Dear Supporters, Colleagues, and Other Friends,

Thank you for your partnership, which enables this ministry to grow, to thrive, to play its part in the Church – and to serve Jesus’ project to redeem all that is redeemable. We hope you share our sense of gratitude for the privilege it is to contribute together.

Each year, I become increasingly uneasy with the standard rationale for our shared ministry. The narrative goes something like this: as a result of the 20th-century missionary movement, the Evangelical Church is established and growing in Africa and the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe – which we refer to as the Majority World. We note that Africa is now the numerical center for Evangelicals and that more missionaries originate from there than from the West. Spirit-led movements are prominent in Latin America and Asia. However, rapid conversions often overwhelm church leaders as they attempt to teach and form new believers. Faith is too often “a mile wide and an inch deep.” Therefore, millions more effective pastors are needed. For ScholarLeaders International and others in our general space, this translates into a need for more and healthier theological education, led by capable faculty.

This narrative is incomplete.
It is not false. For example, after persevering heroically during the Cultural Revolution, the Church in China is now widespread. In Jiangsu province, where 79 million people or nearly 6% of China’s population live, best estimates indicate the presence of 5 to 7 million Christians. The vast majority are Evangelicals, in the sense of upholding a fully Trinitarian view of God and looking to Scripture as authoritative. Five years ago, when I was last in Nanjing, church leaders informed me that there were only 250 ordained pastors in the province. Even if we discount the value of formal ordination, one seminary-trained pastor for every 24,000 Christians is a stretch! The Church in Jiangsu needs pastors, so it also needs more teachers who can equip women and men for ministry. Similar statistics are found in other Majority World countries, especially those that have outlawed theological education for an extended period.

Nevertheless, three things about the standard narrative trouble me. **First, in many contexts the narrative simply does not fit.** For example, Christianity is numerically well behind both Hinduism and Islam in India. The new government, which often conflates being Hindu with being Indian, makes it increasingly difficult for Indian Christians to thrive. Associated concerns – related to national identity, foreign influence, political advantage, and freedom to worship – challenge Indian Christians and are not likely to yield to Western, multicultural values. Similar concerns are evident in Buddhist Sri Lanka, atheist China, and most Muslim-majority nations. In about half of the Majority World, Christian expression is substantially constrained by political forces. In the face of systemic oppression and even war, the Church seems to just hang on as often as it thrives. Godly pastors are a blessing anywhere and the Church needs more of them, but merely adding to their numbers is insufficient in light of Majority World needs.

**Second, the narrative carries a Church-Triumphant tone that resonates poorly with the reality on the ground.** A highly effective Nigerian leader recently shared, “We now have a Christian majority. Our denomination is the largest in Nigeria and growing. Christians are in every walk of life. Why is my country in the condition it is in?” He went on to reflect on materialism and corruption, sexual immorality, creation abuse, violent conflict, and urban blight. Years ago, a Filipina leader addressed our board on becoming “downwardly mobile.” Encouraging us to lower ourselves for effective ministry, she reflected the humility that necessarily accompanies any work for Jesus.

It is fair to note that some persistent societal diseases indicate a need for deeper discipleship, which leads to my third point: **What can we in the West bring to help? Are we so well-formed that we can export theological maturity?** I think not. The Nigerian’s sin list is easily observed in the West. I find it impossible to believe that John Stott, when he referred to Christianity as “one thousand miles wide and half an inch deep,” was implying that we Westerners represent a model to emulate.
All this is not intended to discourage. The Church is, in fact, growing in much of the Majority World. Men and women represent Jesus valiantly in the most difficult contexts. His Church is hard-pressed, but ubiquitous, like yeast being worked into dough. In all its virtues and despite our failures, the Church is guided by and embodies God’s Spirit as we participate in Jesus’ redemptive project.

**So how can we make the narrative of our raison d'être more complete?** We start by acknowledging that we in the West, no more nor less than others, have gifts we can choose to bring to the table. In areas in which we are working, those gifts include access to a long tradition of Christian reflection, diverse educational models, well-developed skills in organizational strategy and planning, advanced technology, and wealth.

We bring these gifts because there is one Church, led by Jesus and united by God’s Spirit – and we are grateful to be part of it, to share what we have, to stand with hard-pressed brothers and sisters, and to receive in turn. We bring our gifts out of concern for justice, believing that all people deserve to learn of the Good News in their own languages and as lived out in their own cultures.

At **ScholarLeaders**, we focus our work where we perceive particular opportunities. Through **LeaderStudies**, we support access to higher education and theological reflection. Through the **Vital SustainAbility Initiative**, we offer skills in strategy and planning. From among our network of theological leaders, we promote the sharing of **InSights** in the form of essays, writing grants, and the **Journal for Global Theological Education** – and we recognize exceptional contributors as **ScholarLeader of the Year**.

From our experience as executive leaders, we initiated the **PeerLeader Forum** for overstretched leaders to counsel and encourage one another. And from our relative abundance, we help to bear the financial burdens of ministry through **PressOn**. In all this, our agenda, programs, and growth are driven by the needs of the Church in the Majority World and by the gifts we have been given to advance Jesus’ project.

This is not a one-way deal. The Church in the West is likewise blessed by gifts from the Majority World. To help us address oppressive social structures in light of the Gospel, we listen to theologians from Latin America. To learn what it means to be a Christian minority with limited religious freedom, we hear from sisters and brothers in China, India, Pakistan, and North Africa. To understand the power of lament, we sit with a Congolese.

The past year’s progress is detailed in the rest of this report, but there are a few things I would like to highlight. First, **ScholarLeaders International** is healthy, more so than at any time I can recall. Each program is clearly positioned, with defined investment priorities. Our next two ministry initiatives are based on evident needs and the gifts we can muster: **Theological Leadership for the Church in the Context of Islam**, undertaken with the active participation and guidance of board member and
Islam expert John Azumah, is to consider ways to resource the Church for its ministry to Muslims and in Muslim-majority settings. A second initiative, for which we are preparing this year to enable output in the next, focuses on **Technology-Enabled Theological Education** for the Majority World, with particular concern for spiritual formation in non-residential settings. Both endeavors are informed by lessons from the **Vital SustainAbility Initiative**, through which we expect to keep identifying new opportunities to contribute.

We continue to enjoy and value strong relationships with like-minded organizations, including an expanding global network of theological schools, Western ministries like Overseas Council and Theological Book Network, and half a dozen particularly thoughtful foundations. Increasingly, I hear that **SCHOLARLEADERS INTERNATIONAL** is valued for effective collaboration, efficiency, transparency in reporting, and on-schedule delivery of results.

Operating income grew over 10% last year. Two new Legacy Funds were added – the Brian Prinn Memorial Fund and the Persevere Scholarship – each in loving memory of someone we lost, and dedicated to advancing passions shared with each loved one.

We welcome Marcos Orison Almeida, a Brazilian who will join Emmanuel Bellon in leading the **Vital SustainAbility Initiative**. We have known Marcos for years, having supported him during his doctoral studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. We later benefitted from his contributions as a **SCHOLARLEADERS** board member. Marcos has held leadership positions at South American Theological Seminary, founded by Antonio Barro, the 2011 ScholarLeader of the Year. Marcos will continue serving as a faculty member while working with us.

After 14 years of board service together, we bid a fond farewell to Kerry and Tim Dearborn. Both have made wide-ranging contributions that reflect their immersion in theology and the Majority World. Thank you, Kerry and Tim. Despite missing them, the **SCHOLARLEADERS** board, led by Tite Tiénou, remains among our strongest assets, uniquely combining leaders from business, the academy, and the arts.

As a faith-based ministry, we remain near one edge or another, always dependent on generous donors for funding and volunteers for guidance, and grateful that Jesus allows and even values us as contributors to his project. He is good and, fortunately, loves the imperfect.

With deep appreciation for your support, partnership, friendship, encouragement, and intercession,

Larry A. Smith  
President
Highlights From the Past Year

*Through the Vital SustainAbility Initiative* (VSI), **SCHOLARLEADERS collaborates with 19 leading theological institutions in the Majority World to clarify their missions and create strategic plans for sustainability.**

![Image of Dr. Emmanuel Bellon and NBTS leaders](image)

Along with our partners at Overseas Council, we celebrate encouraging results and enthusiastic reviews. Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS) – a premier theological institution in Nigeria and the first Evangelical seminary in Sub-Saharan Africa to grant a doctorate in theology – has completed a comprehensive five-year strategic plan for sustainability, which includes clear, mission-minded initiatives related to faculty development, pedagogy, and prophetic engagement with pressing social issues, such as materialism and corruption.

Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary – a respected interdenominational school serving 350 students from Eurasia – has identified its special calling to develop a theology of citizenship and a distinctly Ukrainian Christian identity. The school also seeks to address post-war trauma and rising materialism in Ukrainian society and in other former Soviet countries.

Colombo Theological Seminary in Sri Lanka – an esteemed interdenominational and multiethnic institution training over 1,000 leaders – is exploring creative and sustainable ways to reach Buddhists (70% of Sri Lankans), collaborate with pastors to mentor students, and utilize extension sites and technology-enabled learning programs to train 3,000 future Christian leaders by 2021.

In 2016, the VSI Team also began work with Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (Beirut, Lebanon), Asian Theological Seminary (Manila, Philippines), Evangelical Theological Seminary (Cairo, Egypt), Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (Addis Ababa), Africa International University (Nairobi, Kenya), South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (Bangalore, India), and Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de l’Alliance Chrétienne (Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire).
LeaderStudies awards scholarships to exceptional Majority World Christian leaders pursuing doctoral-level education in theology and related disciplines.

This year, we celebrated with 11 leaders as they completed their PhDs and returned to leadership positions back home. In the spring, we accepted another nine. ScholarLeaders currently supports 47 leaders from 28 countries studying at 28 institutions in 18 nations. Since 1984, we have sponsored 260 leaders from 54 countries. Twenty years ago, 100% of the leaders had to study in the West. Thanks to new doctoral programs at Majority World schools – often developed by those in the ScholarLeaders fellowship – more than 60% can continue ministering in the Majority World while earning their degrees.

Dr. Honoré Kwany completed his PhD in Educational Studies at the University of South Africa and now serves as Vice Rector at the Christian Bilingual University of Congo, a school founded by Drs. David and Kaswera Kasali, who also received support from ScholarLeaders:

“I am very grateful to ScholarLeaders for standing beside me with my family not only financially, but also socially and emotionally through always inquiring about my progress and our life with the family.”

Dr. Honoré Kwany and family

InSights Essays enable Majority World leaders to share from their experiences, expertise, and reflections on the Church in their home contexts.

We heard from Palestinians on the refugee crisis in Europe, a Pakistani on a Christian response to religious extremism, and an Ethiopian on moving from despair to hope amid overwhelming circumstances.

InSights Grants fund gifted Majority World scholars to conduct research, write books and articles, and publish their work in service to the Church and society.

In partnership with the Institute for Biblical Research, we supported contributions from six Majority World scholars to an important series on Scripture in Global Context. The Spirit over the Earth: Pneumatology in the Majority World is now available. With Theological Book Network and the South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies, we support the Center for South Asian Research (CSAR), which
provides funding, space, and research resources for scholars called to serve the Church as theological writers and thought leaders.

The InSights Journal for Global Theological Education enhances the global discourse on theological education by featuring Majority World perspectives, realities, and practices.

Under the guidance of an international editorial board of leading theologians and educators, the Journal engages and amplifies Majority World voices, and highlights innovative approaches. Published twice a year, this unique online periodical has a growing readership of over 800. We are beginning to publish articles written in Spanish, French, and Chinese, with English translation.

The PeerLeader Forum enables senior leaders of Majority World theological institutions to collaborate on strategic issues, and to counsel with and encourage one another.

The fifth Francophone Africa Forum met in Togo to explore “Transitions and Legacy.” The participants – seven executive leaders and their spouses from six institutions in five countries – greatly appreciated the space for rest, renewal, reflection, and relationship-building.

“If the PeerLeader Forum didn’t exist, it would need to be invented! Thank you to all those who support us in our life-giving work as leaders of theological institutions in French-speaking Africa!”

– Dr. Célestin Kouassi, Academic Dean at Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de l’Alliance Chrétienne (a VSI client school) in Côte d’Ivoire.

The third Anglophone Africa Forum met in Ghana and focused on “Leadership and Transition.” Ten couples gathered for prayer, rest, and discussion on identifying successors, mentorship, and organizational continuity.
The ScholarLeader of the Year Award recognizes exceptional Christian leaders from the Majority World and provides opportunities for them to share their work globally.

We are pleased to announce Dr. Athena Gorospe as the 2017 ScholarLeader of the Year. Athena serves as Associate Professor of Old Testament and Director of the PhD Program at Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) in Manila, Philippines. She recently published commentaries on Judges and Job. A scholar-activist, Athena is particularly interested in how God’s justice relates to migrants and displaced peoples.

Global Voices promotes Majority World-to-Majority World dialogue.

This year, we also sponsored Dr. Salim Munayer to present at the Theological Forum at Asian Theological Seminary on facilitating reconciliation. Amid growing unrest in the southern islands where Islamic presence is strong, ATS is exploring avenues for mutual understanding and reconciliation between Christians and Muslims. Salim’s expertise, forged in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, provides a valuable and timely perspective.

PressOn provides funds for leaders to return home after studies and re-engage in ministry, as well as seed money for innovative ministry initiatives in the Majority World.

We enabled four leaders to return to ministry after graduation. Donors also helped Colombo Theological Seminary (CTS), a Vital SustainAbility client school, respond to a financial crisis caused by internet fraud, thus preserving the institution for ministry in Buddhist Sri Lanka.
“Your gift has undoubtedly lifted up our spirits and certainly encouraged us as a leadership team to ‘press on’ with the mission the Lord has entrusted to us! In the grace of God and by the rich generosity of His people, our monthly needs and building projects’ needs were met sufficiently for us to echo the words of Paul that we are ‘amply supplied.’”

– Dr. Ivor Poobalan, CTS President

Advancement & Other Financial Results: We give thanks for 119 donors last year, who provided our highest total revenue ever. Two new Legacy Endowments – the Brian Prinn Memorial Fund and the Persevere Scholarship – were established with substantial gifts to both. Income for general funds increased by slightly over 10% and we ended the year with a modest surplus.

SCHOLARLEADERS board members generously cover all administrative costs, allowing 100% of other donations to support programs that directly encourage and enable Christian theological leaders from the Majority World for the Global Church.

Revenue Sources

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<tr>
<td>Legacies &amp; Interest</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
<td>$1,200,000</td>
<td>$1,400,000</td>
<td>$1,600,000</td>
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<td>Churches</td>
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<td>$600,000</td>
<td>$800,000</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
<td>$1,200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
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<td>$800,000</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
<td>$1,200,000</td>
<td>$1,400,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
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<td>$1,000,000</td>
<td>$1,200,000</td>
<td>$1,400,000</td>
<td>$1,600,000</td>
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**Board of Directors:**

- Tite Tiénou, PhD, Chair (2004)
- Gary Ames (2011)
- John Azumah, PhD (2012)
- Bruce Baker, PhD (1997)
- Dan Boyce (2012)
- Mark Conroe (1985)
- Debbie & Paul Evans (2005)
- Clair & David Fung, MD (2004)
- Matt Heynen (2014)
- Doug McConnell, PhD (2003)
- Beth & Doug Paul, PhD (2009)
- Linda Prinn (1989)
- Amy & Marshall Reavis (2005)
- Marleen & Bruce Rognlien (2001)
- Marylee & Grayson Sanders (1994)
- Scot Sellers (1985)
- Sharon & Dennis Sheehan, MD (1992)
- Victoria & Larry Smith, President (1996)
- Mike Woodruff (1994)

**Founders:**

- Tom Cooper, PhD
- Steve Hayner, PhD (RIP)
- Mark Labberton, PhD

**Directors Emeriti:**

- Walt Liefeld, PhD
- Paul Pierson, PhD
- Brian Prinn (RIP)

**Staff (left to right):** Marcos Orison Almeida, PhD, Vital SustainAbility Initiative; Steve P. Doggett, Advancement; Bonnie E. Lin, Communications; Evan R. Hunter, PhD, Scholar Network; Lynn M. Simons, Finance & Administration; Emmanuel Bellon, PhD, Executive Network; Larry A. Smith, President.
## Financial Summary

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<th>FY2015</th>
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<td><strong>INCOME</strong></td>
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<td>Individuals</td>
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<td>In-Kind Contributions</td>
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<td>Other (Interest, Merchant Fees, Adjustments)</td>
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<td>(657)</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL INCOME</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,128,106</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,249,396</strong></td>
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<td>Programs</td>
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<td>Strategy &amp; Administration</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>NET CURRENT ASSETS (YEAR-END)</strong></td>
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<td>Earnings on Investments</td>
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<td><strong>FUTURE COMMITMENTS: LeaderStudies</strong>**</td>
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<td>Income versus Prior Year</td>
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<td>Program ÷ Total Expenditure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Assets ÷ LeaderStudies Commitments</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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* Legacy Funds are amortized on a fixed schedule, between 5 and 20 years, according to donor intent.

** Approximate total for leaders pursuing advanced education. These typically require an investment of 2-5 years.

Audited results.
Fiscal Year ends August 31.
And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men and women who will be able to teach others also.

— 2 Timothy 2:2