endorsement slowed below expectations during the decade of 2000-2010. In 2006, CTE reported that they had endorsed 25 schools. By 2010, the number had increased to 29. There were several significant events that may have affected the expected trajectory of schools seeking endorsement. A new Regional Director, Rev. Mike McClafin, replaced Don Corbin in 2003 and led AGWM's ministry in Africa until 2014. Like his predecessor, McClafin noted the importance of training for the church in Africa, "Because of the tremendous church growth, we have an enormous need to train pastors and other leaders."¹⁴ In 2004, a new facility was constructed in Springfield, Missouri, to house ATTS and the

¹³ CTE Minutes, Honeydew, South Africa, January 12, 2002. It should be noted that the minutes referred to 73 AG resident Bible Colleges. Comparing this number with the statistics provided in Jester's dissertation, the discrepancy could be explained by considering the existence of 132 extension programs scattered across the continent which were not targeted for endorsement at this time.

¹⁴ Paulina C. "Regional Director Appointed," *The Christian Post*, January 1, 2003, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/regional-director-appointed.html>.

CTE. To bring clarity for the AG American church regarding the mission of ATTS, the name “Africa’s Hope” was adopted and used for communication with American churches while the ministry continued to be known as ATTS in Africa. The mission statement of Africa’s Hope stated: “We exist to facilitate training that equips the church in Africa to disciple the nations in the power of the Holy Spirit. Spirit-empowered, biblically trained leaders are the hope of Africa.”¹⁵ Dr. York passed away in 2005 after an extended battle with cancer. One of York’s final victories was the successful launch of Pan-Africa Theological Seminary in Lomé, Togo, in 2005, a doctoral program serving the national churches of the continent. With his death, McClafflin assumed the role of executive director for ATTS from 2005 to 2007. In 2007, Dr. Bill Kirsch was appointed director of ATTS and led the ministry until 2012. Kirsch first served as York’s administrator at ATTS beginning in 2000 before taking this new role. Dr. Carl Gibbs, former missionary to Brazil and academic dean of graduate studies at Global University (USA), transferred to Africa’s Hope and was appointed chairman of the CTE in 2006. Gibbs worked to strengthen the endorsement process, include interdenominational evaluation, and guarantee that the association was providing quality assurance in the performance of its member schools.

Meanwhile, there were calls from across the continent for a full-service association that could provide endorsement and accreditation for schools, offer teacher training and certification for Bible college faculty, and promote scholarly research and writing by African Pentecostal scholars addressing critical, theological issues for the church and academy. At the 2008 ATTS continental meeting in Togo, Africa’s Hope invited Dr. John Carter, a missionary educator from the Philippines, to advise the delegation on the structure and function of this type of association. A steering committee was formed by CTE to investigate the need for a Pan-African Pentecostal Theological Association.¹⁶ Subsequently, three meetings were convened in Togo, Kenya, and South Africa to gather feedback on the

¹⁵ “Africa’s Hope,” accessed August 14, 2024, <https://www.africashope.org/>.

¹⁶ The key individuals serving on the steering committee were Gibbs, Carter, Easter, and Joy York.

purpose for the association and promote buy-in from missionaries and national church leaders representing several Pentecostal denominations and missions. When the idea of the association was presented to AAGA in 2009, it was enthusiastically approved. Throughout 2010, the steering committee developed essential accreditation tools, a tentative constitution and bylaws for this type of full-service organization, and an agenda for a meeting of Bible school and mission representatives that could officially launch an association to address the needs of Pentecostal training across Africa. A key individual who spent hours drafting the constitution and building a list of potential members was Rev. Joy York, John York's wife.¹⁷ The meeting was called in February 2011.

APTEA's Launch in 2011

At the gathering in Limuru, Kenya, 74 interdenominational and international missions and national church leaders representing 41 institutions and organizations from 20 countries, officially set in order the Association for Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (APTEA), a theological educational association serving Pentecostal schools and denominations located on the African continent.¹⁸ Dr. John L. Easter was elected as the first executive director of the association. A constitution and bylaws were adopted, officers were selected, and three commissions were appointed, which were: 1) Endorsement and Accreditation; 2) Faculty Enrichment and Certification; and 3) Scholarly Research and Writing. Those selected to make up the Board of Directors consisted of three representative groups: *Denominational Representatives*: Lazarus Chakwera — Africa Assemblies of

¹⁷ Rev. Joy York remained very engaged at Africa's Hope and PATHs until her retirement in 2022.

¹⁸ Sixty-one people from 24 nations made up the initial invitation list for the first APTEA Triennial Conference in Limuru, February 2011. The statistics for the conference were recorded by Rev. Joy York in the "APTEA First Triennial Conference, Brackenhurst Conference Centre, Limuru, Kenya, 20-23 February 2011, MINUTES."

God Alliance, and first chairman of the Board; Vincent Atterbury — Apostolic Faith Mission; and Simon-Peter Emiau — Pentecostal Assemblies of Africa. *Regional Representatives* were: North Africa: Jeremy Feller; West Africa: Jean Bandé; Central Africa: John Ikoni; East Africa: Barnabas Mtokambali; and South Africa: Adrian Chalwe. The *Members at Large* were Peter Njiri, Greg Beggs, Irving Whitt, and Harrison Sakala. The chairs of the three commissions were Robert Shipley, Endorsement and Accreditation Commission;¹⁹ Enson Lwesya, Scholarly Research and Writing Commission; and Murriell McCulley, Faculty Enrichment and Certification Commission.

The mission statement of the association stated that its purpose was “to promote the mission of God by facilitating and ensuring excellence in member institutions through recognition of academic programs, faculty development, institutional enrichment, and scholarly writing.”²⁰ Mike McClaffin, speaking on the important function of APTEA, commented, “Churches are being planted at an unprecedented rate. No need is more critical in Africa right now than training pastors to conserve this incredible harvest that is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.”²¹ The twenty-nine schools that had earned their endorsement through CTE were grandfathered into APTEA as endorsed institutions.

Easter served in the role of executive director until 2020 when Dr. Doug Lowenberg, missionary to Ethiopia, was chosen. In addition to his responsibilities with APTEA, Easter became co-director for Africa’s Hope in 2012, sharing the leadership responsibilities with Kirsch and Rev. Kirk Spain. In 2013, Easter was appointed by McClaffin as the sole director of Africa’s Hope. With a vast array of personnel working at AH, strong financial support, and abundant resources, Easter inspired and marshalled Africa’s Hope to give direction and support to APTEA along with AH’s many ministry engagements to bolster Bible school training across Africa. Triennial

¹⁹ Dr. Jeff Nelson replaced Dr. Shipley in 2012 as the chair of the Endorsement and Accreditation Commission.

²⁰ APTEA Constitution and Bylaws, 2011, 5.

²¹ AG News, “APTEA News Release,” February 24, 2011.

conferences were convened in 2014,²² 2017,²³ and 2020²⁴ when Lowenberg began his tenure. The fifth triennial conference convened in 2023.

While APTEA was emerging, there was momentum to organize a global Pentecostal educational association, with support coming from African missionary educators and national church leaders along with Pentecostal trainers from around the world, to provide oversight and validation of continental accrediting associations. In July of 2009, Africa's Hope hosted a meeting to launch a global association to provide a standardized and unifying covering for regional accrediting associations. The result was the formation of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE) in 2010.²⁵ At the Pentecostal World Fellowship Assembly in Stockholm in 2010, Dr. Jack Hayford called for WAPTE to be named the official educational arm of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF).²⁶ At this PWF assembly, thirteen educational organizations were recognized as founding members of WAPTE including APTEA, contingent of its formal launch and based on the effectiveness of its parent organization, CTE, operating since 1992. At the invitation of WAPTE, when APTEA was officially established in 2011, the association immediately became a member organization of WAPTE serving the Pentecostal theological and educational constituency of the geographical region of Africa.

²² Two Bible schools were awarded endorsement at the 2014 Triennial Conference. By 2014, the APTEA Endorsement Standards had been translated into French and Portuguese.

²³ Approximately 83 delegates attended the 2017 Triennial in Johannesburg, South Africa.

²⁴ For the Fourth Triennial Conference in 2020, days prior to the coronavirus global epidemic, 130 delegates gathered in Nairobi, Kenya.

²⁵ Ken Horn, "Pentecostals Convene for Triennial Conference," *Pentecostal Evangel*, November 28, 2010, 24-25; and AG News, "Pentecostal Theological Alliance Established," *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 27, 2010, 25.

²⁶ "Pentecostal Theological Alliance Established," *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 6, 2010, 27.

APTEA Today

The 2023 Triennial Conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates numbering 143 attended the gathering from 32 countries. Dr. Andrew Mkwaila was appointed as chairman of the board. Dr. Emmanuel Amofo became the chair of the Scholarly Research and Writing Commission; and Rev. Gloria Biffert was selected as chair for Faculty Enrichment and Certification.²⁷ During the 3-day event, plenary sessions and workshops were offered on the theme, “Regeneration for Enhanced Fruitfulness (John 15:16).” Time was set aside for discussion groups, fellowship, and concert prayer. Teaching certificates were awarded. Strong enthusiasm was expressed by delegates to pursue a self-study for their training institutions. Resources were distributed. And a half-day academic symposium allowed for papers to be presented by African scholars.

At the 2024 Annual APTEA board meeting, convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Dr. James Kesanta was appointed chair for the Endorsement and Accreditation Commission. However, in the meeting, the board decided to eliminate the endorsement category and only offer accreditation. Benchmarks for achieving this status are being determined based on the academic training level of a school — whether the program is at the diploma, advanced diploma, bachelors, masters, or doctoral level. The board began discussions on clarifying the job assignments of the five regional representatives. Further deliberations took place on how to best evaluate the performance of informal and non-formal training programs, both those that are residential and web-based. And rather than having various levels of association membership, it was decided

²⁷ The full 2023 APTEA Board consists of the following: Chairman, Dr. Andrew Mkwaila; Executive Director, Dr. Douglas Lowenberg; Secretary, Dr. Jeremy Feller; Treasurer, Dr. Murriell McCulley; Denominational Representatives, Dr. Désiré Gnanchou (AOG), Dr. Simon-Peter Emiau (PAG), Dr. Victor Herbst (AFM), Dr. Kirk Kauffeldt (PAOC); Regional Representatives, North Africa, Rev. Ermisha Beyene; Central Africa, Dr. Cécile Bomboko; West Africa, Dr. Jacques Compaore; East Africa, Rev. John Tuu; Southern Africa, Rev. Helio Suma; Members at Large, Rev. Randy Tarr (Director, Africa’s Hope); Dr. Carl Gibbs (ATTS); Honoree Member, Dr. John Easter.

that any school that meets the criteria standards for membership, may join and be listed on the APTEA web site. Two lists on the site will distinguish those schools that have been accredited and those that are simply members. The date of the awarding of accreditation and the time of expiration will be identified.

APTEA continues to focus on the work of its three commissions and hosting the triennial conferences. Currently, there are 102 schools and 155 individuals who are members of the association. Since its inception first as the CTE and now as APTEA, 41 schools have been endorsed and 3 accredited.²⁸ The commissions serve schools being endorsed, faculty receiving training leading to certification, and scholarly writing being promoted through symposiums and the publication of the association's electronic journal, *PneumAfrica Journal*. The commission chairs²⁹ are working diligently to see enhanced participation from member schools with each of the three initiatives. When a school informs the association that they want to begin a self-study for the purpose of accreditation, the chair of the Accreditation Commission walks them through the steps and continues to encourage them throughout the process. Three levels of teacher certification can be obtained based on the training and performance of faculty members. The chair of the Commission for Faculty Enrichment and Certification is actively offering training both in person, online, and with videos to empower teachers to be more learning- and outcomes-oriented. The chair for Scholarly Research and Writing offers workshops to schools and regions where there is a request for guidance in developing scholarly research methodologies and in academic writing. Under his leadership, the *PneumAfrica Journal* is published twice annually. African scholars are encouraged to write peer reviewed articles addressing a wide variety of topics which are included in the

²⁸ The schools accredited are West Africa Advanced School of Theology, Lomé, Togo; Pan-Africa Theological Seminary, Lomé, Togo; and Pan Africa Christian College, Harare, Zimbabwe.

²⁹ The current chairs are Dr. James Kesanta, Accreditation Commission; Rev. Gloria Biffert, Faculty Enrichment and Certification; and Dr. Emmanuel Amofo, Scholarly Research and Writing.

journal. Contacts have been made with several book publishers interested in exposing African scholarship to the world.

The Triennial Conferences have been the heartbeat of the association. The emphasis at each gathering remains the pursuit of excellence and quality assurance in the operation of every school, the maintaining of orthodox Pentecostalism in doctrine and practice, upholding a missional focus on the completion of the Great Commission, prioritizing biblical knowledge and scholarship, preserving close relationships between schools and national churches, and the producing of servant practitioners committed to the growth of the local church and its relevance in the society. APTEA attempts to locate the conferences across the continent to encourage maximum participation. While East and South Africa have provided venues easily accessible for membership, the next conference is targeted for West Africa. At the conferences, along with training, inspiration, prayer, and resource distribution, members are encouraged to develop partnerships, collegiality, and collaboration with one another.

Challenges

There are several challenges facing APTEA. Current statistics for the Assemblies of God report that there is some level of ministry activity in 48 of the 54 countries in Africa. Several of these countries have no missionaries and only a nascent national church, but Bible school training is needed. There are 95,000 churches, 73,000 ministers, and 23 million believers. Across the continent, 380 schools are training 25,000 students.³⁰ One of APTEA's member denominations, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, report 14 partnering Bible training programs.³¹ Another member, the Apostolic Faith

³⁰ These statistics are limited to information gathered from "Africa's Hope," accessed August 12, 2024, <https://www.africashope.org/>; and "AGWM Africa," accessed August 12, 2024, <https://agwm.org/en/regions/africa/>.

³¹ "Global Education of the PAOC," accessed August 14, 2024, <https://paoc.org/mission-global/programs/globaled>.

Mission, has 4 schools in South Africa.³² Many more Pentecostal, theological training programs are needed to supply churches with well-trained pastors. In the past, schools that had expatriate missionary educators working alongside national trainers have produced transformational training systems. But several mission organizations report a decline in the number of missionary educators coming to the continent. And while the ultimate goal of indigenous Bible school education is a school with its own, highly qualified, national faculty and staff in the pursuit of high standards, collaboration in the training context with missionary educators, who bring a different worldview, enhances quality education.

Numerous training programs have been established by indigenous denominations and independent churches. APTEA could help them in their pursuit of excellence and offer accreditation, but gaining access to these institutions can be a struggle due to differences in doctrine and practice, language, geographical distance, busy schedules, and a lack of understanding regarding the benefits of accreditation. Even for the 100+ schools that are members of the association, less than half have completed a self-study in pursuit of accreditation. In these cases, school leadership does not recognize the benefits of a thorough self-study; or they are too busy with other issues to organize and start the process; or they assume their school cannot meet the standards, so why try? And as the association matures, it is a challenge to follow up with schools that need to renew their accreditation.

The current leadership team for APTEA is all volunteer, consisting of gifted people who carry numerous responsibilities beyond their involvement with the association. Where in the past the executive director also served as the director of Africa's Hope/ATTS, the current executive director functions as a local AGWM missionary on the continent, unlike the days of York, McClaflin, Kirsch, and Easter. Devoting time to engage member schools scattered over the continent requires additional commitment from these already loaded with local, national, and international duties. And yet, attempts by APTEA leadership to engage local schools is needed especially at the

³² "Apostolic Faith Mission," accessed August 14, 2024, <http://www.pctii.org/afm.html>.

regional and local levels. Accurate recordkeeping is challenging. The association is working to find efficient methods to maintain detailed records of those schools that have been and are being accredited, of teachers seeking certifications, and of members keeping their dues current. Africa's Hope, led by Rev. Randy Tarr, continues as a strong supporter of APTEA by assisting with finances for triennial conferences, producing curriculum for diploma programs, offering teacher seminars, creating software for library and academic operations, and conducting regional, educational seminars. The reality is that the APTEA team is small, and finances are limited, but the board and commission chairs are committed to fulfilling their mission to serve the educational needs of the continent and member schools.

Jesus Christ declared that he would build his church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). He also said that the harvest is great, but the laborers are few (Matt 9:37). Christ is building his church in Africa and the harvest is abundant, but trained, Pentecostal, biblically grounded, servant leaders are few. Academically and experientially equipped, relevant, and committed instructors are insufficient, whether they are indigenous or foreign. Bible schools with a robust faculty and strong curriculum, striving for excellence, are in short supply. Yet the need for hosts of trained pastors to plant new and lead established churches increases daily. An association like APTEA functioning on the continent of Africa is vital.

Conclusion

In reflecting on the history of APTEA, several conclusions can be drawn. The mission of APTEA is not to recruit missionary and national educators. This must be a priority of mission organizations and national churches. But for schools and educators based on African soil, APTEA has the mandate to encourage them to participate as members of the association and pursue accreditation through the self-study process. Schools need to require every member of their faculty to be teacher certified. African schools and national church leaders need to recognize the value of African contextualized theology and provide time and funding for their faculty to address

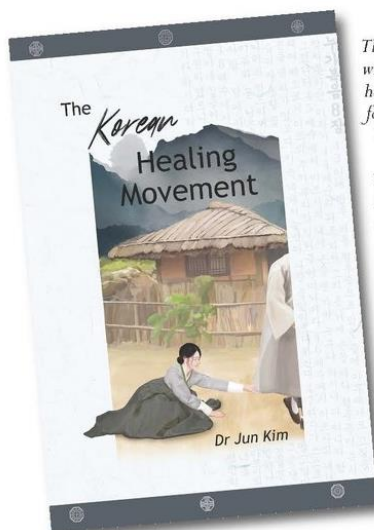
critical spiritual and social issues through research and academic writing. Mission organizations and national churches, not just departments or committees, need to stand with APTEA to assure the quality performance of their Bible schools and institutions. The goal of having every Bible school accredited, all teachers certified, and many African faculty generating relevant, scholarly, Pentecostal materials, will require mission and national church engagement from the top echelons of these organizations, through their hierarchies of leadership, down to the local pastors and missionaries, who believe that trained, Pentecostal, biblically grounded, servant leaders are the hope for the transformation of Africa and the means for fulfilling the Great Commission.

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Asia Pacific Theological Association

Stephen Fogarty

Abstract

The Asia Pacific Theological Association (APTA) has played a critical role in shaping Pentecostal theological education in the Asia-Pacific region. Since its founding in 1987, APTA has provided a platform for the accreditation, development, and networking of Pentecostal Bible schools and theological colleges. By promoting localized scholarship, it has addressed contextual theological issues specific to the region while maintaining Pentecostal doctrinal integrity. The association's three Commissions—Accreditation, Teacher Development and Certification, and Theological—have supported the academic, institutional, and ministerial effectiveness of member schools. APTA's efforts have extended globally, influencing theological accreditation standards beyond the Asia-Pacific region and contributing to the creation of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE).

Keywords: Asia Pacific Theological Association, accreditation, theological scholarship, ministerial training, teacher development, Pentecostal theological institutions

Influence

Over the thirty-five years of its existence Asia Pacific Theological Association (APTA) has helped shape Pentecostal theological education in Asia Pacific and globally. It has become a focal point and a unifying influence for Assemblies of God (AOG) and Pentecostal Bible Schools and Theological Colleges across the Asia Pacific. In doing so, it has contributed to member schools' academic and institutional development and the effectiveness of Pentecostal training in the region.

Triennial General Assemblies and annual Theological Symposia have provided forums for reflection on theological

and pedagogical issues, as well as fellowship and interaction for the academic staff of member institutions. The three APTA Commissions – Accreditation, Teacher Development and Certification, and Theological – have contributed to the development of theological scholarship and accreditation and teaching certification standards across member schools.

APTA has sought to address theological issues pertinent to the Asia Pacific region by encouraging and stimulating localized scholarship and training. It has fostered cooperation between Pentecostal scholars and Bible schools and has been a catalyst for the improvement of theological education and ministry training.

Origin

The Asia Pacific region extends from Northern Asia through Central, East, and Southeast Asia to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific islands. It is a vast and diverse region culturally, economically, and politically. Beginning in the early twentieth century and continuing through to the twenty-first century Pentecostal movements such as the Assemblies of God have commenced and grown in most of the countries of the region. Western missionaries often started these movements, but most also had significant local leadership and cultural characteristics from their inception. The need for theologically competent church leaders and pastors quickly became apparent. As a result, Bible schools were established by Pentecostal movements in most nations throughout the region to provide theological education and ministry training. Typically, these schools were supported and staffed by Western mission organizations.

The number and variety of Bible schools in diverse operating contexts highlighted to church leaders and missionary educators that standards for education, training, and collaboration between the various schools would enhance the faithfulness to the Gospel and effectiveness in the training of all. This is the background for the cooperative endeavors that led to the formation of APTA.

In April 1987, representatives of seventeen AOG Bible schools in the Asia Pacific region met to discuss the possibility of a Pentecostal association to facilitate quality assurance,

teacher training, fellowship, accreditation, and research and scholarship. A proposal for the establishment of APTA was unanimously endorsed in September 1987 by the East Asia Educational Conference. This led to a process of consultation from 1987 to 1990 involving twice-yearly weeklong meetings to draft a constitution, bylaws, and accreditation standards. While standards were benchmarked to other theological associations, there was a strong commitment to preserve Pentecostal theology and practice. The commitment of time and resources to establishing APTA was noteworthy, involving Assemblies of God missionaries and national AOG representatives from Asia Pacific in a cooperative effort. It demonstrated the strong desire among Assemblies of God leaders and educators in the Asia Pacific region for a theological association that would provide accreditation and enhance the quality standards of Pentecostal Bible schools.

APTA was formally established, and member schools were admitted at its first General Assembly held in Port Dickson, Malaysia, in September 1990 as a network of Bible schools, theological educators, missionaries, and ministry practitioners. The fifty-eight charter member schools represented nearly every AOG Bible school in Asia and the Pacific at that time. The keynote speaker for the event was Prince Guneratnam, General Superintendent of the AOG Malaysia. The first APTA Board Chair was Rev. Akei Ito from Japan, and the first Executive Director was Rev. Johnny Yeo from Malaysia. These were apt appointments for the beginning of an Asia Pacific Theological Association. APTA has consistently demonstrated a high degree of engagement and cooperation between missionaries and national leaders. This can be seen in the membership of the Board and Commissions and participation in General Assemblies and Theological Symposia.

Prior to the formation of APTA, historically, Pentecostal Bible schools in Asia were not always welcomed into existing mainline and evangelical accrediting associations. As well, many governments in the Asia Pacific have not accredited theological degrees. APTA filled an accreditation void for Pentecostal Bible schools. It also addressed the growing need for standardized theological education in the Asia-Pacific region. Before its formation, Bible schools in the region

operated largely in isolation, with varying standards and curricula. The need for a unified body to ensure quality and consistency in theological education was evident.

The founding members of APTA recognized the importance of a cooperative approach to theological education. They sought to create an association that would not only set academic standards but also foster a sense of community and mutual support among theological institutions. This has continued to the present.

Purposes

The APTA constitution states four purposes for the association which reflect the intention of the founding members.

The first purpose is to provide a means for member schools to ensure that their education is focused on the underlying philosophy and distinctives of Pentecostal Christianity. Pedagogy should incorporate openness to the immediate and ongoing influence of the Holy Spirit. Education should be based on a high view of Scripture as the Word of God. The goal of training should be to produce ministers of the Word who are committed to and competent in proclaiming Christ within their context. APTA member schools should pursue academic excellence, student spiritual life development, and effective and practical field ministry training within this ethos. This should produce training programs that are developed and adjusted to the needs of the students, the church, and the culture.

The second purpose is to establish standards that provide direction in the development and effectiveness of ministerial training programs. Upon these standards, the association provides accreditation services and facilitates the transfer of credits among member schools.

The third is to provide criteria for member schools to assess the effectiveness of their working relationships with the churches and other Pentecostal ministries within their areas.

Finally, APTA exists to promote close working relationships and the sharing of resources among the schools of the region, and to promote communication with the worldwide Pentecostal Bible school network.

APTA continues to fulfil these purposes through the operation of its three Commissions and the convening of

General Assemblies and theological symposia and training sessions.

Leadership

The APTA General Assembly is the legislative body of the association, and an Executive Board provides effective governance to APTA between the triennial General Assemblies. Board members are elected from the various regions within Asia Pacific and, in turn, elect a chairperson and other executive officers. The Board appoints an Executive Director to serve the association and promote its concerns. The Executive Director is responsible for the development and general management of the association.

APTA has benefited from consistent and stable leadership over its history. At the first APTA General Assembly, Rev. Johnny Yeo of Malaysia was appointed to be the Executive Director. He was succeeded by Rev. Abraham Visca of the Philippines and followed by Dr. Stanley Lim of Malaysia. Since 2007, Dr. Alex Fuentes of the Philippines has been Executive Director, and his leadership has produced institutional membership growth and enhanced association activity as the three commissions have become more active and effective. Each Executive Director has advanced the purposes of APTA and the association's growth by adding new member institutions. They have visited and strengthened member schools and their leadership and have maintained strong and healthy relationships with the leadership of Pentecostal movements throughout the region.

The initial APTA Board Chair was Rev Akei Ito from Japan. He was succeeded by Rev. Derek Tan. Dr John Carter, President of Asia Pacific Theological Seminary and founding chair of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education, was APTA Board Chair from 2005 to 2008. Professor Stephen Fogarty, President of Alphacrucis University College, has been Board Chair since 2008.

APTA's structures and leadership have facilitated the continuity of the association's operation over many decades and stimulated cooperation and unity. APTA has been remarkably free from conflict and division and has maintained continuous

operation of its core functions and strengthened its financial viability.

Commissions

APTA's Mission is to facilitate the ongoing development and effectiveness of the Bible schools of the region by providing a vehicle for cooperation and networking, accreditation and teacher accreditation and teacher certification services, regional conferences, and other programs as shall be deemed necessary.

The three active commissions are key to the outworking of this mission. The Accreditation Commission (AC), the Teacher Development and Certification Commission (TDCC), and the Theological Commission (TC) operationalize the stated objectives. Together these commissions provide means for member schools to ensure that their education is focused on Pentecostal distinctives, academic excellence, student spiritual life development, effective and practical field ministry training, and training programs that are developed and adjusted to the needs of the students, the church, and the culture.

The Accreditation Commission developed accreditation processes focused on balancing academic excellence and practical ministry application over a series of consultations from 1990 to 1993. The accreditation service was launched at the APTA General Assembly in Hong Kong in 1993. Since then, fourteen Bible schools have sought APTA accreditation. The schools are in Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, and Taiwan.

APTA takes a whole school approach to accreditation, which focuses on an institution being guided by well-defined and appropriate goals with effective procedures to achieve those goals. The Accreditation Standards are aimed at building a healthy, effective, and sustainable theological institution. They commence with a focus on institutional mission which should resonate with Scriptural and constituent mandates.

Contribution to mission is to be the basis of faculty and staff appointments and the design of educational programs. Student services and resources are to be designed to encourage the full and appropriate development of the student's spiritual, social, and intellectual potential, considering his or her needs,

interests, and capabilities. Graduates should exhibit a healthy commitment to the mission of the school and to ministry involvement. The result is to be a strong and constructive relationship between the school and the churches it serves.

In distinction from other approaches, APTA's model of accreditation is based on the performance of the entire institution rather than selected academic programs. The accreditation process is designed to help Bible schools strategically position themselves for wholistic development. It has been demonstrated that Bible schools that are accredited with APTA find themselves in a better position when seeking government accreditation in their respective countries. The latest revision of the Accreditation Standards is focused on delivering quality education and training in a digital world.

The Teacher Development and Certification Commission (TDCC) commenced in 1996 as the Teacher Certification Commission, later changing its name to reflect a focus on faculty development. It provides two key services to faculty and teachers of APTA Bible schools – professional development and certification.

TDCC has held regular teacher development workshops and seminars at Bible schools throughout the region and in conjunction with APTA General Assemblies. Subjects addressed have included writing a syllabus, designing and revising courses, creative teaching methods, assessment methods, course evaluation, and developing relationships with students. Seminar and workshop topics have ranged from “Designing Effective Courses” to “Spicing Up Your Classes” and “Brain-Friendly Teaching.”

The second key service of TDCC is overseeing teacher certification. APTA has developed objective criteria for teacher certification focusing on Christian character, experience, doctrinal integrity, education, and academic qualifications. These criteria provide guidance for Bible schools in selecting faculty, helping them to achieve certification, recognizing their training and experience, and incentivizing them to develop their teaching skills.

The Theological Commission (TC) was launched at the Sydney General Assembly in 1999 with the goal of encouraging and developing Asia Pacific Pentecostal theological research

and scholarship. This is to be a means to assist in sustaining and enhancing the growth of the Pentecostal movement in the region and worldwide. TC fulfills its objectives through several related activities. It seeks to identify and monitor theological developments and trends in

the Pentecostal movement, especially matters of concern and interest in the Asia Pacific region. It facilitates discussion of theological issues in its annual symposia and encourages the publication of papers, articles, and journals by members and member schools. TC has also sought to identify and encourage emerging scholarship among Pentecostal believers in the Asia Pacific region.

TC's annual theological symposia have been held in Bible schools throughout the region. The intent has been to encourage faculty and research students to present academic papers in a supportive environment and to participate in workshops. Symposium themes have included "Pentecostalism in Context: Challenges and Opportunities," "Equipping Churches for a Changing World," "Pentecostal Education and Ministry in a Digitalized Society," "Fostering Christian Spiritual Formation in a Post-Pandemic Era," and "Pentecostal Identity in Asia." TC has maintained a strong connection with the Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies and Australasian Pentecostal Studies, which has enabled papers presented at symposia to be published in the two journals. TC has also been instrumental in sourcing Pentecostal publications and resources for APTA school libraries.

Over several years, TC members worked together to produce "Asia Pacific Pentecostalism," which was published by Brill as part of its Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies series and launched during the 2019 theological symposium in Hong Kong. This quality academic publication was based on papers presented at TC symposia and provides insights into the history and theology of Asia Pacific Pentecostalism. It presents previously untold stories and interdisciplinary analysis of pioneer foundations, denominational growth, leadership training, contextualization, and community development across North and East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania.

Significant Contributions

APTA has helped shape Pentecostal theological education in the Asia Pacific region. A key goal of APTA has been to encourage communication and networking among member schools. The triennial General Assemblies have been conducted at different locations within the region to encourage attendance and ensure that all schools can participate. Since 1990, APTA General Assemblies and Theological Symposia have been held in Australia, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand.

Unlike other theological associations that have limited membership to schools holding accreditation, APTA has emphasized inclusivity by granting membership and attendance to non-accredited schools. Over time, APTA has grown to include not only Assemblies of God Bible schools but also other Pentecostal schools in the region that embrace its mission and purposes. This has contributed to the expansion of APTA's influence and reach within the Pentecostal tradition in Asia Pacific.

APTA's contribution to theological education in the Asia-Pacific region includes the standardization and quality assurance of Pentecostal theological education. It has facilitated networking and collaboration between schools and has been a forum for sharing resources and knowledge exchange. APTA has sought to develop close working relationships and the sharing of resources among schools in the region. It has promoted contextualized theological education that addresses the specific needs and cultural contexts of the Asia Pacific region.

APTA has established standards that provide direction in the development and effectiveness of ministerial training programs. It offers accreditation services based on the standards as criteria for self-study and facilitates the transfer of credits among member schools. APTA's standards also provide criteria for member schools to assess the effectiveness of their working relationships with the churches and other ministries within their areas.

APTA has promoted the development of Pentecostal Theology and contributed to the growth and development of this theological tradition in the region. It has placed emphasis

on nurturing research and scholarship. This is evidenced by the organization of annual symposia and contributions to academic journals owned by member institutes. There is a growing academic focus within APTA.

APTA member schools have made significant institutional progress since 1990. Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in the Philippines has developed and had accredited Masters and Doctoral degrees and has produced many graduates who serve in pastoral and leadership roles throughout the region. Alphacrucis University College in Australia has become the largest Christian higher education institution in the nation and offers Bachelor, Masters, and Doctoral degrees. Other schools have established themselves as respected training institutions within their movements and nations.

APTA has been instrumental in the development of Pentecostal accreditation worldwide. The success of APTA has resulted in it being considered a model that could be adopted and contextualized in other areas throughout the world. APTA has shared its governing and accreditation documents, which have been adapted and translated for use in Europe, Eurasia, Latin America, and Africa. APTA leaders have conducted seminars on accreditation for theological educators in these regions.

A significant outcome of this adoption of the APTA model has been the formation of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE). At the seventh APTA General Assembly, held in 2008 in Singapore, theological educators from Africa, Latin America, Eurasia, and Europe were invited to attend and discuss the idea of a worldwide network of Pentecostal theological associations. This resulted in the development of WAPTE. APTA's constitution, bylaws, and accreditation standards formed the basis for the development of WAPTE's organizational structure and the process of validating the accreditation activities of its member theological associations. APTA has played a major role in inspiring a global Pentecostal theological network, as well as providing the scaffolding for developing constitutional foundations, governance frameworks, and administrative processes.

Vision for the Future

APTA continues to play a significant role in shaping Pentecostal theological education in the Asia Pacific region. Through its accreditation services, networking efforts, and promotion of contextualized theological education, APTA continues to contribute to the growth and development of theological training in this dynamic and diverse part of the world.

The opportunity for APTA's ongoing contribution is provided by the rapid growth of Pentecostal Christianity in the Asia-Pacific region and the accompanying need for theological education. APTA can continue to participate in the equipping of Spirit-empowered leaders who will change the world for Jesus Christ.

The challenge is to avoid denominationalism and factionalism, without giving up on APTA's heritage and distinctives, and to connect with the many different expressions of Spirit-filled Christianity. APTA should avoid elitism.

APTA must continue to cultivate the miraculous and to effectively connect with Spirit-empowered immigrant communities. It must embrace emerging technologies and develop appropriate pedagogies to more effectively reach potential students.

Theological education needs to remain practical and responsive to ministry contexts. APTA should facilitate entry-level theological education and encourage practitioner theologians. It should also broaden the understanding of ministry to include leadership within political, educational, business, healthcare, government, and other spheres, and to provide appropriate programs.

APTA can be a strong conduit for effective theological education and ministry training in Asia Pacific. Its track record is good. Its future is promising as it functions as a vehicle for cooperation to enhance the impact of the gospel and for the training of leaders who will change the world.

As quoted on the APTA website, we can live out Isaiah 40:31: "...but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

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The Story of the Church of God

Michael Reynolds

Abstract

The study outlines the history and key contributions of the Church of God denomination. He begins with an overview of the Church's Holiness and Pentecostal roots, setting the stage for its subsequent impact. Reynolds identifies four major contributions: evangelism and church planting, which helped expand the Church of God across North America; global missions, resulting in a worldwide movement with over eight million members; education, including the establishment of institutions like Lee University and Pentecostal Theological Seminary, along with the development of 117 schools outside North America; and leadership, tracing the evolution of the Church's leadership philosophies and their ongoing influence. The article concludes with a vision for the Church's future, particularly its leadership's role in fulfilling the Great Commission through continued global expansion and educational initiatives. The study offers a comprehensive insight into the Church's past, present, and future endeavors.

Keywords: origins, significant contributions, evangelism and church planting, global mission, education, leadership, vision, Great Commission

From the very beginning, the Church of God has been influenced by revival and mission. First identified as a Holiness Church, members and leaders of the Church of God (COG) experienced the outpouring and baptism of the Holy Spirit during a season of revival, beginning with the Shearer Schoolhouse Revival in North Carolina. With the baptism of the Holy Spirit, COG members were experiencing a change in their affections. They especially experienced love for the lost and a deep passion that emerged from a sense of urgency to get

people saved because, for them, the outpouring was evidence that Jesus was coming back soon. With changed affections from the Pentecostal experience, COG missionaries, evangelists, and churches were motivated by love. Despite the modest beginnings in the mountains of North Carolina, and being faced with early persecution, the COG sent missionaries and planted churches for many years, and the COG grew into a movement.

In this article, I will explore the origins of the Church of God. After establishing the historical context, I will elucidate the significant contributions of the Church of God in four broad areas: 1) evangelism and church planting, 2) global mission, 3) education and ministerial development, and 4) leadership. I will conclude with the Church of God's vision for the future.

Origins of the Church of God

According to Church of God (COG) theologian Steven Land, the roots of Pentecostal spirituality came from the North American eighteenth-century Wesleyan and nineteenth-century Holiness roots.¹ Vinson Synan also conveyed that Pentecostalism has Holiness roots. Specifically, he wrote that the Methodist Holiness Movement was one of the movements that “prepared the way for what appeared to be a spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit in America.”² This is certainly true for the COG. When the COG was founded in 1886, its roots were deep in the Wesleyan-Holiness Movement. In fact, the COG was considered a Holiness church years before it was identified as Pentecostal.

The Church of God's origins were in the context of the rural Unicoi Mountains of North Carolina. According to Charles Conn, a COG historian, life was especially hard in the mountains at the end of the nineteenth century.³ Many of the people could not afford education. According to Conn, the people in this rural area were mostly of Scotch-Irish descent.

¹ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 15.

² Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 2.

³ Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God*, definitive edition (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1996), 3.

He describes the people as isolationists, conservative, individualistic, frugal, and with a “hearty degree of fatalism.”⁴ This is the social context from which the Church of God was birthed.

The primary founder was a Baptist preacher named Richard G. Spurling. Spurling (who was 75 years old at the time), along with his son, Richard Spurling, Jr., and a layman named John Plemons, felt a burden to see a renewal and restoration of “simple faith” in the churches.⁵ Consequently, they organized a meeting of eight people on August 19, 1886, in a log structure called the Barney Creek Meetinghouse. Agreeing to the same spiritual issues of renewal and Christian unity (they were disgruntled with denominationalism), they formed a loose ecclesiastic organization called the “Christian Union” to “restore primitive Christianity and bring about the union of all denominations.”⁶

As a few congregations were organized within the Christian Union, the churches were a closely-knit group that identified more with the Holiness Movement of the Wesleyan Methodist tradition. Nevertheless, an outsider by the name of A. J. Tomlinson joined the group in 1903. He was a Quaker missionary from Indiana to the Appalachian region, selling Bibles to the mountain people.⁷ Eventually, Tomlinson would become the most predominant figure in early Church of God history. After a few years of persecution, doctrinal challenges, and modest growth in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee, 21 individuals, including Tomlinson and the Spurlings, came together for the first “General Assembly.”⁸ This was the first step towards reorganizing the Christian Union. In 1906, most of the church leaders moved to Cleveland, Tennessee, which is still the location of the international offices of the Church of God. Finally in 1907, this group of churches reorganized into an Episcopalian (i.e., hierarchical) form of

⁴ Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 5.

⁵ Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 9.

⁶ Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects of America*, rev ed. (Nashville, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949), 100.

⁷ Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 60.

⁸ Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 76.

church government and renamed the organization the “Church of God.”

The Church of God was still identified as a Wesleyan Holiness church in the early years of its birth. However, after the Azusa Street Revival in 1906, the Church of God became influenced by the Pentecostal movement. In fact, many members had already experienced a Pentecostal experience, including speaking in tongues, at an interdenominational revival in 1896 in Cherokee County, North Carolina. This revival, called the Shearer Schoolhouse Revival, helped spread the Wesleyan form of Pentecostalism in the mountain region.

The Azusa Street Revival was significant in that it had a major influence on A.J. Tomlinson. After Tomlinson’s experience of the “Baptism of the Holy Ghost,” Pentecostal doctrine became entrenched in the Church of God. Moreover, the Church of God continued to experience growth in the Southeast region of the United States. Charles Conn reported that during the period after 1910, the Church of God was “gaining rapidly in the South.”⁹

As a young man, A. J. Tomlinson learned his leadership approach from working in the railroad industry. When he came to the COG in 1903, he was known for his drive, vision, and organizational skills. It was clear that his administrative skills were recognized and appreciated as he advanced quickly in the leadership of the Christian Union, and he was able to sustain his influence as the COG grew. When the COG voted in 1909 to create the position of General Overseer (the highest level of leadership in the organization), Tomlinson was the first person to be elected to that position and remained the denomination’s top leader for several years. By 1920, he practiced absolute authority in the organization. As a result, disgruntled leaders in the COG challenged his authority. Therefore, the COG experienced a split in the 1920s. After the COG divided into two organizations, Tomlinson continued to lead the Church of God of Prophecy until his death in 1943.

While maintaining its central governance in Cleveland, Tennessee, the Church of God has also grown around the world, especially in such nations as Jamaica, Haiti, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Romania,

⁹ Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 157.

Bulgaria, Russia, South Korea, Indonesia, Congo, Kenya, Zambia, and the Republic of South Africa. Most of its members are outside the United States. However, it is worth noting that much of the international growth has been by amalgamation. For example, the Church of God amalgamated with the Full Gospel Church in South Africa in 1951 and with the Bethel Full Gospel Church in Indonesia.

As the Church of God expanded to other parts of the United States and overseas, it remained predominantly a Southeastern church. The Church pioneers were mainly Southerners and typically came from rural contexts and small towns. As a result, they planted churches that were steeped in the Pentecostal and Holiness traditions. Church of God congregations spoke in tongues and were accused of being “holy rollers” because of their “wild” worship services. They were also very conservative, even arguably legalistic, in the way they acted and dressed. The members believed in being separate from the “worldly” society. According to Richard Niebuhr’s *Christ and Culture*, the early Church of God members theologically held a “Christ-against Culture” perspective.¹⁰ For example, women would wear long dresses (never pants), would never wear jewelry or makeup, or cut their hair. In the Southeast, Church of God women were known by their beehive hairdos (long hair was pinned up, looking like a beehive). The churches had rules against dancing, mixed bathing, and movies. Because of the strong holiness roots, the early COG pioneers continued the same legalistic traditions as the Church of God grew beyond the Southeast. Nevertheless, the missional and eschatological effects of Pentecostalism were the motivating factor for their growth.

Four Significant Contributions of the Church of God

The Pentecostal Movement has continued to grow around the world. Globally, the five largest Trinitarian Pentecostal denominations are (from largest to smallest): 1) Assemblies of God, 2) Apostolic Church, 3) Foursquare, 4) Church of God, and 5) Church of God in Christ. In the past 20 years, Pentecostalism has significantly grown in the Global South. In

¹⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951).

fact, the only continent in the world where Pentecostals have not experienced significant growth is Europe. Today, it is estimated that there are 644 million Pentecostal adherents. It is the largest expression of Protestantism and the second largest expression of Christianity after Catholicism. The Church of God has modestly contributed to that growth. There are four factors for the Church of God's contributions to the growth of Pentecostalism. Those factors include evangelism and church planting, global mission, education and ministerial training (e.g., non-formal and informal education), and leadership.

Evangelism and Church Planting

The Church of God has grown in the United States of America, predominantly in the Southeast. The COG was birthed in North Carolina, establishing their international headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee, and subsequently growing in the Southeast through evangelism and church planting. Although church planting was not an early emphasis, it was a natural result of the missional passion fuelled by eschatological urgency. In their perspective, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was evidence that Christ was coming in their time, so they had to get people saved. Like other early Pentecostal churches, the Church of God members loved the lost, which drove them to evangelize. However, because of the eschatological urgency, many did not want to take the time for education or church planting strategies. As the Church of God grew, it established churches organically all around the Southeast to disciple the converts. Churches emerged throughout Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Mississippi, Florida, Virginia, West Virginia, and so on. Eventually, the leadership of the Church of God became more strategic about developing ministers and planting churches.

Another factor for the expansion of the Church of God beyond the Southeast was the Southern diaspora in the first 70 or 80 years of COG history. People from the South emigrated to other states for work. For example, they would go to Michigan or Ohio to work in factories and even as far as California or Washington to work in the agricultural industry. The focus was on pastoring the diaspora. As they settled throughout the United States, pioneers would plant Church of God congregations wherever they went.

The Church of God is still growing. Currently, there are 8,277,693 members worldwide, and in July of 2024, the Church of God reported that there are 41,052 churches in 194 countries. The COG is the largest in Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Ohio, and South Carolina. These states are considered “Six Star” and “Five Star” states.¹¹ While the Church of God is still strongest in the Southeast, they have also experienced growth among immigrants, especially among “Hispanic” churches. For example, the Northeastern Hispanic region is a Four Star region with 35,159 members. New York is also a Four Star state with 30,408 members. The COG in New York has predominantly grown among immigrants, especially from the Caribbean. With growth, the membership of the COG has become culturally diverse.

Global Mission

The Church of God is also very diverse because most of its members reside outside of North America. In North America, the COG has 1,266,907 members. Of the 8,277,693 total members, COG membership outside North America is 7,010,786. International growth comes from mission work or amalgamation. In November 1909, upon receiving Spirit baptism, Edmond and Rebecca Barr returned to the Bahamas with the Pentecostal message. They were the first representatives of the COG outside the USA. The Barrs were close friends to R.M. and Ida Evans. R.M. Evans had visions of Bahamians crying for him to bring the light of the gospel to the Bahamas. In December of 1909, R.M. and Ida Evans, along with a young man named Carl Padgett (a son of a pastor in Miami), sailed to the Bahamas to join the Barrs to do mission work. These were the first missionaries.¹²

¹¹ The Church of God categorizes their states or regions by size of membership. There are nine categories: 1) D level = states of regions with 501-1,000 members, 2) C level = states or regions with 1,001-2,000 members, 3) B level = 2,001-4000 members, 4) A level = 4,001-8,000 members, 5) AA level = 8,001-15,000 members, 6) AAA level = 15,001-25,000 members, 7) Four Star level = 25,001-50,000 members, 8) Five Star level = 50,001-100,000 members, and 9) Six Star level = states or regions with 100,000 members or more.

¹² Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 116-117.

Since 1909, many COG missionaries have been sent around the world. Today, Church of God World Missions claims there are 627 missionaries, 56 of which are career missionaries living in the field. In addition to the Caribbean, COG missionaries have gone to Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the South Pacific. Because of the early mission work, the COG has become very strong in Latin America, especially in Mexico, Central America, Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador. Not only is the Church of God in Latin America growing and planting thousands of churches in Latin America, but they are also sending missionaries around the world.

In addition to Latin America, the Church of God has a strong presence in the Philippines, Germany, Zambia, India, and England. The Church of God has amalgamated churches in Indonesia, South Africa, Romania, and Russia. The largest local and national COG is in Indonesia: The Bethel Full Gospel Church of God (i.e., the Gereja Bethel Indonesia, abbreviated as GBI) has approximately three million members, which is almost half of the COG membership outside of North America.

Education

The Church of God has made significant contributions to theological education—an area of ministry within the Church of God where I currently serve. Early in COG history, the leaders recognized that there was a need for trained Christian workers. In 1918, A. J. Tomlinson was serving as Superintendent of Education. On January 1, 1918, they opened the first term of the Bible Training School with twelve students; Nora B. Chambers was the only teacher. The school grew, expanded, and moved from Cleveland to Sevierville, then back to Cleveland. In 1947, the Bible Training School purchased the Bob Jones College campus. Upon returning to Cleveland, the Bible Training School changed its name to Lee College (named after the second president, F. J. Lee). Lee College began to pursue becoming a liberal arts university in the mid-1980s. The shift brought an influx of new students and faculty. By the fall semester of 1997, Lee College had become Lee University. Lee University continued to grow until the COVID pandemic in 2020. Today, Lee has approximately 3,000 students and is the denomination's premier liberal arts university.

In the 1960s, the Church of God recognized that they needed a denominational seminary and began to explore the possibility. By the 1970s, the denomination pursued establishing a graduate school for ministerial development, and in the fall of 1975, the Church of God Graduate School of Christian Ministries held its first classes. In 1978, the school changed its name to the Church of God School of Theology, and the name was changed again in 1997 to reflect the changing level of accreditation. The last name change was in 2004 when the school became the Pentecostal Theological Seminary (PTS). PTS remains the premier seminary for the denomination.

Through the years, the Church of God also had schools throughout the United States. At one time, there was West Coast Bible College in Fresno, California (originally started in Yakima, Washington); Northwest Bible College in Minot, North Dakota; and East Coast Bible College in Charlotte, North Carolina. In Canada, the COG had International Bible College in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. For years, these schools were developing pastors, missionaries, church planters, and other ministers. Unfortunately, all these schools eventually closed. On the West Coast, Patten University served the educational needs of the COG. Eventually, it closed as well, but it is now reemerging with a new vision. There are now three accredited degree-granting schools in North America: 1) Lee University, 2) Pentecostal Theological Seminary, and 3) Patten University.

Currently, there are 117 schools outside of North America that serve the educational and ministry development needs of the Church of God. Those 117 schools are at several levels. The Church of God Division of Education certifies schools for the denomination at Level I (i.e., Christian service schools that provide basic Christian service training to ministers and laity), Level II (i.e., Bible institutes that offer certificates at the postsecondary or college-level education and training), Level III (i.e., undergraduate degree-granting institutions), and Level IV (i.e., graduate degree-granting institutions). There are currently 36 Church of God degree-granting institutions outside North America. In Latin America, the Church of God has a total of 27 schools. In addition, there are 17 schools in Africa, 41 schools in Asia-Pacific (23 of those schools are in

Indonesia), 18 schools in the Caribbean, and 15 schools in Europe.

The Church of God in Latin America has four premier institutions that are part of the Latin American Education Alliance (ALEAL). Each school is considered the premier degree-granting institution for that region. Those schools include the *Seminario Bíblico Mexicano* (SEBIME/Instituto Atkinson) in Mexico; *Seminario Bíblico Pentecostal de Centroamericano* (SEBIPCA) in Guatemala (serving Central America); *Seminário Evangélico de Igreja de Deus* (SEID) in Brazil; and the *Seminario Ministerial Sudamericano* (SEMISUD) in Ecuador (serving South America). In addition to those schools in Latin America, the *Universidad Teológica del Caribe* (UTC) in Puerto Rico is a member of ALEAL. UTC serves the Hispanic Caribbean, and Bethel Bible College of the Caribbean in Jamaica is the premier institution for the English-speaking Caribbean.

For the COG's three other major administrative mission fields (Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Europe-CIS-Middle), the Asian Seminary of Christian Ministries (ASCM) is the flagship field school for Asia-Pacific, the Berea Theological University College (BTUC) is the flagship field school for Africa, and the European Theological Seminary (ETS) is the flagship field school for Europe-Middle East.

In the Church of God, the Division of Education (DOE) provides practical ministerial development programs to train students for credentialing, certification of schools within the denomination, and continuing education of leaders through our schools and DOE1 (an online continuing education program). For ministerial credentialing, the DOE provides the COG with the Calling and Ministry Studies (CAMS) program, designed for candidates to begin the licensure process by discovering and affirming their calling, and the Ministerial Internship Program (MIP), which is required for ministry candidates to prepare for ministry. The two programs are part of the ministerial credentialing process. One major recent contribution is CAMS for Students, the CAMS program that is adjusted for young people between the ages of 14 and 24 to discover their ministerial calling. The DOE1 platform is also a significant contribution, allowing ministers and leaders to improve their

skills in certain areas of ministry while they are practicing ministry.

Internationally, the DOE has worked with key educational institutions to form two new fieldwide education alliances. In 2011, the Church of God in Latin America formed the Latin American Education Alliance so that schools in Latin America could work together. It has been a great success that has inspired other regions of the world. At our International General Assembly, we signed the “Three-Fields Education Alliance” between ASCM, BTUC, and ETS, and the “Inter-Caribbean Education Alliance” for the COG in the Caribbean. Based on ALEAL as a model, these two new alliances will provide a mechanism for our schools to collaborate, share and distribute resources, share faculty, strategize on education, and more. The goal is to establish a global alliance that will include the schools of the three regional alliances and the three North American schools (i.e., Lee University, Pentecostal Theological Seminary, and Patten University).

The Church of God has been historically very slow to embrace education. However, it eventually began to recognize the need for education and training. For example, the denomination realized the decline of ministers, especially church planters, when the five schools in North America closed. Schools are integral to the development of future leaders and ministers for the denomination. Because of the COG’s history, there is still resistance to education due to the historical bias towards practical training (non-formal and informal education). In reality, Pentecostal denominations need formal (theological and ministerial education), informal (coaching and mentoring), and non-formal (practical ministerial training) education. The COG schools and DOE are working together to ensure that all modalities and levels of education are available to develop future generations of church leaders and ministers.

Leadership

Leadership is also a key element for growth. Since A. J. Tomlinson originally designed the organizational structure of the Church of God based on the hierarchal model that he learned in the railroad industry, his leadership style came from the prevalent leader-centered philosophies of the time. Several of the leadership styles at that time were constructed with a

focus on the quality of the leader based on a leader's traits, skills, or behaviors, and Tomlinson possessed the appropriate qualities for such a leader. Because of Tomlinson's influence on the COG's leadership model and structure, many of the subsequent leaders adopted his leadership style. Many of the leaders in the organization's history advanced in leadership because of their personality and because they demonstrated the right traits, skills, and behaviors (especially oratory and personal skills). The traits, skills, and behaviors that were desired and admired were those transmitted by Tomlinson's legacy.

Although the general Church of God culture and leadership philosophies have evolved, the culture of the organization has been slower to change. For much of the organization's history, the Church of God culture operated in isolation from secular influences—or at least they attempted to do so. The top denominational leadership is elected by a body of ordained “Bishops” that attend the bi-annual General Assembly. Although the General Assembly is attended by members and ministers from other parts of the USA and from around the world, the vast majority are from the Southeast USA. Consequently, leaders are often elected who are charismatic and able to persuade followers to vote. They have leadership traits that are appealing to this demographic of ordained ministers. Historically, great orators with strong personal skills have advanced in the leadership ranks. Yet, a few of those leaders were able to make significant contributions to the Church by emphasizing the need for evangelism, church planting, global mission, or education.

Skills-approach leadership (i.e., a model of leadership that focuses on the skills of the leader) is still prevalent in the organization. Contemporary leaders in the Church of God strive to be highly skilled. They possess both technical skills (e.g., preaching skills, administrative skills, ecclesiastical skills, etc.) and human skills (e.g., charismatic personalities with highly relational skills). From the legacy of A.J. Tomlinson and subsequent leaders, leader-centered leadership has remained prevalent in the Church of God in the past 20 years. Leaders throughout the organization continue to be elected or appointed due to their traits, behaviors, and skills. However,

there are leaders who are emerging with a renewed missional passion.

A Vision of the Future

Like many Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions, the missional passion in the Church of God has diminished over the past 20 years. However, in the past two years, the COG has had a renewed commitment to the Great Commission—“to go into all nations, teaching them about the grace and mercy of our Savior, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”¹³

In 2022, leadership appealed to COG members to complete an initiative from 2014 called the “FINISH Challenge.” This initiative established core values for the denomination to “finish the Great Commission.” FINISH is an acronym that stands for Find, Intercede, Network, Invest, Send, and Harvest: **F**ind the lost; **I**ntercede on their behalf; **N**etwork with other believers; **I**ntercede on their behalf; **S**end laborers into the field; and reap a world **H**arvest. At the COG’s 2020 International General Assembly, the Executive Committee established three major objectives for the denomination to intensify the “FINISH” commitment and realize results by 2024. The three objectives of the “Harvest Commission 2024” were: 1) Advance the Coverage of the Gospel (i.e., an objective to engage the harvest by realizing the goal of a Bible, believer, and local church in every nation); 2) Activate the Calling of a Generation (i.e., objective to engage, prepare and credential an emerging generation of 5,000 ministers aged 17-25 throughout the world); and 3) Achieve the Continuity of Significant Growth (i.e., to mobilize the fiduciary responsibilities of the International Offices and launch regional renewal by combining objectives of all the departments in the COG).¹⁴

Since 2022, the vision has been cast, and progress has been made. The various departments of the denomination have focused resources and energy towards the objectives. Since there is a new General Overseer with new leaders on the

¹³ Church of God Executive Committee, *Harvest Commission 2024: Laborers Together for Great Commission Completion*, (Cleveland: Church of God International Offices, 2022), 3.

¹⁴ Church of God Executive Committee, 6-7.

Executive Committee, the vision has changed, or at least evolved. However, if the focus remains on God's mission by making ongoing contributions to evangelism/church planting, global mission, education, and leadership, the COG will continue to grow around the world.

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International Church of the Foursquare: Formal Education

Gary Matsdorf

Abstract

Formal ministry training and education have been integral to the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel since its inception in 1923. Although the primary means of training in its 100-year history has developed mostly along the lines of One-Year Ministry Certificates from Schools of Ministry and ongoing informal leadership training seminars, it does have six degree-granting institutions globally offering accredited degrees, including terminal degrees. This article highlights four of Foursquare's six colleges/universities.

Keywords: Aimee Semple McPherson, formal and informal training, Life Pacific University, Asia LIFE University, LIFE Theological Seminary, New International University

January 1, 2023, the Foursquare denomination celebrated 100 years of ministry that began with the opening of Angelus Temple in the Los Angeles suburb of Echo Park on January 1, 1923. Shortly after its opening, Angelus Temple's founder, evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, established "The Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute." The training institute reflected Mrs. McPherson's belief that ministry leadership required discipleship and formal training. The training institute was soon renamed L.I.F.E. (Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism) Bible College and moved into an adjacent five-story building.

As Foursquare spread around the world (having a presence in 156 nations as of 2024), its modified episcopal form of government meant that each nation autonomously determined its own educational approach and standards for licensed ministers. Most nations chose (and still choose) not to require a ministry degree for licensed ministers and did not replicate

L.I.F.E.¹ Instead, Foursquare embraced non-degree granting training in either One-Year Ministry Certificate granting Schools of Ministry and/or ongoing ministry training seminars (informal training). The scope and theology of this approach are explained in detail in *Pentecostal Education*, Volume 8, Number 2, the article “Discipleship and Leadership Training.”

Despite not requiring a degree (or any minimum formal training), Foursquare U.S. continued to expand and develop L.I.F.E., which is called Life Pacific University today. Nigeria, South Korea, Canada, and Sri Lanka followed suit in opening degree-granting colleges and universities. Their histories are told below.²

Life Pacific University (LPU)³

The founder of the Foursquare Church clearly understood the need for Pentecostal formation and training. She was a “Holy Spirit preacher” who hosted numerous church services, healing crusades, and innovative radio and printed gospel messages. Still, she also felt strongly about education, so much so that when she founded the iconic Angelus Temple in Los Angeles in 1923, she also founded LPU, then called “The Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute.” Soon after, she dedicated an entire five-story building to education and training, renaming the school L.I.F.E. (Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism) Bible College.⁴

LPU expanded throughout the 20th century, offering its first 4-year degree in the 1940s, and launched the Bachelor of Theology, Bachelor of Religious Education, and intercollegiate sports (basketball and baseball) in the 1950s. Another

¹ Even Foursquare (U.S.) dropped the formal education requirement in the late 1970s.

² Due to circumstances beyond the author’s control, Sri Lanka’s and Canada’s colleges will not be represented in this article.

³ This section of the article was written by Dr. Daniel Ruarte, Provost and Vice-President of Academic Affairs at LPU. More space is devoted to LPU than the other colleges because it is Foursquare’s founding university.

⁴ Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *The Vine and The Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* (Los Angeles, CA: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1992), 12.

milestone was reached in 1990 by relocating the university from Echo Park to a larger campus in San Dimas, California, its current home. This marked the beginning of several years of expansion and building projects.

In the 1980s, LPU began pursuing formal recognition from the U.S. Department of Education through accreditation associations recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).⁵ Starting with accreditation from the Association of Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) in 1980, it obtained WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) candidacy in 2000,⁶ which culminated in full accreditation status in 2003. During this time, the name changed to Life Bible College and later, in 2019, to Life Pacific University. It is now under the leadership of President Angie Richey and has begun the initial accreditation process with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for its recently funded Life Pacific Seminary.⁷ These are all very significant accomplishments that represent a century of existence, institutional growth, and a commitment to formal higher education for ministry leaders.

The Mission of LPU

Life Pacific University is an institution of biblical higher education existing for the transformational development of students into leaders prepared to serve God in the Church, the workplace, and the world.

The Vision of LPU

Life Pacific University is recognized worldwide as a Pentecostal institution, within the Foursquare tradition, characterized by a diverse community of Spirit-empowered students, scholars, and practitioners whose hearts and minds are devoted to Christ and His kingdom.

⁵ Life Pacific University is a CHEA member institution, see online at <https://www.chea.org/life-pacific-university>.

⁶ For the WSCUC landing page for Life Pacific University, see: <https://www.wscuc.org/institutions/life-pacific-university>.

⁷ For LPU's launch of Life Pacific Seminary, see: <https://lifepacific.edu/seminary>.

LPU's Distinctives

- Scripture is LPU's authoritative guide for faith and practice and the foundation for how LPU thinks, learns, lives, and ministers (2 Timothy 3:16).
- LPU is a grace-based community that is exemplified by excellence organizationally and Christ-like character individually (Ephesians 2:11-22; John 15; Romans 8:28-30; Galatians 5:22-25/Ephesians 5:15-20).
- LPU reflects 1) Foursquare heritage and its appeal for moderation in doctrine and practice; 2) a Pentecostal ethos and Spirit-empowered lifestyle; 3) women in senior leadership in ministry; 4) Indigenous empowerment; and 5) an integrated interdenominational mission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth (Titus 1:7-9; Ephesians 4:11-13; Acts 1:4-8).
- LPU displays global awareness through celebrating diversity, understanding its place in the world and the far-reaching impact of decisions and actions, and innovatively engaging the world (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Matthew 28:19-20; John 17:15-19).

LPU's ultimate objective is the preparation of leaders who will serve God wholeheartedly, taking the message of God's kingdom to the ends of the earth. While LPU is an educational institution of the Foursquare Church, more than one-third of the current student body comes from other denominations. The university and its founding movement value interdenominational cooperation⁸ and continue to pursue the ongoing fulfillment of its mission and vision.

Current and Future Degree Offerings⁹

- Undergraduate Programs: BA in Biblical Studies, BA in Ministry, BA in Business Administration, BA in Human Development and Psychology, BA in Mass

⁸ 2023/24 *Full-Time faculty Handbook*. Office of Academic Affairs and Provost Office. Life Pacific University.

⁹ For Life Pacific University Academic Offerings, see <https://lifepacific.edu/academics>.

Communication, BA in Worship, Arts and Media, Online BA in Organizational Management, Online BA in Ministry and Leadership.

- Graduate Programs: MA in Strategic Leadership, MA in Leadership (Spanish), MA in Theological Studies, MA in Counseling, Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Divinity (MDiv.)
- Non-Credit Certificates: Certificate in Biblical Foundations (English and Spanish), Certificate in Chaplaincy (English and Spanish), Certificate in NextGen Ministries, and Certificate in Theology (coming soon).
- Life Pacific University-Virginia Campus:¹⁰ In 2024, LPU received full accreditation and permission from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and its accreditors to offer its full BA in Ministry program at her campus in Virginia. LPU is excited about this and knows that many students on the East Coast will benefit from this new offering.¹¹
- Doctor of Ministry (English and Spanish): One significant project underway is the first terminal degree to be offered by LPU. This has been a dream of many and is a significant investment that LPU is working to accomplish by 2026.¹²

Major Grants

For the first time in its history, LPU has received grants totalling over five million dollars since 2022.

¹⁰ L.I.F.E. opened a Midwest campus in Mount Vernon, Ohio, in 1957 where it remained until moving to Virginia in 1988.

¹¹ A new BA in Ministry is offered at the Virginia Campus. See <https://lifepacific.edu/news/lpuva-to-offer-on-campus-b-a-degree/>.

¹² This has been approved internally by our faculty, provost council, and board of trustees, but it is only in the initial phase of accreditation. Review by our accreditors (WSCUC, ABHE) is pending and must be finalized before we can admit or enroll any students. This should be completed and approved by 2026.

Lilly Pathways for Tomorrow: Developing Hispanic Pastors and Leaders (\$1,464,274).¹³ This grant has allowed LPU to increase the quality and promotion of its Hispanic offerings, including its MA in Leadership in Spanish and Spanish-language-based certificates. This also enables LPU to create multiple micro-certificates that will be offered at a meager cost to help develop Hispanic pastors and leaders. The grant also provides coaching opportunities and enhances LPU's programs. The motto, "From Certificate to Doctorate," bespeaks a pathway for the education and growth of Hispanic leaders. LPU is grateful for this opportunity and sees it as a blessing for the further development of leaders and influence.

Student Success Initiative: The Department of Education HSI grant (\$2,369,725).¹⁴ This grant allows LPU to offer a wide variety of support to its undergraduate student population, especially for academically underprepared students from high school and entering the university context. It is common knowledge that the first two semesters in college are the most difficult, and many students quit (in academic terms, they "drop out"). This causes retention to suffer, and those most affected are the students. The grant supports students by offering a summer bridge program, where they can go through an intensive academic and fun-filled program that prepares them to be successful in their first year of college and beyond. The grant also offers funds to support students with counseling and other needs and a component that includes faculty development and training certifications in helping students succeed.

Lilly Compelling Preaching: Enhancing Preaching Skills (\$1,249,176).¹⁵ The preaching grant is significant and a blessing for students in LPU's School of Theology and Ministry and current pastors and leaders. The grant consists of three

¹³ For more details of this grant, see <https://lifepacific.edu/news/5-million-lilly-endowment-shared-grant-awarded-to-lpu-apu-and-labi/>.

¹⁴ For more details on this grant, see <https://lifepacific.edu/news/lpu-awarded-2-3-million-u-s-department-of-education-federal-grant/>.

¹⁵ For more details on this grant, see <https://lifepacific.edu/news/lpu-awarded-lilly-grant/>.

activities—developing a Preaching Institute for aspiring preachers, hosting an annual preaching conference with top-quality workshops and speakers, and creating a digital repository called “Ministry Toolkit” that will resource pastors and leaders as they search for content and materials to develop their weekly sermons. These will be done from a Spirit-filled and Christ-centered perspective, covering some of the most important topics, doctrines, and aspects preachers deal with all the time.

New Centers and Departments, 2020-2024

Recently, as LPU has continued to pursue more excellent ways to fulfill its mission and vision through the development of centers and departments that can accelerate and help it focus on important tasks, LPU restructured its academic office with the installment of its first provost position and two colleges/schools, the School of Theology and Ministry (STM) and the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) with their respective deans (see below). LPU also established a Prayer Chapel at the center of its academic building as a place where students and guests can come to pray or participate in hosted services. Other recent major accomplishments include the establishment of:

- The Center for Global Pentecostal Studies and Practice (CGPSP)¹⁶
- The Center for Educational Excellence (CEE)
- Life Pacific Seminary (LPS)¹⁷
- The School of Arts and Sciences (SAS)
- The School of Theology and Ministry (STM)

A2 University Designation (Acts Two)

Life Pacific University is an academic engine for the kingdom of God, the Foursquare denomination, and Pentecostal

¹⁶ See the article on the launch of the new Center for Global Pentecostal Studies and Practice at: <https://lifepacific.edu/news/a-new-beginning-lpus-seminary-and-center-for-global-pentecostal-studies-practice/>.

¹⁷ Life Pacific Seminary officially launched in 2023; for more detailed information and a welcome video by its director, see LPU’s website: <https://lifepacific.edu/seminary/>.

movements around the world. There are just a few fully accredited Pentecostal institutions,¹⁸ and LPU is Foursquare's primary university in the United States. Life Pacific University serves with a Holy Spirit vision of resembling a new, yet not so new, concept of being recognized as an "Acts 2 University" (an Acts 2 institution).¹⁹ LPU does not want to be just another Christian university; it strives to stand strong as a biblical university, holding on through its 100-year development to the required thirty units of Bible and ministry classes for all students and majors. LPU's highest aspiration, therefore, is to be recognized more and more as an "Acts 2 University."

In the higher education world, many universities seek an R1 designation,²⁰ the most prestigious recognition for research institutions. However, LPU would rather be recognized as a "Spirit-filled and Christ-centered" institution, defined by a strong Pentecostal ethos and a call to develop leaders for God's mission in the world who are radically passionate about God, His presence, and His kingdom! An "Acts 2 University" not only integrates "faith and learning," it goes deeper to integrate "Spirit and learning"; it is not just pedagogy or teaching, but Pentecostal pedagogy and teaching, within all its varied topics and subjects. A chapel at a Christian university might entail worship, preaching, and announcements. A chapel at an Acts 2 University entails worship, preaching, altar calls, prophetic words, laying on of hands, and a powerful move of the Holy

¹⁸ For the purposes of this article, "fully accredited" means holding accreditation with WSCUC. This accrediting association is the highest level of academic accreditation.

¹⁹ This concept came at one of LPU's Executive Cabinet Day Away work retreats. After a devotional time and prayer with Lew and Angie Richey, together with LPU's VP of Student Life, George Bostanic, and VP of Enrollment and Marketing, Sara Huson, Daniel Ruarte shared this vision with them of an Acts 2 University. In academia, an R1 institution is a top research university, and many universities strive to receive this distinguished designation. LPU believes it should strive to receive an Acts 2 designation, which attests to its dedication to living out a Pentecostal ethos and Acts 2 principles.

²⁰ For more information on what the R1, R2, and R3 designation means see: <https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/carnegie-classification/research-designations/>.

Spirit within the student body. For these dynamics LPU wants to be recognized; this is its badge of honor and academic designation. Becoming an A2 University is based on LPU's long-standing vision which still drives the university in this direction; its leadership works diligently to facilitate an atmosphere of academic learning, biblical discipleship, and the powerful move of the Holy Spirit. Is LPU fully there yet? This writer thinks not. But there has been great progress towards this end,²¹ and everyone at LPU wants to pursue more of God and more of His presence, believes it is possible, and continues to pray to see a massive spiritual breakthrough. LPU wants to better partner together with pastors, churches, leaders, institutions, and movements to collaborate in the kingdom of God by providing high quality training and education whose graduates will impact the world for Christ.²²

*Asia LIFE University (ALU)*²³

Asia LIFE University (ALU) was established in 1972. The founding chairperson of the board of directors was Rev. Seen-Ok Ahn. The first president was Foursquare American missionary, Rev. Evelyn Thompson, and the current president is Dr. Sarah Yongnan Jeon Ahn. The founding philosophy of the university, which continues today, is to establish Christian leaders who emphasize the works, gifts, and ministry of the Holy Spirit based on one's personal experience with the Holy Spirit and consistent with Pentecostal theology. At present, thirty-one professors are teaching in their fields of expertise, and approximately 200 students are enrolled on campus annually in the master's and doctoral programs. About forty students from various countries are engaged annually in the online learning program. ALU is accredited by the Ministry of Education of the Korean Government and the Asia Theological Association.

²¹ Regarding an "outpouring of the Holy Spirit at LPU," see at <https://lifepacific.edu/news/outpouring-of-the-holy-spirit-at-lpu/>.

²² For more information, send inquiries to druarte@lifepacific.edu or academics@lifepacific.edu.

²³ This section of the article was written by Dr. Kwang-jin Jang, Professor of Systematic Theology at ALU.

History of ALU's Global Involvement

In addition to various master's and doctoral degree programs offered in the Korean language for Korean-speaking students, ALU has offered a Master of Divinity degree in English since 1998, inviting foreign leaders on campus to educate them and then send them back to serve their own people upon graduation. Many graduates who received theological education have dedicated themselves to the kingdom of God around the world. Over the past twenty-five years, 120 leaders from thirty-three countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, Central Asia, and the USA have graduated from ALU in the English degree track.

In 2017, ALU offered a Master of Divinity program in a city in China to educate Chinese leaders. The students were all recent graduates from a renowned university in China. Since graduating, they have been serving the Lord in different cities in China. ALU also offered an MA in Religious Studies program for Kazakh leaders via Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic. The graduates are now ministering to Muslims in their country.

Since 2004, ALU has offered a Master of Divinity program for missionaries working in Europe. During their summer and winter vacations, ALU professors travel to countries such as Italy and Germany to hold intensive courses for missionaries. Those engaged in missionary work in different countries in Europe join these courses. During the regular semester periods, ALU offers online courses for them. Approximately forty missionaries have graduated from this program.

ALU is making every effort to train and establish leaders globally. While the campus is in Daejeon, South Korea, ALU extends its reach to the world with confidence that this is a promising way to effectively evangelize the world by equipping leaders with a Spirit-led theological orientation and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Recent Developments at ALU

In response to the rapidly diversifying pastoral field of the 21st century, and to nurture the abilities needed for the church and society, ALU has opened departments not only in theology but also in pastoral counseling, counseling psychology, social welfare, alternative education, beauty therapy, and culture and arts therapy. These programs meet the diverse needs of the

pastoral field and community. ALU educates and produces leaders who have understanding and integrated skills. Leaders trained in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit are doing their best to evangelize and disciple people in various churches and communities.

In Fall 2023, in keeping with the university's commitment to serve as a meaningful and useful institution in establishing leaders for Foursquare churches globally, ALU launched a new master's program called the Global Online MA in Theology. The recent pandemic showed APU's leadership the great potential for training and establishing Foursquare leaders in different countries using Zoom sessions and video lectures exclusively, allowing trainees to stay home and continue their ministries in their countries. ALU believes this delivery system is a great way to establish leaders for Foursquare churches globally, especially where local Foursquare churches desperately need young leaders trained for involvement in ministry. It is especially an effective pathway to train those in Muslim contexts.

A Vision of the Future and Plans for Advancement

Education at ALU emphasizes Pentecostal theology, which is in-depth theological study of the Holy Spirit, and Spirit-filled ministry and missions. Professors and staff at ALU pray regularly that leaders trained in the gospel of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit will be involved in ministries effectively doing their best to evangelize and disciple the nations.

Based on Christian values, ALU is also committed to cultivating creative and talented individuals for future societal engagement and to establishing field experts with both theoretical and practical skills in areas such as counseling, healing, education, music, arts, and social welfare.

*LIFE Theological Seminary*²⁴

LIFE Theological Seminary (formerly LIFE Bible College) is an accredited degree granting institution sponsored by the Foursquare Gospel Church in Nigeria. It was established in 1955 in Lagos State, Nigeria, by Rev. and Rev. Mrs. Harold

²⁴ This section of the article was written by Dr. Cletus Orgu, Provost of LIFE Theological Seminary.

Curtis, Foursquare American missionaries to Nigeria. The seminary started as a vocational open-air Bible school where men and women were trained for practical Christian ministry. It later developed into a night Bible college after the Foursquare Gospel Church in Nigeria was officially inaugurated. LIFE was fully indigenized in 1986 with its first Nigerian principal, Rev. James Temidara. Today it is a fully accredited institution offering various degrees.

LIFE Theological Seminary is one of the foremost seminaries in Africa and serves English-speaking students continent-wide. Through a thoughtfully designed academic curriculum, opportunities for practical ministry experience, deeply rooted spiritual formation, and academic excellence, students are trained to be Christian leaders and agents of transformation in their respective communities. LIFE has graduated thousands of Christian ministers from all walks of life and different denominations from Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Benin Republic, Central Africa Republic, Cameroon, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone. In addition to the main campus in Ikorodu (since 1958), there are several centers and satellite campuses in various cities throughout Nigeria. Two of the seminary's satellite campuses have evolved into the status of a college of theology—LIFE Colleges of Theology in Aba and in Abuja, Nigeria. LIFE also offers online studies.

LIFE is accredited by the Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) and affiliated with the University of Ibadan (U.I). LIFE is a member of the Overseas Council (O.C.) and a member of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE). Life Pacific University in America also recognizes LIFE's certificate for its master's degree program.

LIFE offers a certificate in Christian Ministry, a certificate and diploma in Music, a diploma in Theology, and a Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theology, and Doctor of Ministry/Philosophy (DMin/PhD) in Theology. In addition, LIFE organizes various academic-spiritual programs to further equip and educate students. These include the Annual Spiritual Life Retreat, an annual Social Weekend (a time of reflection on

topical national issues), an annual Christian Education Conference, and frequent Faculty Lectureships.

LIFE's leadership is committed to expanding the influence of the seminary in the 21st century, especially in Africa. It remains committed to its founding vision: "admonishing and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ" (Col 1:28 NIV); its mission statement: "raising Holy Spirit-filled, fully and adequately equipped men and women for effective service to God, His Church and Humanity"; and its core values of spirituality, excellence, discipline, integrity, and competence.

*The New International University (TNIU)*²⁵

Higher education has always been a missional emphasis for the founders of The New International University, Drs. Peter and Gabriella van Breda. They view education as one of the best means to contribute to extending the kingdom of God in effective ways, especially in the majority world. They see formal higher education as "the new missions' frontier" believing that Christian leaders in every walk of life in the majority world are hungry for and in need of higher education.²⁶

²⁵ This section of the article was written by Dr. Gabriella van Breda, Chief Academic Officer at TNIU.

²⁶ TNIU's vision to democratize education is associated with the van Bredas' personal experiences and with research from organizations such as The World Bank/UNESCO and The Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. These organizations report a dearth of education in the majority world, particularly along Western patterns. If available in the majority world, it is generally only for limited sectors of the upper class. See: The State of Global Learning Poverty Update, Conference Edition, June 23, 2022. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/original/Learning-poverty-report-2022-06-21-final-V7-0-conferenceEdition.pdf>. See also: Gordon Conwell University, <https://gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/research/quick-facts/>. Paul House, Joost Nixon, "Incarnational Pastoral Training in the Majority World: An Interview with Dr. Paul House," *Journal of Global Christianity*, January 7, 2022. <https://trainingleadersinternational.org/jgc/139/incarnational->

This missional understanding, together with anecdotal evidence from their leadership on three continents over three decades, was the impetus for founding TNIU as an online university in 2017.²⁷ It is headquartered in Bellevue, Washington. TNIU was registered with the Washington State Student Achievement Council in 2017 and is accredited by the Asia Theological Association (ATA).

TNIU delivers accessible, affordable, biblical, missional, and practical higher education to pastors and leaders in twenty-two countries (2024), most of whom are in the majority world. As such, TNIU's degree courses are developed, structured, and delivered in a way that accentuates community transformation as the outcome of personal, professional, and pastoral educational development, often in the context of poverty, civil unrest, and Christian faith persecution.

In addition to gaining accreditation with ATA, TNIU's significant developments include:

- Fully online accredited degree programs utilizing synchronous and asynchronous learning models.
- Free access to online library resources for all students.
- A global supervising faculty.
- Multi-ethnic, cross-cultural student cohorts.
- A fee structure that makes Christian education affordable for the masses.
- Delivering education to leaders in their home country, thus eliminating the need for leaders to leave their cultural contexts to access higher education.

TNIU's future goals include: 1) offering degree programs in languages other than English, and 2) local context mentoring partnerships that facilitate student achievement and advancement. This latter is in keeping with TNIU's perspective

pastoral-training-in-the-majority-world-an-interview-with-dr-paul-house-author-of-bonhoeffers-seminary-vision; and Ashish Chrispal, "Restoring Missional Vision in Theological Education: The Need for Transformative Pastoral Training in the Majority World," Lausanne Movement, September 2019. <https://lausanne.org/global-analysis/restoring-missional-vision-theological-education#endnote-3>.

²⁷ The online nature of TNIU's degree programs allows leaders to study together with a cohort of other global students while remaining within their own country contexts.

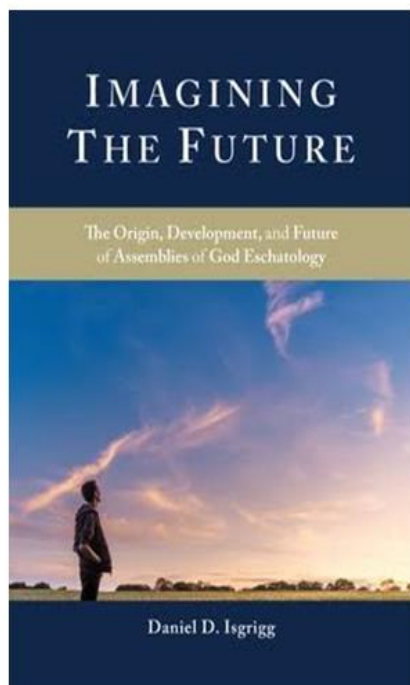
that graduates are community influencers, whose critical thinking skills and training impact community decision-making at the corporate, political, and societal levels. As such, when Christian pastors and community leaders are equipped educationally, the ripple effect is better spiritual, mental, and physical care for marginalized groups. Spirituality and religious activity have been a source of healing, comfort, and relief for multitudes of people for thousands of years. While spirituality is expressed in diverse ways, medical research links the integration and practice of spirituality with better mental health outcomes, enhanced feelings of positivity, hopefulness, and improved psychological well-being. TNIU believes that this is all the more so when, higher education trains Christian leaders with a Bible-based curriculum.

Gary Matsdorf (gmatsdorf@foursquare.org), a minister of the Foursquare Church, serves as the Global Education Coordinator for the Foursquare Church and Chair of the Foursquare Global Doctrine Committee and the Foursquare's representative to the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education. His publications include the *Spirit-Filled Life Bible*, co-edited with Jack Hayford.

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Daniel Isgrigg



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GlobalEd: The Mission Global Equipping Ministry of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

Kirk Kauffeldt

Abstract

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) is a mission that has demonstrated strong commitment to equipping for ministry. From its early engagement in pioneer mission work, which began before the official establishment of the organization in 1919, ministry training was a focus area. This perspective was very much a part of the mission's commitment to indigenous missional work and its goal of self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating church movements. Over the past century several Bible colleges, universities, and ministry training/leadership development programs have been established. GlobalEd has become the program that was established by the PAOC mission to provide leadership in the service of global equipping. This article will describe the origins and history of GlobalEd, highlight historical developments, and identify significant contributions made to the global work of Pentecostal theological education. It will also illustrate GlobalEd's role in global Pentecostal theological and ministry training associations, including WAPTE.

Keywords: Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, equipping, GlobalEd, indigenous mission model

Introduction

GlobalEd is the equipping arm of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada's Mission Global. The department works in collaboration with Mission Global workers and a rich network of international partner institutions and ministries. Through its programs GlobalEd provides a variety of equipping solutions that both strengthen existing ministry leadership training programs and address strategic initiatives to ensure effectiveness in the vital areas of ministry and leadership development. GlobalEd also provides important leadership support in areas such as accreditation, strategic planning,

curriculum development, and capacity building. GlobalEd was one of the founding associations of WAPTE and remains a strong partner.

This article will describe the origins and history of GlobalEd, highlight historical developments, and identify significant contributions made to the global work of Pentecostal theological education. It is a summary based on reflection rather than in-depth research and draws upon the recollection of organizational history by leaders along with internal non-published documents and reports. It is shared as a celebration of the contribution made by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), its leaders, global workers, partners, and donors to the mission of God through effective stewardship of equipping ministry.

The Beginnings: Before 2000

When the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred in Canada, it produced a mission movement even before the PAOC was formally established in 1919. Records indicate there were missionaries from Canada to Southern Africa, Egypt, China, and Mongolia as early as 1909. In fact, the desire to collaborate in mission work was a significant factor in the decision to form a fellowship.

Early in their mission strategy, the PAOC focused on leadership training. Dr. Irving Whitt, the first Director of GlobalEd, in a 2003 presentation in Nairobi for equipping leaders, noted that from the very beginning, the PAOC has always considered church ministry training and leadership development important. As early as 1926, Austin Chawner, a mission pioneer, emphasized the training of young men and women for ministry. The Kellers in Kenya wrote with the same conviction: "We are doing our utmost to train Africans to work among the Africans. If Africa is to be evangelized, it must be done by the African." The result was an adoption of the indigenous model of missions and its goal of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating church movements. Central to this model was the importance of training and the equipping of leaders.

PAOC involvement in mission grew steadily. Through the early years and up to the 1980s, involvement in the ministry of

leadership development training continued to be a strong area of focus. The mission theme at that time was “Teach to Reach.” According to Dr. Whitt, by that time thirty-five percent of the PAOC mission personnel indicated training and leadership development as their primary ministry responsibility. This work included partnership with thirty-three theological colleges and the provision of extension or distance education programs. The clear strategy was to give full responsibility to national bodies and seek greater levels of sustainability. “The overall emphasis in that decade was upon giving autonomy and handing over leadership to nationals in each country. The national church organizations maintained a cooperative relationship with the missionaries. But the roles were reversed: the missionaries took the secondary roles as the nationals assumed leadership.”

Through the late 1980s and 1990s, PAOC mission work was disrupted by significant financial challenges. The net effect was the consolidation of mission work and a reduction of mission resources on the field, especially where the national church was seen to be vital and strong. However, the operation of institutional ministry training remained a key area of ongoing partnership between the mission and the national church because of its perceived role towards indigeneity. The re-evaluation of mission effort and the “closing” of fields and opening of “new” ones reflected an increased commitment to assessment and the evaluation of strategy. Within this dynamic, a new role in the mission leadership team was developed, and Whitt was engaged as the Missions Education Coordinator. This appointment was the seed of what has now become GlobalEd.

Foundations and Launch: 2000-2015

A Leadership Role for Equipping

The early years of the twenty-first century were foundational for the development of GlobalEd. The appointment of a Missions Education Coordinator to a leadership role in the mission department was an acknowledgment of the important role that equipping occupied in the global mission strategy. At the same time, the establishment of this role occurred during a season of disruption, adaptation, and regeneration. The main

factors for creating this role to service global theological education and leadership training, but also to ensure the prevailing sense of urgency to become a strategic, efficient, and innovative organization, were benefited significantly from missiological expertise.

The job description for the Mission Education Coordinator (later renamed the Global Education, Leadership Specialist, and Research Director) included three areas:

- 1) Global Education and Leadership Training – To inspire, promote, support, and facilitate the equipping of national workers in all PAOC mission fields and to support the leadership of the respective Regional Directors in this endeavor.
- 2) Research – To provide detailed research information to serve all aspects of strategic planning for the PAOC mission and strategic fund-raising initiatives. Serve as a resource for the strategic planning process by supplying world data and world mission research.
- 3) Cross-Cultural Training – To identify the needs of PAOC missionary training and provide recommended programs for our workers.

In the early years of this new level of service and leadership for PAOC's global equipping ministries, the focus was two-fold. The first area of focus was the role of providing missiological direction and research on mission realities and trends to guide the numerous strategic decisions that were in play during that season of regeneration. Second, there was the introduction, by mission leadership in the Canadian office, of oversight, service, and leadership for the equipping work provided by partner institutions around the world. Up until this time, much of the leadership support for the Bible colleges, universities, and leadership programs was at the level of the local missionaries and their regional directors.

In 2001, the Five-Year Global Action Plan for Mission Education was generated and described four primary goals for the program along with accompanying short-term goals and objectives. The four areas of focus were to:

- 1) Assess leadership training needs on various fields and assist in acquiring and coordinating resources to be applied to the same.

- 2) Ensure that all PAOC missionaries are educationally equipped and adequately resourced, commensurate with their level of responsibility.
- 3) Maximize cross-cultural training in Canadian Bible colleges and strengthen mission training in PAOC churches.
- 4) Contribute to the philosophical and communication developments of the mission division where needed.

The introduction of a designated leadership role for equipping signaled that equipping ministry was regarded as an important part of the described PAOC mission strategy of Reaching, Planting, Equipping, and Caring and that oversight and service from the “head office” would add value. It also indicated growing recognition that “our colleges” were increasingly to be regarded as partners rather than ministries of the PAOC. This perspective would grow in significance through efforts to strengthen the relationships among international partners around best practices and clarity regarding the importance of local ownership, including financial viability and sustainability. The impact of the emerging perspective for mission support of equipping ministries was most fully expressed in Africa, where the PAOC had established its most significant number of colleges. It was in this context that supports for equipping ministry, and the setting of the vision and role for GlobalEd took place.

Networking – TELTAC, APTEA, and WAPTE

In October of 1999, forty leaders from eleven countries met in Nairobi, Kenya. The delegates were comprised of regional coordinators, national church leaders, college principals, and deans, missionaries, and pastors. Their expressed aims were:

- To build relationships among colleagues involved in similar ministries.
- To understand the impact of various developments and trends in the church, particularly as they relate to leadership training.
- To discern God’s will for the future of the ministries represented, working together for maximum effectiveness.

Several recommendations for further action were made at this gathering. A leadership training action committee was convened in Harare, Zimbabwe, on January 24-25, 2001, and the result was the formation of the Theological Education and Leadership Training Advisory Council (TELTAC). TELTAC

represented thirteen institutions and several extension programs. At this meeting, TELTAC recommended the following strategic initiatives:

- 1) To establish a set of standards for all levels of theological education and leadership training that can be used as a basis to enhance programs.
- 2) To standardize the provision of theological education and leadership training with a view to offering our services at all levels and to more people in an effective and efficient manner.
- 3) To develop theological education and leadership training programs that are increasingly relevant to the constituencies they serve.
- 4) To improve the level of instruction and training offered by our theological education and leadership training programs through the development of our faculty and trainers.
- 5) To make a concerted effort to proactively address the funding challenge that our theological education and leadership training programs face.
- 6) To maximize the leadership training potential of each Pentecostal fellowship by identifying effective modes of extension and distance education and by relating such training to appropriate structures (e.g. training institutions and executive bodies).
- 7) To make every effort to assist our theological education and leadership training programs in benefiting from increased utilization of computer technology, particularly in the areas of student records and library services.
- 8) To identify funding for the ongoing work of TELTAC, including immediate recommendations on the work of the standards and regional faculty development opportunities.

An executive committee for TELTAC was established, and work toward the identified initiatives began in earnest. Of particular interest was the early engagement with the Africa Theological Training Service (ATTS) of the Assemblies of God (USA). Several recommendations were made concerning TELTAC's involvement with ATTS:

- We recommend that all our institutional training centers (i.e., those colleges offering diplomas and/or degrees) actively seek ATT's endorsement.
- We recommend that one of the TELTAC subcommittee members be designated to serve as the liaison with ATTS and be available to assist our colleges in the self-study aspects of the endorsement process.

- We recommend that a representative from one of our Pentecostal Assemblies colleges (preferably a TELTAC member) be a part of each ATTS site visit inspection team when they visit a Pentecostal Assemblies college.
- We recommend that TELTAC go beyond the ATTS curriculum standards, which identify the minimum number of semester units required for a degree or a diploma. Work should be done to identify a profile of courses for each of the study areas.
- We recommend that leadership training programs become true extensions of the established, official Bible colleges and that these institutions proactively serve their fellowship objectives in this area.

TELTAC was instrumental in shaping PAOC's equipping work in Africa from its establishment in 2000 through 2010. By that time, TELTAC had accomplished the following:

- Established a network of institutions that shared vision, mission, and core values, thus enhancing collaboration and partnerships.
- Facilitated endorsement (accreditation) through Africa Theological Training Services.
- Established a core curriculum for Pentecostal theological education and ministry training.
- Established IT facilities for institutions.
- Facilitated professional library support and the automation of library services.
- Hosted regional faculty development seminars.
- Offered leadership training seminars for institutional managers (principals, deans, and heads of programs).

By 2010, work on establishing the Association for Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (APTEA) was well underway. APTEA was envisioned to be a continental service provider for all Pentecostal fellowships in Africa. It would focus on services related to networking, accreditation, faculty development, and research. The overlap between APTEA and TELTAC was substantial, so it was logical that TELTAC would fold into APTEA. At the 2010 TELTAC Symposium, a full presentation on the formation of APTEA was made, and by agreement, it was determined that TELTAC colleges would be invited to join APTEA. The value-added services to TELTAC were now going to be offered through APTEA. It was understood that networking of PAOC partner institutions in

Africa would continue to be facilitated by GlobalEd but within the larger APTEA family. It is interesting to note that the leading officers of TELTAC, Rev. Simon Peter Emiau (Chair) and Dr. J. Kirk Kauffeldt (Executive Secretary) would soon take on leadership roles in APTEA: Rev. Emiau as the Chairman of the APTEA Board, and Kauffeldt as the Chair for Endorsement and Accreditation.

As these developments were happening in Africa, the launch of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education was taking place. The idea of a global association for Pentecostal theological education was discussed at a special meeting in September 2008 held in Singapore. The participants in that meeting included representatives from all regions of the Assemblies of God World Missions. Two critical decisions were made. First, it was concluded that the global association should be broadly Pentecostal and not limited to schools associated with AGWM (USA). Second, it was proposed that the new association should be covered by the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF). A follow-up meeting was scheduled for July 2009. Whitt was invited to attend that meeting, contribute to the development of a constitution, and serve as a founding Board member for WAPTE. Since that time, PAOC GlobalEd has been a part of WAPTE, the education commission of the PWF.

The Timothy Fund

Some of the best ideas are considered over a good cup of coffee. Such was the idea to establish the Timothy Scholarship Fund. “What would be the most practical way that GlobalEd could help our partner institutions?” was the question of the day. In an extended conversation with Kauffeldt in 2008, at a Java House in Nairobi, about how PAOC GlobalEd could best serve partner colleges, the vision for scholarship assistance was shaped, and the Timothy Fund was started. Whitt, who had recently returned to his role after a three-year term of service as a pastor in Toronto, wanted to build on the gains accomplished through growth in networking but also initiate a service to individual institutions that would be tangible and practical.

The idea of annually providing scholarship funds for students who needed assistance to pay for training in response to their calling was regarded as a win for the needy students, a

win for the institution as these funds would contribute to the operational budget of the college, and a win for GlobalEd as a stakeholder for global equipping ministry. The strategy was simple. Through the provision of a \$600 scholarship each year for select students, donors would:

- Empower passionate leaders around the world to be equipped for their calling by offsetting their tuition cost.
- Strengthen partner colleges by allowing them to set institutional budgets that include adequate student tuition so these training facilities can become financially independent.
- Release a mission force on the ground in contexts where Canadians would not be able to go.

Since 2009, the Timothy Fund, under the capable leadership of Rev. Valerie Penney, has worked closely with partner institutions to identify students with a call and giftedness for ministry to be considered for a Timothy Fund Scholarship. The number of students for each school is determined based on enrollment. Testimonies from each applicant are received along with a picture to promote the Timothy Fund to donors. Institutional allocations are sent out each October, followed by financial reports by the partner to ensure that funds have been distributed as intended. Over the past fifteen years, 2709 Timothy Fund scholarships, in the amount of six hundred dollars, have been provided to PAOC partner colleges.

Leadership Transitions

Sadly, in 2012, Dr. Whitt was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He continued to serve the vision for global equipping ministry as best he could during his years of illness until he passed on May 28, 2014. His role as a missiologist and his contribution to global and cross-cultural theological education and leadership training were gifts not only to the PAOC mission but to many other like-minded agencies, institutions, and associations. He faithfully served the vision for the appointment of leadership for the global equipping ministry of PAOC mission endeavors in the formative years of GlobalEd. Following a term of interim leadership by Rev. David Boyd, a person with rich educational experience who had also been the Regional Director for Eurasia, Dr. Kirk Kauffeldt, was appointed in 2015 to the role of Director for GlobalEd. Kauffeldt presented a different profile

for the department. His graduate degrees were in education rather than theology or missiology, although he did have a rich mission background and an undergraduate degree in Biblical studies. His thirty years of experience in senior and executive leadership roles at Christian universities in Canada, Kenya, Indonesia, and Lithuania were regarded as assets that would be instrumental in shaping the work of GlobalEd in the dynamic season of mission equipping that was ahead.

Growth and New Ventures

Strengthening Existing Programs

By 2015, PAOC equipping mission work was consolidated through the work of GlobalEd. The mission's commitment to equipping remained unequivocal even as the role of the mission among the global equipping communities had matured from pioneer and parent to partner. When Kauffeldt assumed leadership, the department was a credible service provider, particularly in terms of engagement with regional and global equipping associations. The Timothy Fund had grown in its first five years from 40 scholarships given to three institutions to 156 scholarships given to sixteen institutions. The appointment of Kauffeldt would see GlobalEd mature in the years following, building on the foundation of missiological research and guidance previously established, deepening engagements in global networks, finding new ways to relate to global partners, and developing innovative equipping solutions, all of which were hoped for from the start.

There was a shift in the role description for the new Director for GlobalEd, which included an increased focus on oversight and leadership and diminished expectations for research, data collection, and serving as a resource person or advisor. The main functions of the role were identified as:

- 1) Provide leadership for all GlobalEd programs, activities, staff, and services so that the vision and mission for the department are realized and the scope and effectiveness of the equipping ministries associated with PAOC international mission work are increased.
- 2) Serve as part of the International Mission Lead Team to support the work of the mission and the Executive Director.

Greater space, including a significant increase in budget provision for the program, was made for senior administrative

leadership. This empowerment contributed to the growth of GlobalEd in the years that followed. A strategic planning process was engaged in 2016 and produced an updated mission statement and the following strategic priorities:

Mission Statement

The mission of GlobalEd is to provide supportive assistance and guidance, raise and distribute resources, mobilize and encourage equipping workers, and implement proactive strategies for the benefit of partners so that the equipping ministries associated with PAOC international mission are effective and fruitful.

Strategic Priorities

- New Program Development – develop new equipping programs in addition to the current focus on pastoral ministry training.
- Next Generation Engagement – identify and execute a strategy to meaningfully connect and respond to millennial-focused equipping mission opportunities.
- Technology and Equipping – serve as an initiator and catalyst for maximizing the scope and quality of equipping through improved access to and use of technology.
- Capacity Building for Improved Quality – lead the professional development and quality assurance efforts for leaders (administrators, educators, and global workers) in equipping ministries.
- Financial Strength – raise sufficient resources to provide for the annual operational budget and grow scholarship and project support.
- Constituency Relations – raise awareness and appreciation for the role of GlobalEd among the PAOC and PAONL constituency and beyond.
- Global Partner Relations – improve connection with and classification of international equipping partners.
- Relevance – increase the confidence in and appreciation for GlobalEd’s services among the PAOC constituency, including global workers and international partners.

New Program Development

At the time of the leadership transition, GlobalEd was effectively engaged in global networking associations, the

Timothy Fund scholarship program, and the establishment of the Equipping Community of Practice. Efforts to deepen and strengthen each of these remain an essential aspect of GlobalEd work.

GlobalEd has been involved in the establishment of and engagement in regional and global networks or associations to advance equipping in Pentecostal institutions. For example, Kauffeldt joined the Board of APTEA in 2015 and was later appointed as the chair of the Commission for Endorsement and Accreditation. He was instrumental in developing the APTEA Standards and facilitating self-studies and site visits associated with quality assurance work. He also served with APTEA to advance academic quality assurance in 2017. This work produced the quality assurance instrument, “Assessing Fundamental Teaching and Learning Commitments.” This is a guide for institutional leaders, especially those responsible for the curriculum, to work through a set of specific commitments. It provides an opportunity to assess each of these by seeking feedback on selected indicators. The following is the set of teaching and learning commitments that should be considered fundamental: Pentecostal training, Spiritual formation, Mission focus, Leadership that serves, Collaborative learning, Practical application, Assessment, and Contextualization. Most importantly, GlobalEd ensured that each of the principals and deans from partner institutions in Africa attended the APTEA triennial workshops in 2017, 2020, and 2023. These conferences provide an opportunity for the family of PAOC-related institutions which previously gathered as TELTAC to remain connected to one another. Kauffeldt continues to serve on the APTEA Board but has transitioned out of the role of commission chair for quality assurance. He led the Board’s strategic planning process in 2024.

Kauffeldt was also appointed to the WAPTE Board in 2017. In August 2019, he was selected to lead accreditation related services described in the WAPTE constitution, an appointment which led to becoming the Chair of the Commission for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. In that capacity, he led the WAPTE initiatives to develop WAPTE’s Accreditation Standards in 2022, drawing from the Standards already developed for the Asia Pentecostal Theological Association and

APTEA. This development paves the way for institutions in regions not served by regional associations to access direct support for quality assurance through WAPTE.

The Timothy Fund program has continued to grow from strength to strength. By 2017, the number of scholarships provided had grown to 264 distributed to students in thirty-three institutions. It became apparent that this growth trajectory could eventually create sustainability challenges. Thus, consideration was given to the best way to strategically allocate the scholarships. Considerations, including the nature of the connection to the PAOC and the enrollment profile of the colleges, were factored into policies for fund distribution. The net effect was a reduction in the annual number of scholarships awarded while being more strategic with regard to connected partners. In 2023, therefore, the total number of scholarships distributed was 224. In addition, funds were directed to strategic initiatives, including the Graduate Certificate in Youth Ministry. The Timothy Fund program continues to be a blessing to students and to the operational budgets of colleges. Recently, GlobalEd was assigned to manage the Education Trust Fund. This is an endowment fund for graduate study scholarships established in 2006 following the sale of mission properties. The establishment of this fund is another example of the commitment to indigeneity.

GlobalEd is also a service provider for the Equipping Community of Practice. The collective of equipping mission workers and partner institution leaders became focused on building relationships and providing practical support for equippers. Recently, webinars on specialized topics have been provided. These topics included Adaptive Leadership, Board and Governance Capacity Building, Best Practices Online, Leadership, Resource Mobilization, and Research. Strengthening this community has helped build a sense of connection and a greater understanding of unique contextual challenges and responses to issues and interests of shared experience. This community has also provided a means to assist educators from Canada who are interested in volunteering to teach overseas and finding opportunities to serve. In 2018, an Education Consultation was held in Nairobi to assist in delivering improved teaching and learning. During the Covid

pandemic, GlobalEd was instrumental in assisting several colleges to develop the capacity for online learning by helping to set up learning management systems and train faculty and administrators on how to teach and learn in this new environment.

The provision of consultancy and advisory services by the Director has become a feature of the contribution of GlobalEd to Pentecostal equipping. A series of regular and ongoing engagements with institutions is currently a significant part of the Director's role. These included the following:

- Consultation for the government approval and launch of a Christian University in Hong Kong (Gratia College).
- Regeneration and strategic planning for the Middle East Evangelical Theological Seminary in Egypt.
- Strategic planning for the Thailand Pentecostal Seminary in Bangkok.
- Accreditation consultation for the network of AOG colleges in South Africa.
- Addressing institutional leadership and governance challenges at the PAOC-sponsored college in Brazil.
- Board development and strategic planning for the PAOC-sponsored college in Zimbabwe.
- Participation in a consultation and follow up on missional equipping in Pakistan.
- System redesign, board development, and strategic planning for PAOC-related colleges in Tanzania.

Innovation: Non-Formal Training and the GlobalEd Institute

GlobalEd was established with a focus on equipping in the formal education sector, i.e., registered colleges and universities that provide training towards the completion of a certificate, diploma, and degree programs. This remains a crucial focus area but of late, GlobalEd has realized great fruitfulness in the emerging non-formal sector. The limitations of sufficient equipping through formal training alone, especially in the Global South, are evident. To meet the demand for trained leaders, new strategies are necessary.

Early work in this area began in 2016 when the global worker training program for Canadian mission candidates was assigned to GlobalEd. An outcomes-based curriculum that could be delivered to participants in a structured way through

non-formal coursework was developed and offered to equip all PAOC mission candidates. This program is now delivered in cohorts and self-paced online learning that includes regular learning community connections. The departmental learning that occurred while developing this solution was twofold. First, excellent equipping solutions can be created through quality non-formal training. Second, a “vehicle” for delivering these kinds of programs enhances rigor and provides credibility. From this learning, a vision to establish the GlobalEd Institute was birthed.

In 2018, the GlobalEd Institute was established as part of GlobalEd in partnership with Summit Pacific College, an accredited Canadian Bible College. The Institute serves constituencies and institutions both in Canada and internationally by providing high-quality non-formal learning programs. This department is focused on equipping ministries associated with the PAOC’s global mission work and partners with a global network of international colleges and leadership development ministries. The training is practical and flexible with variable delivery methods. Programs are based on credible learning methods that lead to realizing desired outcomes and competencies.

Establishing the Ministry Essentials Training Program (METP) aims to create a structured, non-formal Christian ministry training program that will equip ministry leaders in international contexts who have little to no access to formal theological education. The program gives ministry leaders essential knowledge and skills to lead a congregation or ministry. It also sets each leader on a trajectory for continuous growth to meet the challenges of ministry. Through twelve carefully selected courses, students receive a primary education in biblical and theological principles as well as best ministry practices. As a non-formal program, students do not register for academic credit. Instead, they register for courses that are part of a structured program of study with specific learning outcomes, assessment of learning, and the tracking of student progress through the program. Students who successfully complete all courses are issued a certificate from the GlobalEd Institute. The relevance and demand for this kind of training is evident in the rapid growth since the program was launched in

2019. Currently, there are 19 active partnerships (locations) with 12 additional sites about to launch. The course and instructor materials are available in 26 languages. There have been 1200 graduates, and the current enrollment is 879 students. There are great equipping stories in countries where the PAOC has not had a mission presence, including Pakistan and Chad.

In addition to METP, the Institute is developing other non-formal equipping solutions. The Quest Leadership program is a character-based leadership development program that will equip emerging leaders to create a biblically informed approach to servant leadership. It was fully developed for use with more experienced ministry leaders in mind, but it is being repurposed to address the opportunities associated with next-generation leaders.

Light for the Nations is a mission-equipping program. The purpose of Light for the Nations is to serve national churches to be effective, fruitful missions sending churches that will influence as yet unreached peoples to faith in Jesus Christ through excellence in the cross-cultural training of mission leaders and of the ministers who will be sent to serve in other cultural contexts. As these programs are rolled out, we expect growth similar to that of METPs.

Conclusion

Through GlobalEd, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada has positively contributed to the Pentecostal equipping ministry. It has become a credible expression of the value the PAOC mission places on equipping. It contributes to the global Pentecostal family through its scholarship support of students, development of quality institutions, networking in professional associations, and innovative work in non-formal equipping solutions.

Kirk Kauffeldt (Kirk.Kauffeldt@paoc.org) is the Director for GlobalEd, the equipping program of PAOC Mission Global, which supports the work of PAOC theological education and leadership initiatives around the world. He is also the

Director of International Extension Studies at Summit Pacific College, which includes the GlobalEd Institute.

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The (U.S.) Assemblies of God Alliance for Higher Education

Paul R. Alexander

Abstract:

The Assemblies of God (AG) in the U.S. has a long history of founding Bible colleges and universities, starting with Bethany Bible College and Vanguard University in the early 20th century. Initially, the AG established regional institutions, but over time more schools emerged, including those serving Hispanic communities like the Latin American Bible Institute. By the 2000s, many AG Bible colleges had transitioned into universities, offering liberal arts alongside ministry training. In 2008, under Dr. George O. Wood, the AG formed the Alliance for AG Higher Education to provide oversight, resources, and endorsements to 18 affiliated institutions. The Alliance, which continues under new leadership, promotes institutional standards and represents AG schools in broader AG governance.

Keywords: (US) Assemblies of God, Bible colleges, higher education, Alliance for AG Higher Education, ministry training, theological education, accreditation, institutional endorsement

History

The Assemblies of God (US) has had a long history of establishing Bible Colleges and Universities. The first of these was Bethany Bible College in Santa Cruz, CA, which was founded in 1919. The Bible College of Southern California followed shortly thereafter and was established in 1920. It is now known as Vanguard University.

Initially, a policy was established based on the AG structure, which recognized six regions. It is from each of these regions that an Executive Presbyter is elected. It was also agreed that each of these regions could establish a Bible College. Hence, most of the well-established colleges (now universities) within the AG are named after compass points. (Southeastern, North Central, Northwest etc.). This policy was challenged early on.

For example, Lakewood Park Bible College (now Trinity Bible College and Graduate School) was established in 1948. The AG hierarchy disapproved of this and prevented the new Bible College from advertising in the Fellowship's magazine.

Slowly, multiple other Colleges were established, notably those serving the Hispanic community, such as the Latin American Bible Institute. In one case, a well-established College known as Zion Bible Institute in 1924 became a recognized AG institution, later changing its name to Northpoint Bible College in 2013.

By the early 2000s, most of the older and larger institutions had become established as Universities and had broadened their offerings to offer a liberal arts curriculum. Bible College training was not abandoned, and in most instances, the ministry training department of these universities was the largest.

The one exception to this rule was when Evangel University was established in 1955. It was intended to be a liberal arts institution from the outset, causing confusion among some who were suspicious of the academy. It was established as a General Council-owned University and coexisted with Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri. By the early 1970s, the need for a specialist seminary was seen, and the seeds were sown for what is now the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. In recent years, the seminary has become embedded within Evangel University. Central Bible College merged with the university at the same time.

In summary, the general rule was that regions could own and operate their own institutions, which they did successfully. At the same time, the three institutions – Central Bible College, Evangel University, and Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, all in Springfield, Missouri were owned by the General Council.

There had never been any formal association representing these institutions to the General Council. Some argue that there was a residual bias against higher education, especially ministerial education offered in an academic context with the awarding of degrees as a result.

However, by the late 1980s, a commission was established and called the Commission on Christian Higher Education. It

had limited formal endorsement criteria and operated as a largely informal fraternity for the Presidents of AG institutions.

In 2007, Dr. George O. Wood was elected as the General Superintendent of the U.S. Assemblies of God General Council. One of the first items of business for Dr. Wood was the renaming of what had been called the Commission on Christian Higher Education (COCHE). In 2008, the General Presbytery of the AG approved the formation of "The Alliance for AG Higher Education." (The Alliance).

The focus of The Alliance was to provide resources and endorsement facilitation for the 18 AG colleges and universities that were in existence at that time. Financial resources were approved by the Exec Presbytery so that The Alliance team was able to give far more attention and leadership conferencing resources to AG colleges and universities than in previous years.

Also, in 2008, upon Dr. Dayton Kingsriter's retirement as COCHE's Director, Dr. G. Robert Cook Jr. was appointed as the Executive Vice President of The Alliance, with Dr. Wood serving as the President.

In 2010, Dr. Cook was named as the President of the Alliance, serving until his resignation in 2012 to begin pastoring an AG church in Colorado. Drs. David Moore and Marilyn Abplanalp served as VPs of The Alliance with Dr. Cook.

Dr. Marilyn Abplanalp was named President of the Alliance at that time and served until her retirement in 2015. The Alliance office was tasked with gathering data and statistics. Additionally, site visits were undertaken and endorsements recommended (or not) to the Board of the Alliance. At that time the Board consisted of all Presidents of endorsed colleges and universities as well as the Chair of the Board of Trustees or Regents.

Following Marilyn Abplanalp's retirement, the Alliance was absorbed into the responsibilities of a Director within the National Ministry Center in Springfield, MO, and, apart from an annual meeting, most activities ceased.

In 2017, Rev Doug Clay was elected as the new Superintendent of the Assemblies of God (USA). In the two years prior to his election considerable structural change had taken place at the National Ministry Center. However, the role

and function of the Alliance was not addressed. By 2019, Rev Doug Clay felt that the future function of the Alliance would be better served by having a President of an Alliance institution serve as President. He authorized a small group of Presidents to recommend how this should take place.

Upon the recommendation of this group Dr. Paul Alexander was named as the President of The Alliance in 2019 and is currently serving in that role.

As the previous Board (described above) had no authority to set budgets or raise revenue it was apparent that a new structure was required. Remaining answerable to the General Superintendent, the previous Board was reconstituted as members, new endorsement standards were established and it was agreed that there would be at least two meetings of the members per year.

Several benefits have now been accomplished. They include a wider and more carefully managed process for institutions to become endorsed by the Alliance, recognition of awardees in the categories of “Outstanding Educator” and “Outstanding Administrator” at General Presbytery and General Council, and the formation of a “Scholars Forum”, among others. Importantly, the President of the Alliance enjoys a standing invitation to attend and participate in Executive Presbytery meetings regularly.

As a result of the structural changes, new colleges have received endorsements or been admitted to associate status. The Alliance does not gather statistics but does report annually to the General Presbytery and periodically to the Executive Presbytery. Below is a list of institutions that are currently recognized and endorsed by the Alliance. There are three categories of membership with new applicant institutions being recognized at Affiliate membership. Full membership requires accreditation by a Title IV gatekeeper accrediting association.

(U.S.) Assemblies of God Schools

Full Member

- Ascent College: www.ascent.edu
- Assemblies of God Theological School of New York
- Bridges Christian College & Seminary: www.BCC.edu
- Caribbean Theological College

- Christ Mission College: www.cmctx.edu
- Evangel University: www.evangel.edu
- Global University: www.globaluniversity.edu
- Latin American Bible Institute: www.labi.edu
- Lumbee River Christian College: www.LumbeeRiver.edu
- Nelson University (formerly SAGU): www.nelson.edu
- North Central University: www.northcentral.edu
- Northpoint Bible College and Seminary: www.northpoint.edu
- Northwest University: www.northwestu.edu
- Southeastern University: www.seu.edu
- Trinity Bible College and Graduate School: www.trinitybiblecollege.edu
- University of Valley Forge: www.valleyforge.edu
- Vanguard University: www.vanguard.edu

Associate:

- Northpoint College: www.northpointcollege.edu

Affiliate:

- California Theological Seminary: www.agcts.com
- Spanish Eastern Bible College

Paul R. Alexander (paulalexander@trinitybiblecollege.edu), from South Africa, currently serves as President of Trinity Bible College and Graduate School in Ellendale, North Dakota, USA and Chair of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education.

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Global Network of Spirit-Empowered Scholars: The Academic Working Group of Empowered21

Wonsuk Ma

Abstract

This study recounts the development of the academic stream within the Empowered21 movement. It begins with a brief historical account of Empowered21 and its commitment to the academic component in its development. Then, the study traces various academic conferences and scholars' consultations to date, including the formal launch of the Global Network of Spirit-Empowered Scholars (GNSES) as a working group of Empowered21. The study also introduces the collaborative work between the GNSES and the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE), which serves as the Education Commission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF). The essay concludes with the movement's achievements and its future.

Keywords: Empowered21, Scholars' Consultations, Global Network of Spirit-Empowered Scholars

The Formation of Empowered21 (2010-2015) and Scholarship

The Empowered21 (E21) is a global relational network among broad Spirit-empowered communities and leaders. "Spirit-empowered" has become the umbrella term coined by this network to refer to the "broad spectrum of Spirit-empowered Christianity including Pentecostals, Charismatics, and every subsequent wave of Holy Spirit expression in the body of Christ."¹ Historically, the Charismatic movement organized

¹ Billy Wilson, "Foreword" to Vinson Synan and Amos Yong, eds., *Global Renewal Christianity: Spirit-Empowered Movements Past, Present, and Future*, Volume One, *Asia and Oceania* (Lake Mary, FL:

various renewal conferences, especially in North America, while classical Pentecostals continued fellowship through the Pentecostal World Fellowship. The latter was not able to accommodate the growing non-denominational Spirit-filled movements. According to Synan, “This situation called for a new paradigm to bring all the elements of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements together in unity. Thus, the vision for Empowered21 was born.”² The genesis of Empowered21 goes back to the 2006 Azusa Centennial Celebration in Los Angeles, initially planned by Robert Fisher but led by Billy Wilson due to Fisher’s unexpected death.³ After the successful event, Wilson was left with an extremely valuable database of who’s who in the world’s Spirit-empowered movement. Unlike a century ago, the list contained a wide range of Spirit-motivated expressions, including Catholic Charismatics and diverse independent churches. Sensing the need for and move of the Spirit toward “the convergence of spiritual streams,”⁴ Wilson, with his close friends Mart Green and Rob Hoskins, had a discussion, and Empowered21 was born at the 2010 Global Congress on Holy Spirit Empowerment held at the Oral Roberts University Campus, Tulsa, Oklahoma.⁵

Leading up to the 2010 conference, Wilson and his team undertook a multi-year conversation with three groups of stakeholders (leaders, new generation, and scholars of the movement) in over fifty nations on five continents with the following questions for the future of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity:

- 1) What does it mean to be a Spirit-filled Christian in the twenty-first century?
- 2) How do new generations view the Holy Spirit?

Charisma House, 2016), ix. See also Vinson Synan and Billy Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: The Story of Empowered21 and the Movement It Serves* (Tulsa, OK: Empowered Book, 2021), 60.

² Synan and Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 51.

³ The details are found in Synan and Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 75-78.

⁴ Synan and Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 82.

⁵ Synan and Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 60.

- 3) What are today's youth saying about the Spirit-filled church?
- 4) What vocabulary should we be using to help young people connect with the power of the Holy Spirit?
- 5) What are the most significant issues facing the global Spirit-empowered movement over the next ten years?
- 6) What are the positive and negative trends in the movement presently? and
- 7) What theological questions need to be answered for the movement to continue growing?⁶

In 2013, E21's Global Council adopted "one large goal God was calling us to embrace together": "That every person on earth would have an authentic encounter with Jesus Christ through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit... by Pentecost 2033."⁷ This vision reveals several theological and strategic considerations. Theologically, the movement set the Great Commission as its utmost priority, faithful to the Pentecostal tradition. Its pneumatological distinctive is also clear by identifying the work of the Holy Spirit as the primary source for evangelization. Strategically, fully aware of the vulnerability of a relational network such as E21, the leaders felt a strong need for a uniting goal. The target of Pentecost 2033 also guided the regional and annual meetings to be held in the Pentecost week.

Two US Congresses

This careful process culminated in the 2010 Global Congress on Holy Spirit Empowerment in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Fully informed by the global conversations, this 10,000-participant conference included 210 workshops in its program. Led by Vinson Synan, the collection of selected academic presentations later resulted in a substantial book (600 pages!), *Spirit-Empowered Christianity in the 21st Century* (2011).⁸ The book, with three parts, argues for the protection of Charismatic distinctives and

⁶ William M. Wilson, "Foreword" to Vinson Synan, ed., *Spirit-Empowered Christianity in the 21st Century: Insights, Analysis and Future Trends* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2011), viii.

⁷ Synan and Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 84.

⁸ Synan and Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 62.

a creative adaptation of the distinctives for the new generation and context.

The place of scholars was critical in the minds of the architects of Empowered21. They were among the three stakeholder groups from the movement's inception, and the program of the organizing Congress attested to their conspicuous role. This recognition of scholarship was also powerfully illustrated by the second gathering. In 2012, Empowered21 met at Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies.⁹ Considering the distinctly academic nature of the Society's annual meeting, Empowered21 demonstrated its high expectation of Spirit-empowered scholarship in the development of the movement.

Toward 2015

After the two US conferences, Empowered21 began to organize regional meetings, which climaxed in the 2015 Jerusalem Congress. In the meantime, the academic trust continued meetings.

In 2010, Wilson asked Harold Hunter to organize an international conference of global Pentecostal scholars and Hunter invited a group of Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal academics, both from the global North and South. This 2012 Consultation on Global Pentecostalism in Oxford included fifteen scholars from eleven world regions to accentuate the diversity of the Spirit-empowered faith. Hunter also planned the consultation to be a space for dialogue, with the Pentecostals engaging with the voices of the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox traditions, and the World Council of Churches.¹⁰ The book is understandably organized in three parts: 1) "Global Voices from Oxford," which includes two non-Pentecostal and one Pentecostal voices from the Oxford academic community; 2) "The Global South," with eight studies from the Global South; and 3) "The Global North," with four contextual studies. *The Many Faces of Pentecostalism*,

⁹ Synan and Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 62.

¹⁰ "Editors' Preface," in Harold D. Hunter and Neil Ormerod, eds., *The Many Faces of Global Pentecostalism* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2013), vii.

published through CPT Press, is the second academic publication by Empowered21. This consultation reveals Empowered21's commitment to nurturing Spirit-empowered scholarship and exploring program formats for its scholarly component.

At the same time, Vinson Synan, joined by Amos Yong, continued the ongoing mapping work of the global landscape of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity.¹¹ In 2013, Synan organized a meeting in Sydney to focus on Asia, which formed the basis of the Asian volume.¹² Then, the Synan-Yong team organized a Latin American meeting in 2014 in Quito, Ecuador, which became the genesis of the Latin American volume.¹³ The 2015 Jerusalem Congress brought many scholars who presented their studies on Africa, Europe, and North America, which served as the basis for the African and Europe-North American volumes.¹⁴ The four-volume series was a monumental accomplishment, thanks to Synan's leadership with his worldwide network and Yong's dedicated and able organizational and editorial leadership.¹⁵ Their vast networks, rich knowledge of Pentecostalism, and editorial skills contributed to this rare and massive reference series. Its 86 studies presented up-to-date histories of Spirit-empowered Christianity in many countries and pressing issues and challenges faced by Spirit-empowered communities. The series

¹¹ "Series Preface," in Synan and Yong, eds. *Global Renewal Christianity: Asia and Oceania*, xv-xvi.

¹² Synan and Yong, eds., *Global Renewal Christianity: Asia and Oceania*.

¹³ Vinson Synan, Amos Yong and Miguel Alvarez, eds., *Global Renewal Christianity, Volume Two, Latin America* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2016).

¹⁴ Vinson Synan, Amos Yong and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *Global Renewal Christianity, Volume 3, Africa* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2016); Vinson Synan and Amos Yong, eds., *Global Renewal Christianity, Volume 4, Europe and North America* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2017).

¹⁵ Yong identified the fourth conference in Ghana. According to him, he helped Synan to organize all four meetings, although he did not attend the meetings in Ghana and Jerusalem. He led the recruitment of scholars and organization of the books. Amos Yong, email message to author, July 31, 2024.

is extremely valuable and deserving of more attention among academics and libraries.

Annual Scholars Consultations (2016-2022)

After the 2015 Jerusalem Congress, Empowered21 has set a permanent program format for its working groups, including the academic stream. The annual scholars' consultation has been held in the location where the Global Council and other working groups meet in conjunction with a regional or global Empowered21 conference, generally on Monday and Tuesday of the week leading to Pentecost Sunday. The global council guides the theme for each consultation according to two of the seven guiding questions (above):

- What are the most significant issues facing the global Spirit-empowered movement over the next ten years?
and
- What theological questions need to be answered for the movement to continue growing?

The theme of the London 2016 consultation, held in conjunction with the European Congress, was “Grace in the Spirit-Empowered Movement.” The consultation was explicitly called to respond to “the controversial so-called ‘hyper-grace movement’ that had become quite popular with several prominent ministries.”¹⁶ Synan enlisted a group of scholars from diverse confessional, geographical, and academic backgrounds to explore biblical, theological, historical, and contextual understanding of the subject. When the consultation book *The Truth about Grace* was published, Synan included “Beware of Counterfeit Grace” by Joseph Prince, considered the most prominent advocate of the hyper-grace movement, in his defense and response to his critics. He also recruited Michael L. Brown, viewed as the most credible critic of the hyper-grace argument, to contribute an essay titled “Are All Our Sins—Past, Present, and Future—Already Forgiven in Jesus?” This was the last academic conference organized by Vinson Synan for the movement and through his celebrated scholarly career.

¹⁶ Vinson Synan, “Preface,” in Vinson Synan, ed., *The Truth about Grace: Spirit-Empowered Perspectives* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2018), xiv.

Wonsuk Ma, a new faculty member of Oral Roberts University, organized the 2017 consultation in Singapore. He had had a glimpse of the scholarly activities of Empowered21 as an outsider. When Harold Hunter's 2012 consultation took place in Oxford, Ma invited the event to the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, where he served then as its executive director. He participated in the scholarly process as well. When the scholars' consultation was held in London in 2016, he spent a day engaging with the academic participants. The theme assigned for the year was human sexuality, initially intended to tackle gender issues. Sensing the complexity and divisive nature of the theme, Ma placed the theme in the context of human sexuality as God's gift. He drafted a theme description to elaborate on the organizer's intention for the presenters. Under the theme, "The Gift of Human Sexuality and the Holy Spirit," the conference was divided into two categories of studies: 1) foundations, dealing with biblical, theological, historical, and philosophical grounds, and 2) challenges, gospel responses, and opportunities in the form of real life and contextual studies.¹⁷ Presenters represented four continents (Asia, Africa, Oceania, and North America) with experience in academia and denominational, local church, and parachurch ministries. The organizer encouraged collaborative studies, resulting in three husband-wife teams and one father-daughter team. Local theological educators were invited to the consultation proceedings for fellowship. The presenters also visited a Pentecostal theological school during their visit. With additional commissioned chapters, the very first book on the subject by a group of Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars and practitioners was published, *Human Sexuality and the Holy Spirit: Spirit-Empowered Perspectives*.¹⁸ After the initial partnership with Charisma House, this consultation also saw a new publishing partner: ORU Press, Oral Roberts University's publishing arm.

The 2018 consultation was held in Johannesburg in conjunction with the African Congress of Empowered21. Ma

¹⁷ "Report to the Global Council" (May 2017), 3-4.

¹⁸ Wonsuk Ma and Kathaleen Reid-Martinez with Annamarie Hamilton, eds., *Human Sexuality and the Holy Spirit: Spirit-Empowered Perspectives* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2019).

organized the consultation with Emmanuel Anim, a Ghanaian Pentecostal scholar, under the theme, “Proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Only Savior in the Power of the Holy Spirit to the Challenges of Today’s World.” As the theme description elaborated, the focus of the consultation was the “Challenges Arising from Social Contexts, both Global and Local.” The universal issues included the challenges of religious pluralism, increasing secularism, universalism, liberal theology, and postmodernity. In contrast, the local (in his case, African) issues included “specific political, sociocultural, economic, and religious elements.”¹⁹ Six of the eleven presentations explored African contextual issues; the remainder included biblical and historical studies. For the first time, available IT technology made offsite remote presentations and conference participation possible. The participants also visited a local Bible college for fellowship and learning. The resultant book, *Proclaiming Christ in the Power of the Holy Spirit*, was published in 2020.²⁰

The 2019 scholars’ consultation in Bogota, Colombia, brought a new co-chair, Apostle Opoku Onyinah of the Church of Pentecost (Ghana), to team up with Wonsuk Ma in planning and managing consultations, as well as editing the consultation books. The theme was “Poverty, Its Impact, and the Responses of Spirit-empowered Communities.” Its theme description suggested three areas for the presenters to explore: 1) the roots of poverty, 2) the impact of poverty and the church, and 2) the work of the Holy Spirit manifested through the ministry of Spirit-empowered communities. The same document also expressed the consultation’s intention to be a space for mutual learning, primarily through case studies.²¹ This consultation also accentuated the benefits of regional settings. Latin America proved to be a rich ground for learning about the realities of poverty and various Christian responses to it, including liberation theology. Six out of the thirteen studies were presented by Latin American scholars and practitioners. Considering the ongoing challenge to identify suitable Latin

¹⁹ “2018 Johannesburg Scholars’ Consultation Report” (May 2018), 4.

²⁰ Wonsuk Ma and Emmanuel Aim with Rebekah Bled, eds., *Proclaiming Christ in the Power of the Holy Spirit: Opportunities and Challenges* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2020).

²¹ “2019 Bogota Scholars’ Consultation Report” (June 2019), 5.

American voices for each consultation and book, this was a significant benefit to be in the religion. In addition to four IT-facilitated remote presentations, three studies were delivered in Spanish with translation. The Latin American experiences were compared with those of Africa, Asia, and North America-Europe (with two studies each) for mutual learning. With the additional ten chapters, *Good News to the Poor* was published as a significant contribution to this critical subject.²²

The 2020 Congress was to be a global celebration in Jerusalem, but the global pandemic upended the plan. The Empowered21 conference and its working group meetings were pivoted to online gatherings coordinated by the Oral Roberts University team in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The theme had been set: “The Remaining Task of the Great Commission toward 2033 Pentecost: The Role of the Spirit-Empowered Movement.” The consultation was intended to get a picture of the current state of global Christianity and identify the role of the Spirit-empowered movement in world evangelization. This theme aligned with the vision of Empowered21: “That every person on earth would have an authentic encounter with Jesus Christ through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit... by Pentecost 2033.”²³ For the mapping and strategization exercise, the co-chairs organized thirteen regional studies. The global conference, which was conducted completely via Zoom, required careful consideration of different time zones. Through the presentations and discussions, several lessons surfaced for future consideration, and some of them are:

- A need to support local churches with resources and materials to teach generations, both for the church and the marketplace (education, business, etc.);
- A call to listening to communities to contextualize mission;
- Reverse missions related to migration and the challenges of identity and mission; and

²² Wonsuk Ma and Opoku Onyinah with Rebekah Bled, eds., *Good News to the Poor: Spirit-Empowered Responses to Poverty* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2022).

²³ “Our Vision,” Empowered21, accessed July 30, 2024, <https://empowered21.com/about/>.

- Ecclesiological elements as means of evangelism, such as education, prayer, and discipleship.

With ten additional chapters, *The Remaining Task of the Great Commission* was published with three sections: “Foundational,” “Geographical,” and “Strategic.”²⁴

The 2021 Dubai consultation was held under the shadow of the pandemic. Travel entailed COVID tests, vaccine certificates, distance requirements, mandatory face masks, and many more. Even the dates for the Empowered21 meetings were adjusted from the customary week of Pentecost Sunday to October. Naturally, the consultation took the ongoing pandemic as its theme: “The Response of the Global Spirit-Empowered Church to the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Most studies were tentative reflections as the end of the global challenge was not yet in sight. The consultation’s theme description also reflected this “in-the-middle” nature:

...to reflect on how the global Spirit-empowered Church responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies include multidisciplinary explorations of theological, ecclesiological, historical, sociological, medical, or missiological responses to the pandemic.²⁵

Eleven studies were presented, eight remotely and three onsite. Nine case studies revealed diverse responses of Spirit-empowered communities to the pandemic. The participants realized that each response differed from others due to the unique circumstances under which Spirit-empowered believers and communities experienced the pandemic. Unlike other topics, the presenters and participants, including local Christians, became keenly aware of different government policies, regulations, and availability of medical services impacting Christian responses to the COVID-19 challenges. During the book process, the editors also commissioned additional studies, including several reprints of relevant studies

²⁴ Wonsuk Ma and Opoku Onyinah with Rebekah Bled, eds., *The Remaining Task of the Great Commission and the Spirit-Empowered Movement* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2023).

²⁵ “2021 Scholars’ Consultation Report” (Oct 2021), 5.

by Pentecostal scholars, to publish *The Pandemic and the Holy Spirit*.²⁶

The 2022 Seoul consultation continued the previous dates, October, but for a different reason. For the first time, the triennial conference of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) and Empowered21 annual meetings were held together, bringing two global Spirit-empowered networks to each other. This combined conference was possible as Billy Wilson served as the Chair of both global bodies. To take full advantage of this celebrated gathering, the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE), the Education Commission of the PWF, was invited to plan and manage a joint consultation. Barry Saylor, WAPTE's executive director who attended the 2021 Dubai consultation, was invited to the consultation management team. Following the PWF-E21's theme, "Pentecostal Revival in the Next Generation," the joint consultation adopted "The Next Generation and the Holy Spirit" as its theme.²⁷ Recognizing that both the new and the current generation have roles to play in the intergenerational work of the Holy Spirit, the consultation carefully selected presenters from both generational camps. The 2022 consultation saw ten full-length studies and six study outlines. For the first time, the consultation introduced a keynote speaker, this time, Randy Clark (via Zoom). The joint conference attracted a large number of delegates, and a dozen leaders participated in this pre-conference academic consultation. The consultation participants also joined the relaunch event of the Asian Pentecostal Society on its second day. The Seoul consultation book, *The New Generation and the Holy Spirit*, is expected to appear in early 2025.²⁸

²⁶ Wonsuk Ma, Opoku Onyinah and Rebekah Bled, eds., *The Pandemic and the Holy Spirit: From Lament to Hope and Healing* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2024).

²⁷ "2022 Scholars' Consultation Report" (Oct 2022), 5-6.

²⁸ Wonsuk Ma, Barry Saylor, Opoku Onyinah and Rebekah Bled, eds., *The New Generation and the Holy Spirit: Building a Spirit-Empowered Future* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2025 forthcoming).

The Era of GNSSES and EveryONE (2023-)

Although the annual consultation continues in the existing format, the 2023 Amsterdam gathering of Empowered21 opened a new horizon in two crucial areas.

The EveryONE Initiative

For Empowered21, the Amsterdam conference launched the “new decade of evangelism” toward the 2033 Pentecost target. The gathering was not only large (with 7,500 onsite participants) but also “evangelistically ecumenical.” To set the stage, Billy Wilson of E21 and PWF and Rick Warren of the Finishing the Task hosted a preparatory meeting in Dec 2022 in New York, attended by 26 denominational leaders, inter-church bodies, and mission agencies, committing to fulfilling the Great Commission by 2033. The list includes, for example, the Lausanne Movement, the newly formed Global Methodist Church, and a Catholic movement called Global 2033.²⁹ The 2023 Amsterdam conference launched the EveryONE initiative, bringing communities for a decade of evangelistic thrust. The conference program included dynamic worship sessions, 22 workshops, and collaboration and strategy sessions. On the last day, the participants and local believers spread throughout the city for street evangelism and outreach. The conference was concluded in the Olympic Stadium for a rally and commissioning service.³⁰

The EveryONE launch implies at least two developments. Firstly, Spirit-empowered Christianity, grown to become the second-largest Christian family (after the Catholics), now exercises its leadership in evangelism, mission, and Christian unity. Demonstrating its ability to call various church traditions and mission bodies for a united effort, evangelization proved to be a uniting theme. Secondly, from then on, Empowered21

²⁹ A. Larry Ross Communications, “Ministry Leaders Unite on Fulfilling the Great Commission by 2033,” *Religion News Service*, December 8, 2022, sec. RNS Press Releases, accessed on July 31, 2024, <https://religionnews.com/2022/12/08/ministry-leaders-unite-on-fulfilling-the-great-commission-by-2033/>.

³⁰ For the conference details, see <https://amsterdam2023.com/>, accessed July 31, 2024. Empowered21 plans to publish a compendium of the 2023 Amsterdam conference.

gatherings would bring the “EveryONE” focus. As the clock ticks toward 2033, this sharp focus on the goal of evangelization is much needed.

Global Network of Spirit-Empowered Scholars (GNSES)

The Amsterdam scholars’ consultation also launched a global network of academics and practitioners. From the beginning, the movement had identified three stakeholder groups: leaders (or “fathers and mothers”), new generation, and scholars. Accordingly, Empowered21 established the Global Council (and Regional Cabinets) as the body of leaders and the NextGen to represent the new generation. (It also formed the Global Evangelist Alliance and the Women’s Alliance). However, the scholars, the third stakeholder group, had not been organized, although its programs (consultations and publications) have continued. Empowered21 leadership originally planned to organize a scholarly working group in 2020 at the planned Jerusalem Global Congress. This overdue concept was finally realized by launching the Global Network of Spirit-Empowered Scholars (GNSES) on June 19, 2023.

Also, there had been a need for a worldwide network of Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars. National or regional academic societies exist, including the Society for Pentecostal Studies, a US body that serves far beyond its borders. Pentecostal-Charismatic Theological Inquiry International (PCTII) gathered a database of Pentecostal academics.³¹ The GNSES aims to bring Spirit-empowered researchers-practitioners with graduate qualifications into a network. The focus is research to strengthen the Spirit-empowered faith and communities. This network would serve as the initial pool for the contributors to the annual consultations and their books. The members would also receive resources produced by GNSES and other working groups. The initial invitation was sent to those who had participated in the academic meetings of E21 to

³¹ Harold Hunter gathered an impressive list of Pentecostal societies and academic journals, even if some of the information is dated. Pentecostal-Charismatic Theological Inquiry International, “Academic Societies and the Like,” accessed on August 1, 2024, <http://pctii.org/academic.html>. The database site is no longer available.

form the base of the network. The Center for Spirit-Empowered Research of Oral Roberts University now administers this growing body.

At the GNSSES launch, Wilson characterized Spirit-empowered scholarship with four related research areas for the network members:

- 1) Scholarship to build the Spirit-empowered movement;
- 2) Scholarship to help the world understand who we are;
- 3) Scholarship that connects the generations and helps us reach everyone on earth; and
- 4) Scholarship that flows from service and love.³²

Consultations

The 2023 Amsterdam consultation, now back to the Pentecost week routine, was planned to fully support the EveryONE conference by integrating its program into the flow of the conference. Accordingly, five presenters led their workshops for the EveryONE conference, using their research but presenting in plain language. The co-chairs selected “Spirit-empowered Evangelists” as the consultation theme, but the co-chairs did not produce a theme description. They also planned to publish the presentations in the planned conference compendium, breaking the usual pattern of an annual book project. Seven studies included one biblical reflection on Spirit-empowered evangelism and six studies on selected evangelists, both world-renowned and unknown. Although small in number, the studies cover four continents: Africa, Asia, North America, and Europe.³³ Sensing the subject’s importance, the co-chairs organized a full-length book. More than 15 studies were subsequently commissioned for this book.

The 2024 consultation was held in Jakarta as the first one under the banner of GNSSES. Thus, the co-chairs sent an initial invitation to the 270 GNSSES members for their research proposals. This consultation was held in conjunction with EveryONE Asia. Under the overarching thrust for the decade of evangelization, the co-chairs selected religions as the context and challenge of Christian witness. Thus, “Spirit-Empowered Living and Witnessing in Religious Contexts” was its theme.

³² “A Report of the 2023 Scholars’ Consultation” (June 2023), 1.

³³ “A Report of the 2023 Scholars’ Consultation” (June 2023), 2.

The consultation theme description highlighted two Asian realities to frame the consultation:

The host city of this year's Consultation symbolizes Asian realities: 1) the birthplace of most major religions and 2) the least evangelized, with less than nine percent as Christians in this largest continent. This context provides a rich ground for learning from diverse Spirit-empowered communities in their Spirit-empowered living as Christ's followers with different religions and witnessing his love and gift of salvation with sensitivity to their religious beliefs.

Fourteen studies and two study outlines represented various religious contexts: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, secularism, and animism. Ten studies investigated Asian religious contexts by Asians, and African and North American scholars prepared the rest. The editors plan to fill the gaps, both religious and geographical, through the editorial process for the consultation book.

As Concluding...

In fifteen short years from its initial meeting in 2009, Empowered21 has risen to be "the most widespread and important global network of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements that have appeared since the glory days of Azusa Street in 1906."³⁴ I will mention its significance in several ways.

Firstly, it has emerged as a global umbrella network encompassing the full spectrum of Spirit-empowered Christianity, including classical Pentecostals, Charismatics, and the plethora of neo-Charismatics and independent churches. It complements the Pentecostal World Fellowship, which serves classical Pentecostal denominations. While the PWF has been serving the denominational Pentecostal churches for three-quarters of a century, it no longer reflects today's global Spirit-empowered constituencies as the smallest family, as the table below shows.³⁵

³⁴ Synan and Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 65.

³⁵ Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity: The Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement in the 21st Century* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2013), 34.

Spirit-Empowered Believers (unit: million)		
	2020	2050
Classical Pentecostals	123.6	203.7
Charismatics	268.3	393.2
Neo-Charismatics	252.3	434.6

The inclusive nature of E21 was crucial in bringing the Charismatics and Neo-Charismatics under the large tent of Spirit-empowered Christianity. The coming of these two world networks for joint conferences and collaborative work is historic and encouraging. After the 2022 Seoul conference, the 2025 triennial Pentecostal World Conference is also jointly held with Empowered21’s global congress in Helsinki, Finland. Both bodies are expected to embrace the evangelistic focus initiated by E21 in its EveryONE initiative.

Secondly, Empowered21 has also exhibited extraordinary energy in unfolding and implementing its programs through annual meetings. This is compared with the PWC’s triennial meetings. The GNSES is an example: It has managed successful annual consultations and publications. Indeed, all the working groups are highly motivated to advance the EveryONE vision. For example, the Global Evangelist Alliance is conducting large-scale evangelistic gatherings in different parts of the world. Considering the movement’s relational and voluntary nature, the motivation is genuinely attributed to the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. This dynamic process also attests to an impressive resource mobilization. The recent EveryONE Asia in Jakarta demonstrated the unbelievable mobilization of human talent, influence, and financial resources by local hosts to bring more than 11,000 Spirit-empowered believers from 46 nations. The recent report also shared that Christians in Indonesia participated in a 21-day fast and over 1,000 prayer towers.³⁶

Thirdly, its sharp focus on evangelization is another achievement. As anticipated, this universally accepted goal has brought diverse streams of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, ministries, and leadership into one space. This emphasis has been a restorative move to the very core of Pentecostal

³⁶ Empowered21, “EveryONE Asia 2024 Recap” (July 2024).

theology: the Holy Spirit empowered his people to be Christ's witnesses to the ends of the earth (Act 1:8). This belief turned the Azusa Street Mission, for example, into a powerful missionary community,³⁷ and this foundational pneumatological missiology has sustained the highest growth rate among Christian traditions. At the same time, Pentecostal mission thinking has explored new frontiers such as holistic engagement for the marginalized, a justice agenda to address the structural root of human suffering, Christian unity, inter-religious engagement, and creation care. While this broadening of Spirit-empowered mission is encouraging and commendable, the primary focus of evangelization might have "thinned out." Unfortunately, we have seen this blurring focus of evangelism in developing the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference tradition. Many have watched the development of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism to see if it maintains the original primary focus on evangelism. In this environment, the resurgence of evangelistic zeal rightly comes from the Spirit-empowered movement, the fastest-growing segment of world Christianity. Mission historians will see the EveryONE initiative among the worldwide evangelistic movements.

Fourthly, as mentioned above, the E21's academic community (now organized as the GNSSES) has significantly contributed to Spirit-empowered scholarship. Following the guiding questions of the movement, the scholars' consultations identify challenging issues that Spirit-empowered communities face. Theological controversy over hyper-grace teaching (2016 London consultation), Human sexuality and gender issues (2017 Singapore consultation), today's cultural currents such as religious pluralism (2018 Johannesburg consultation), dehumanizing poverty (2019 Bogota consultation), the universal struggle of a pandemic (2021 Dubai consultation), inter-generational issues (2022 Seoul consultation), the reality and challenge of religions (2024 Jakarta consultation), and the

³⁷ Gary B. McGee, "Missions, Overseas (N American Pentecostal)," *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, edited by Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 888, estimated approximately 200 Pentecostal missionaries travelled overseas by 1910.

surging number of people on the move including refugees and immigrants (2025 Helsinki consultation). These books break new ground with unique Spirit-empowered perspectives. However, they are not a random list of pressing issues; the reflections are intentionally tied to the ultimate goal of evangelization. The EveryONE agenda has also received full attention as two consultations directly addressed this mandate: The remaining task of the Great Commission (2020 Tulsa consultation) and Spirit-empowered evangelists (2023 Amsterdam consultation). With the five massive volumes on global Spirit-empowered Christianity, GNSES's role cannot be understated.³⁸

Like the Pentecostal World Fellowship and Empowered21 are collaborating more regularly, the Fellowship's WAPTE and E21's GNSES are working together to advance Spirit-empowered scholarship. In addition to the joint consultations (in 2022 and 2025), a GNSES co-chair serves on the WAPTE board, overseeing the publication of its biennial journal, *Pentecostal Education*. WAPTE's executive director has been participating in the E21's scholars' consultations since 2011. This experience is extremely encouraging as PWF did not have any academic function in its triennial conferences. Seeing this need, half a dozen Pentecostal academics organized a one-day forum before 1998 (Seoul), 2001 (Los Angeles), and 2004 (Johannesburg) Pentecostal World Conferences. Records of the International Forum for Pentecostal Studies are rarely found,³⁹

³⁸ WAPTE serves a similar purpose for the Pentecostal World Fellowship, which adopted it as PWF's Education Commission in 2009, which was also asked to plan a theological consultation for 2010 PWF conference in Stockholm. John F. Carter, Paul R. Alexander, and Barry L. Saylor, "Advancing the Vision for Pentecostal Theological Education Worldwide: The Origins and Development of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education," *Pentecostal Education* 7:2 (Fall 2022), 246.

³⁹ Harold Hunter's "Academic Societies and the Like" includes valuable information under "International." Hunter notes: "International Forum for Pentecostal Studies. Organizes theological conferences in conjunction with the Pentecostal World Conferences... Committee members are: Dr. Opoku Onyinah (Africa); Lim Yeu Cheun (Asia), Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss (Europe), Dr. Miguel Alvarez

but it served as a precursor of today's thriving Spirit-empowered scholarship.

Lastly, I will end my reflective essay with a few questions on the E21's future. The success of Empowered21 as a relational network can be attributed to several critical elements, such as the visionary leadership of Billy Wilson, his inner circle for ideas and resources,⁴⁰ a momentum created by annual meetings, the strategic adoption of the EveryONE initiative as E21's common goal, the enthusiastic participation of leaders of the world's large churches and organizations, the mobilization of resources, and more. The critical role that Empowered21 is serving has been argued above. The questions about the future of the movement arise precisely from its relational nature. Two of them are:

- If the EveryONE vision has united the stakeholders of the movement, what will happen after 2033?
- If the "traditioning" of Spirit-empowered spirituality, ethos, and mission to the next generation is the movement's fundamental agenda, what's the future beyond the current leadership?

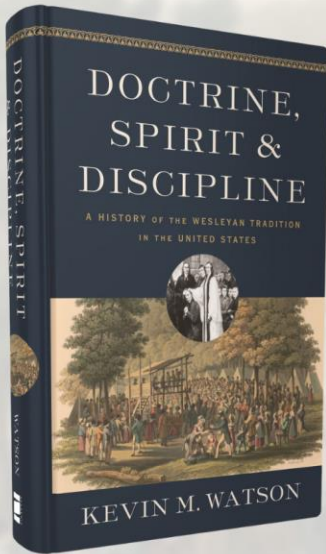
I admit that the questions are from the "flesh," not from the Spirit. But shouldn't Spirit-empowerment be matched by human dedication and wisdom? But for now, I am deeply grateful for this new movement and its achievements. I am equally impressed by its energy and enthusiasm, matched with sheer dedication and God-size vision of the shapers of the movement.

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(Latin America), Dr. Harold D. Hunter (North America), Dr. Wonsuk Ma, Member at Large." Younghoon Lee of Yoido Full Gospel Church hosted the 1998 and 2010 gatherings.

⁴⁰ Synan identified Mart Green of the Green Family Foundation and Rob Hoskins of OneHope as Wilson's co-architects of the movement. Synan and Wilson, *As Waters Cover the Sea*, 57-59.

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Reviews

Wonsuk Ma, Opoku Onyinah, and Rebekah Bled, eds. *The Pandemic and the Holy Spirit: From Lament to Hope and Healing*. Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2024. Pp. xiii + 421.

A curious question provoked by the profound disruption of life thrust upon the contemporary world by the COVID-19 pandemic is how Pentecostalism, a movement known for its emphasis on the healing and empowering Holy Spirit, has responded to this unmatched global crisis. *The Pandemic and the Holy Spirit* is a timely and thought-provoking collection edited by seasoned practitioners and Pentecostal scholars Wonsuk Ma and Opoku Onyinah and assisted by Rebekah Bled, a Methodist and a Ph.D. Candidate in Theology at Oral Roberts University with research interest in Spirit-empowered communities of Pentecostalism. Emerging from presentations at the 2021 Global Network of Spirit-Empowered Scholars consultations, the book comprises twenty chapters, including the introduction and a postscript, from twenty-seven scholars worldwide. As evident in the chapters, the editors aimed for comprehensive coverage of the ‘various aspects of COVID-19’ (p. 6). The volume explores various biblical, theological, historical, socio-cultural, ecclesiological, and missiological perspectives that shaped Pentecostal engagement with the pandemic.

The Pandemic’s two-part division is an intentional effort to curate a cohesive narrative that moves from foundational ideas to specific case studies and responses. The opening seven chapters of the book (Part I) lay necessary biblical and historical foundations as they survey how past Christians responded to plagues and pandemics, offer theological reflections on suffering and healing, and expound a Lukan pneumatology grounded in the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. These chapters set the stage for the heart of the volume

(Part II) — a series of regionally-focused case studies that capture how Pentecostals in diverse contexts dealt with the spiritual, theological, and practical dimensions of COVID-19. In chapter 1, Onyinah gives a comprehensive biblical-theological background to the concept of a pandemic. Informed by biblical insights, he tentatively suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic may well be the result of the Fall and is God’s call for people to repent and return to him. Balfour examines Lukan pneumatology and highlights the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. Isgrigg compares the 1918 pandemic to COVID-19 and urges Pentecostals to learn from past responses. Ma tackles the tension between Pentecostal belief in divine healing and the reality of suffering. He acknowledges that the healing movement has long been “caught between the provision of divine healing and the reality of ‘unhealing’” (109) and asserts that the pandemic challenges Pentecostals to reassess their theology and practice and to embrace ethical and social aspects of healing amid medical and vaccine inequality. Jun Kim, presenting a perspective different from Onyinah’s view of the pandemic as a potential consequence of the Fall, offers a nuanced understanding of pain and suffering by drawing from various biblical themes and theological traditions. Both authors, nevertheless, agree that the pandemic context should prompt efforts to help people and improve life.

Part II presents case studies that capture how Pentecostals in different regional contexts dealt with the spiritual, theological, and practical dimensions of COVID-19. The authors of chapter 10, for instance, discuss sex trafficking in India, noting how the Holy Spirit opened opportunities to help victims during the pandemic period. Wachsmuth, in chapter 11, discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequalities faced by Roma communities in Eastern Europe and calls on the Spirit-empowered movement to respond with mercy, advocacy, and solidarity. Similarly, Yong and Yong, in chapter 12, note the pandemic’s adverse economic, political, and racial dimensions in American society and urge the American Pentecostal communities to advocate for social justice as part of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment. In chapter 17, S. Ofotsu Ofoe examines how Ghanaian Pentecostal churches, accustomed to physical touch and frenzied prayers

during the Holy Spirit baptism services, have adapted this practice during the pandemic. Discussing the effect of the limitations imposed by the pandemic restrictions, he argues that Ghanaian Pentecostals should explore alternative methods of administering this empowering biblical experience.

From wrestling with triumphalist theologies of prosperity to reimagining church life and ministries to advocating for justice amid heightened marginalization, the volume reveals both the challenges and creative resilience exhibited by Spirit-empowered communities. Some chapters directly address the pandemic (e.g., chapters 1, 6, 14-18), while others explore broader themes that intersect with it (e.g., chapters 3, 9, 11, 19). Few minor mistakes exist, perhaps the result of the editors' desire to "fast-track the book process" (p. 6) to guarantee the book's topicality for its potential readers. In Asamoah-Gyadu's article on how African Pentecostals and charismatics responded to the pandemic, for example, he describes what is supposedly five consecutive prophecies delivered by Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa yet dates the "fourth prophecy" to March 2020 and the "final prophetic utterance" to February 2020 (p. 260). This minor discrepancy negates the assumed succession in the delivery of prophecies.

The few errors notwithstanding, the volume presents a refreshingly honest and self-critical assessment of Pentecostal responses from Pentecostal insiders that acknowledges the influence of cultural factors like racism, conspiracy theories, and polarized socio-political tensions. The book models theological reflection firmly rooted in concrete lived realities. Its rich collection points toward a pneumatological ecclesiology that holds together lament over immense suffering with hope in the Holy Spirit's life-giving power. Ultimately, it passionately calls for a Spirit-empowered Christianity engaged with the world's suffering through compassion, justice, and holistic human flourishing, inspiring readers to take action. Although focused on the pandemic, the book's insights hold enduring relevance for global Pentecostalism.

Overall, *The Pandemic and the Holy Spirit* is thought-provoking and gives a balanced reflection that highlights Pentecostalism's strengths and weaknesses in dealing with crises and suffering in the context of a pandemic. It promises to be a valuable resource for scholars, students, and practitioners

of Pentecostalism and missiology who seek to understand the voice and workings of the Holy Spirit in a pandemic world.

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Lee Roy Martin, *Daniel: A Translation and Commentary*.
Pentecostal Readings of Scripture. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press,
2024.

Lee Roy Martin is a professor at Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, TN, USA, teaching biblical studies and lay involvement. He is an editor of the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* and co-director of the Centre for Pentecostal Theology. He has published over forty books and many articles, especially concerning Pentecostal interpretation. As a minister, he is ordained in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) and has served in various pastoral and academic roles. Thus, Martin is uniquely qualified for providing this work's Pentecostal focus.

In this work, Martin provides a translation and brief commentary of Daniel based on Daniel's message and its implications for modern Christian readers. Martin attempts to stay within the text of Daniel for his interpretations, though referencing across the canon, and he aims for the work to serve clergy and laity (x–xi).

The book is structured with prefaces by the series editors and the author, followed by an introduction before section-by-section commentary. In the introduction, Martin notes the division of Daniel into the miracle stories of chapters one through six and the apocalyptic visions of chapters seven through twelve (2–3). These two parts assure readers of God's care for "his people" in times of trial and of God's control of the future (2). After outlining Daniel and its chronology, the rest of the book turns to commentary. Martin focuses at times on relevant scholarly issues, but always returns to practical and theological implications. For instance, in Daniel 1, he addresses the meaning of the renaming of Daniel and his companions in

1:6–7 (14) and the meaning of a particular Hebrew word, *yasem*, in 1:8 (17). He then turns the reader toward understanding their own struggles in the light of Daniel’s resistance of Babylonian pressure to conform (20–21). Although Martin’s interpretations often emerge plainly from the text, he also engages in Christian spiritual interpretation, as when he determines the stone in 2:44–45 to represent Jesus and his eschatological kingdom (33). Martin similarly attributes the actions of Daniel and his companions to their charismatic giftings (18, 34). Interpretations like these place Martin’s text in line with ancient interpreters and within the dispensational Pentecostal tradition specifically.

Daniel 3 centers around Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego’s commitment to God despite persecution. He interprets this story in light of the challenges of Christian life, understood as opportunities to show commitment to God as an evangelistic witness (42–47). Daniel 4 humbles Nebuchadnezzar and shows that God’s punishment and human failure are not irreversible (60). Martin provides basic scholarly information on Daniel 5, with the translation of Belshazzar’s name (62), the identity of the Babylonian queen (69), an explanation of the handwriting on the wall as a symbolic play on words (71), and concludes by turning to the need for Christians to hear challenging words from God and respond, to have discernment, and to trust in God’s sovereignty (76–77). Daniel 6 challenges Christians regarding their response to mistreatment, immorality, or dishonesty (83).

Turning to the apocalyptic section of Daniel 7–12, Martin shifts between ancient context and fulfillments. He relates the son of man in 7:13–14 to Jesus (97). He acknowledges the historical role of Antiochus IV Epiphanes while also acknowledging historical linking of Daniel 7:23–28 with Revelation 13 (101). Accepting both interpretations and other Spirit-led applications, Martin offers an alternative, advocating multiple fulfillments (112). He sees symbolic and prophetic fulfillment in the “repetition of evil throughout history” in the 2nd century BCE, the 1st century CE, and the “last days” (112; 142–143). This seems realistic and authentically Pentecostal, but it could be misused to validate problematic end-times interpretations today. Pentecostals might find benefit in adopting Martin’s view while allowing indefinite finality

concerning Daniel's apocalyptic fulfillment. Martin's comments on Daniel 9:26–27 alleviate concern by discussing the difficulties of constructing an exact timeline from Daniel and the need to trust in God's victory through Jesus (127). Martin again equates a man with Jesus in 10:5–9, utilizing Revelation 1 as a parallel (135). Martin's commentary on Daniel 12's vision of a resurrection brings in the New Testament and includes a substantial section defending the eternality of hell (150–151). Martin finally endorses reading Daniel in biblical context, understanding Daniel's effects on historical and contemporary audiences, and hoping in God's sovereignty while evangelizing (156).

I commend Martin for his brevity, understandability, and applications. First, the book is only a little over 150 pages, helpfully contrasting many bulky scholarly commentaries. Thus, a reader can get a basic understanding of the text and its implications within a few hours. Second, the book is accessible, avoiding jargon or extensive scholarly discussions, which would shut off its intended popular-level audience. Finally, Martin's applications are sound and Pentecostal while avoiding the extremes of some popular interpretations. Thus, pastors and congregations could use Martin's application questions and interpretations to probe their own devotion to God and to encourage trust in God's sovereignty. Such applications would help Christians who have fear concerning the decline of Western Christianity and the premillennial, dispensational perception of impending judgment.

This book does not have many weaknesses. Martin provides, as promised, a translation and brief, Pentecostal commentary. Non-Pentecostal, non-Christian, or critical readers of Daniel will not be satisfied by this work. It does not meet the standards of historical-critical scholarship, but it does not claim to do so. The book's binding is the most significant issue, at times causing the bottoms of pages to stick together.

This book will not likely be employed by biblical scholars or critics, but it is useful for Christian readers. Pastors could easily employ Martin's insights in their preaching and teaching, and laity can be encouraged by Martin's emphasis on God's care for his followers and God's sovereignty over the world's events. Pentecostals should utilize this work in engaging the text of

Daniel faithfully and meaningfully in their congregations and personal, spiritual lives.

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Christian Tsekpoe and Lord Elorm Donkor, eds. *Re-Visioning African Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology in the Public Sphere*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2024. xxviii + 208 pp.

Re-Visioning African Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology in the Public Sphere is a significant contribution to the study of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, particularly within the African context. This volume emerges from the James McKeown Memorial Lecture series, honoring a pioneer of Ghanaian Pentecostalism. The book brings together scholars and practitioners who engage critically with the ecclesiological implications of Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology in contemporary society. While the book offers valuable insights and perspectives, it also presents certain shortcomings that warrant discussion.

The book's strengths lie in its comprehensive examination of the movement's impact. The authors, hailing from various academic backgrounds, including theology, sociology, and cultural studies, enrich the discourse surrounding Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology. This diversity allows for a thorough understanding of the movement's impact on society and internal dynamics, providing a wealth of knowledge to the reader. The inclusion of voices from both African scholars and those in the diaspora provides a well-rounded perspective on the subject matter (xvi, 1). Additionally, the book effectively emphasizes the role of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in the public sphere. It addresses how these churches can influence social transformation, engage with governance issues, and respond to contemporary challenges such as corruption and the COVID-19 pandemic. This focus on public engagement is timely and relevant, encouraging churches to take an active role in societal issues rather than remaining insular (64).

Furthermore, the authors adopt a balanced approach, acknowledging both the achievements and shortcomings of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. This critical appraisal is essential for fostering a realistic understanding of the movement's impact. By highlighting areas needing improvement, the book encourages self-reflection within the movement and promotes a culture of accountability. The book's balanced critique engages the reader in thoughtful consideration of the movement's complexities, fostering a sense of engagement and thoughtfulness. The book again advocates for a holistic understanding of ecclesiology encompassing theological considerations and social, cultural, and political dimensions. This approach is critical in Africa, where the church's role extends beyond spiritual matters to social responsibility and community engagement.

The book's content is organized into twelve chapters. Each chapter delves deep into crucial discussions surrounding the concept of ecclesiology and its profound influence on Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology in Africa and the African diaspora. The book addresses topics such as mission and social transformation, ecclesiological evaluation of Christian values and principles in the public sphere, church-state relations, and the issue of corruption in Africa. Additionally, the book explores Pentecostals' response to Home and Urban mission, Pentecostalism, and the Lordship of Christ in a religiously pluralistic society and rethinking the church in the context of COVID-19. The final chapter in this book was dedicated to discussing church governance and national transformation, an important subject to discuss when dealing with issues concerning public ecclesiology.

What sets this book apart is the authors' unique perspective, which stems from their dual roles as both scholars and practitioners. This multidimensional approach enriches the content with practical insights while maintaining academic rigor. The bilingual nature of the authors, along with their scholarly and practical expertise, adds depth and richness to the exploration of these complex and multifaceted topics. Overall, the book promises to offer a compelling and insightful perspective on the intersection of ecclesiology, Pentecostalism, and societal transformation, making it an essential read for

scholars, practitioners, and anyone interested in the dynamic relationship between faith and society. The discussions surrounding contemporary issues, such as the church's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges of religious pluralism, for example, are particularly noteworthy. These topics are crucial for understanding how Pentecostal-Charismatic churches navigate a rapidly changing world and adapt their practices to meet new challenges (64, 147, 166).

In short, *Re-Visioning African Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology in the Public Sphere* is a timely and significant contribution to ecclesiology and Pentecostal studies. It serves as both a critique and a celebration of the African Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, urging its adherents to embrace their ecclesiological responsibilities in a rapidly changing world. The book's emphasis on the Holy Spirit's transformative potential and its call for self-reflection and accountability makes it a valuable resource for pastors, lay leaders, and scholars. As the authors collectively advocate for a more engaged and socially responsible ecclesiology, they invite readers to envision a future where Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are vibrant communities of faith and catalysts for positive change in society. This volume is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the role of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement in the public sphere and its potential to contribute to the holistic proclamation of the Gospel in the nations of the world.

The book's main shortcoming is the lack of discussion on the role of music in Pentecostal-Charismatic worship. Music is crucial for expressing, building community, and reflecting theology in these churches. The absence of this topic limits the exploration of how music shapes ecclesiology and the experiences of congregants. The rich musical traditions within Pentecostalism represent a missed opportunity for a deeper understanding of worship practices. Music in these settings carries theological weight and can be a powerful medium for teaching and reinforcing doctrine. The book should expand on how music can mobilize congregations for social change and express social justice concerns. It overlooks the diversity of musical styles and expressions within Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and the influence of technology on worship music. The book, therefore, misses the opportunity to integrate

perspectives from musicology, ethnomusicology, and cultural studies, which could enrich the understanding of Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology. This shortcoming presents an area ripe for future research on the role of music in shaping ecclesiology, identity, and public engagement within the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement.

Despite these shortcomings, the volume is a valuable resource for scholars, practitioners, and anyone interested in understanding the role of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in contemporary society. It lays a foundation for further exploration and dialogue, particularly in areas that warrant deeper investigation, such as the role of music and the integration of interdisciplinary perspectives.

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