SCHOLARLEADERS

CULTIVATING THEOLOGICAL LEADERS FOR THE GLOBAL CHURCH

YOUR SOURCE FOR SL UPDATES: SPRING 2023

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Christopher Hays, Evan Hunter, Taras Dyatlik meeting in Lviv, Ukraine.

DEAR FRIENDS OF SCHOLARLEADERS,

By: Christopher M. Hays

2023 is an exciting time to be part of ScholarLeaders' work, cultivating theological leaders around the world. Our team has been crisscrossing the globe investing in some of the most influential Christian scholars of this generation and the next.

These past couple months, we've been in Ukraine, partnering with valiant theological leaders to tackle the challenge of training pastors in wartime, as part of our Church & Society program. We've been in Nigeria and India, ministering to the presidents of theological schools in our PeerLeader Forum. Right now, we are busy onboarding the bright new PhD scholars chosen by our selection committee in February for support beginning in September. Our ministry is growing by leaps and bounds, and we are so grateful to you for partnering with us!

ScholarLeaders keeps building powerful programs to encourage and enable theologians from the Majority World for the global Church. But not everyone knows about all the different sorts of work we do, above and beyond investing in scholars through doctoral scholarships. So this year, we are creating digital newsletters (like this one!), each of which will showcase a different ministry of ScholarLeaders, to give you the latest on how God is allowing us to equip and support theological leaders around the world.

MINISTRY FEATURE:
VSI

Emmanuel Bellon leads conversation at Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, a VSI school in Lebanon.

WHEN STRATEGY GOES TO SCHOOL

By: Evan Hunter and Linzay Rinquest

Seminary presidents are intelligent, courageous, and talented individuals who often find themselves heading schools under significant challenges. A leader in Nigeria must consider whether to arm faculty to protect the school from violent religious mobs. A president in Lebanon has watched the local currency devalue by 90%. An executive in India must guide a complex organization that includes the seminary, a primary school, and a hospital. Though these individuals are wise and passionate, years of earning a PhD in theology could not prepare them for the daunting task of institutional leadership. During their studies, they honed critical thinking skills, but they have found that directing a seminary – developing strategy, managing finances, guiding mission – requires a steep learning curve.

Over the years, ScholarLeaders has listened to PhD graduates discuss the challenges they face after earning their doctorates. We noticed that those who stepped rapidly into senior leadership mentioned particular stressors. In response, we developed the Vital SustainAbility Initiative to address these leaders' desires to attain meaningful sustainability in carrying out their schools' mission. Through VSI, we work with school executives to understand the contextual realities each school faces, along with the unique resources that shape each school's role in effectively training the next generation of Christian leaders. While sustainability includes financial viability, school leaders quickly realize that achieving their mission requires the coordination of faculty, facilities, and curriculum as well.

Our Engagement Directors have decades of experience in theological education; among them are three former seminary presidents. We have now worked with over 40 schools. Through a dialogical consultative process, the VSI team asks questions, explores ideas, and shares models from across contexts. In doing so, they help the school leader work with the school's leadership team and faculty in new ways to clarify mission, analyze their context, and formulate strategic priorities.

We have been tremendously encouraged to see how schools

WHEN STRATEGY GOES TO SCHOOL

have risen to the challenges they face and developed projects to advance each school's mission. These have included faculty development plans that allow schools to staff new curricular offerings and to plan for retirements; solar projects to offset electricity shortages; online programs to help train those who cannot attend traditional full-time programs; digital library expansions to support those online programs; third-stream income projects to provide revenue; and new courses that respond to contextual challenges.

Even more importantly, through VSI, these executives find confidantes who help them persevere in their lonely and daunting work. VSI mentorship guides them into new ways of strategizing. Describing VSI's impact on his school, Elie Haddad, President of Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, said, "These discussions have become part of who we are, and they've become part of our DNA. They are helping change us into thinking differently and moving in a different direction."

Taras Dyatlik, who has led work with schools in Ukraine, states that leaders who participated in VSI were well equipped to pivot when Russia invaded Ukraine. Thanks to their VSI training, these leaders were able to turn their seminaries into a network of relief hubs that has collaborated to evacuate people from front-line regions, host refugees, and provide food, medical supplies, and Bibles. Now, as Ukrainian schools shift back to their primary calling to train Christian leaders, they do so within new contextual realities that will require a revised strategy. They will receive renewed help from VSI Engagement Directors to do so.

Theological schools train the leaders of tomorrow; equip a new generation of pastors, teachers, and missionaries; and provide theological guidance and biblical wisdom for the church and society, with unique expressions in each cultural context. To do this well requires leaders called, gifted, and equipped to sustain that mission.

Linzay Rinquest, ScholarLeaders Engagement Director, collaborating with ATA facilitators-in-training. Together, they completed a successful strategy planning session with Alpha Omega International College in Malaysia.

SL4O
EST. 1983
SCHOLARLEADERS

ScholarLeaders staff and board met in California in February for fellowship, prayer, and planning. Yosam Manafa (LeaderStudies) opened the meeting with a devotional and prayer. A highlight of this year's meeting was looking back on 40 years of God's faithful provision in our ministry.

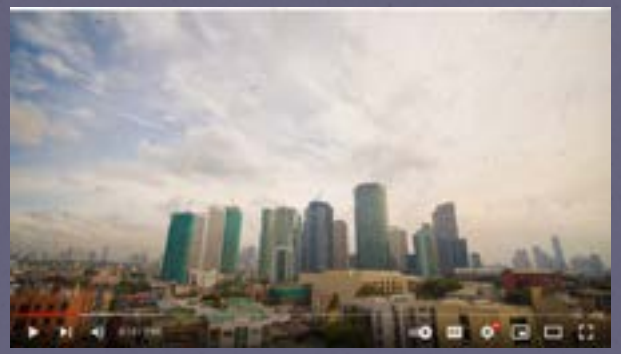
We made a coffee table book highlighting 40 scholars from our four decades. You can view the SL40 coffee table book as a digital flipbook HERE.

Scholars, board members, and staff enjoyed sharing a meal at our February 2023 board meeting in Pasadena, California.

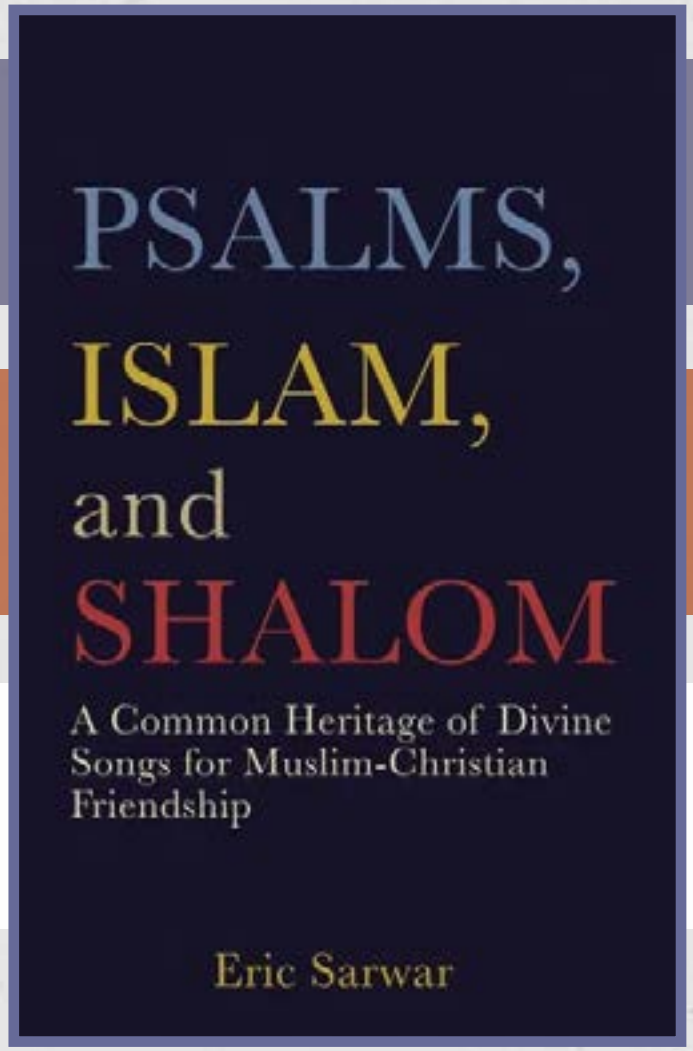
At the board meeting last month, we shared these three video segments that give an overview of the organization from its founding in 1983 through the present.

Part One traces the story through the life and ministry of Dr. Athena Gorospe. Part Two traces ScholarLeaders' impact through the decades. Part Three features theological leaders expressing their gratitude to the donors whose generosity continues to bear good fruit around the world.

Soli Deo Gloria!



BOOKS BY SL SCHOLARS



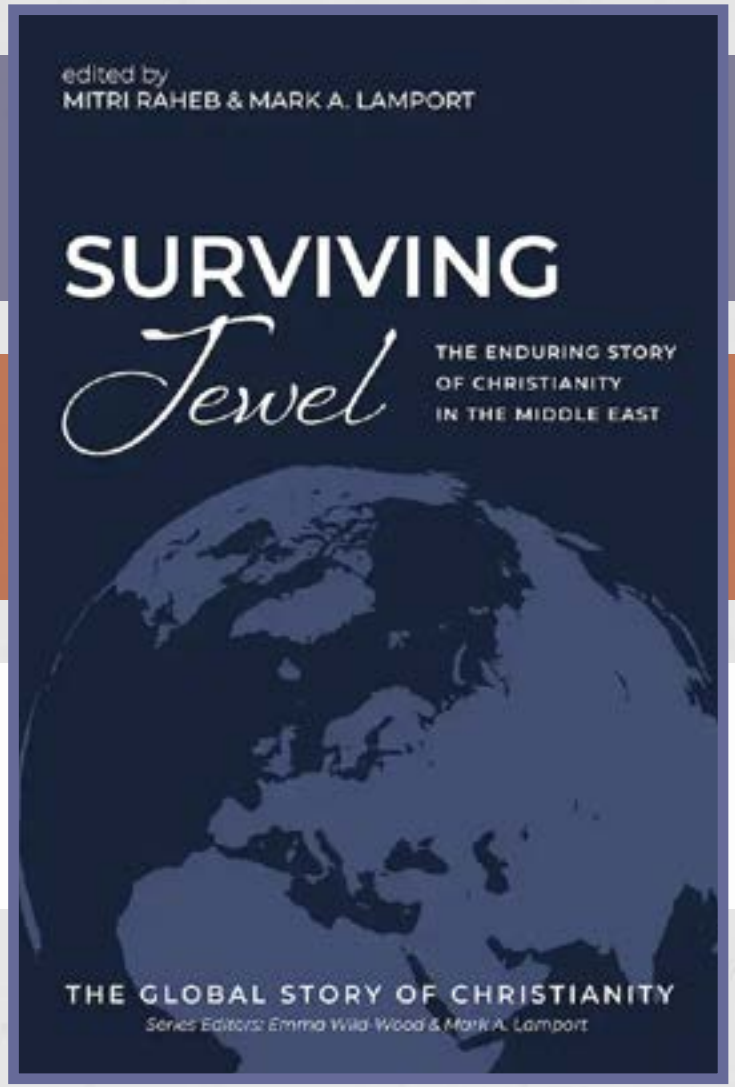
PSALMS, ISLAM, AND SHALOM

Our February book of the month was *Psalms, Islam, and Shalom: A Common Heritage of Divine Songs for Muslim-Christian Friendship* by Eric Sarwar. Dr. Sarwar completed his PhD at Fuller in 2021 with support from ScholarLeaders. He's the founding president of Tehillim School of Church Music & Worship in Pakistan.

BOOKS BY SL SCHOLARS

LES ORIGINES DU CORAN ET DE L'ISLAM

Our January book was *Les origines du Coran et de l'islam* by Karim, who is pursuing a doctoral thesis at the *École pratique des hautes études / Paris Sciences et Lettres* (PSL) with funding from ScholarLeaders.

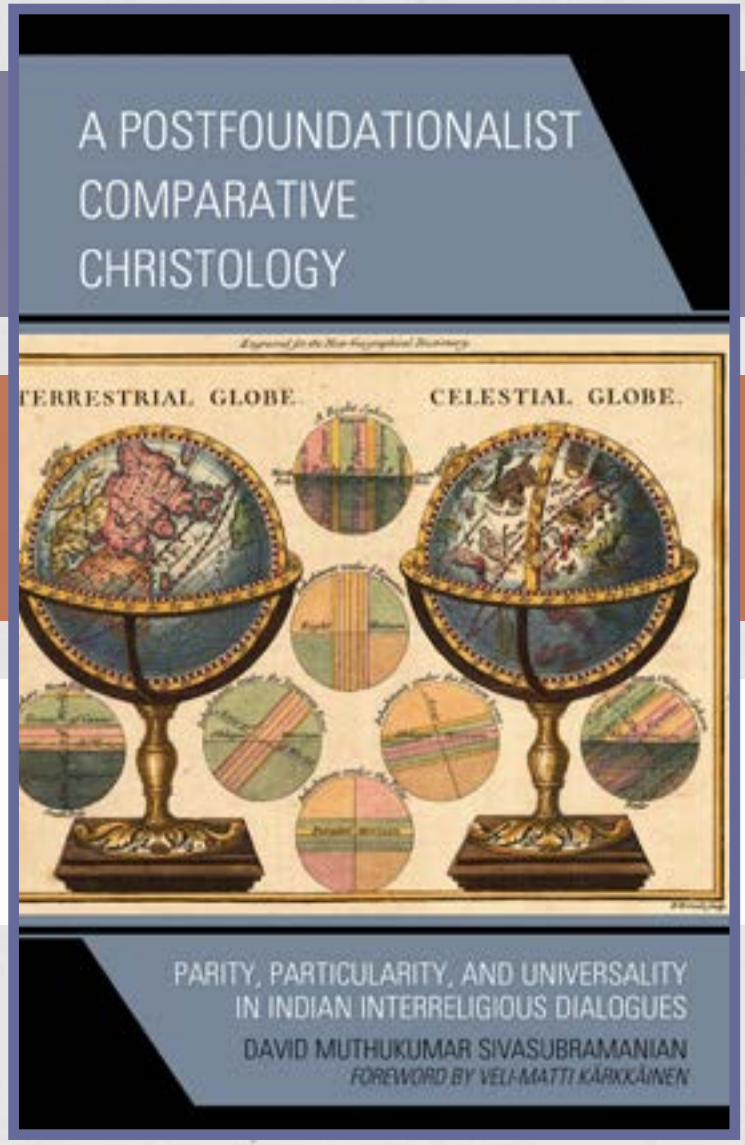


SURVIVING JEWEL

Our December book was *Surviving Jewel: The Enduring Story of Christianity in the Middle East*. Anne Zaki (LS), originally from Egypt, contributed the chapter "Public Theology and the Middle Eastern Church."

A POSTFOUNDATIONALIST COMPARATIVE CHRISTOLOGY

Our November book was *A Postfoundationalist Comparative Christology: Parity, Particularity, and Universality in Indian Interreligious Dialogues* by David Muthukumar (LS). This work facilitates dialogue across religions while affirming the particularity and universality of the Christian faith.



PRAYER FOCUS:
PALESTINE

GRACE AL-ZOUGHBI ARTEEN FROM PALESTINE

By: Bonnie Lin

Please pray with us for Christian leaders from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Religion, especially Islam, uniquely characterizes this region. According to Pew, more than half of the 20 MENA countries have populations that are at least 95% Muslim. Despite their ancient heritage, Christians remain vulnerable and relatively few (15 million), persevering as a faithful remnant amid adversity and, in some places, violent persecution. Learn about ScholarLeaders' work with Christian leaders and schools in MENA by visiting our Prayer Community page.

Let us intercede for Grace Al-Zoughbi Arteen from Palestine.

Established in 1988, the State of Palestine is recognized by 138 United Nations member states. Though its designated capital is Jerusalem, it currently operates out of Ramallah. Most of the land claimed by Palestine has remained under Israeli control since the Six-Day War in 1967. Approximately 5.2 million people live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. 79% are Palestinian Arabs and 22% are Israeli Jews. Around 93% of Palestinians are Muslims (mostly Sunni), while Palestinian Christians represent 6% of the population, followed by smaller Druze and Samaritan minorities. Amid resurgent violence, please pray for the peace of Christ to reign in the Holy Land.

Grace is pursuing a PhD in Theological Education at the London School of Theology (UK). A native of Bethlehem, Grace understands the challenges that Palestinian Christians face as ethnic and religious minorities. Few Palestinians have access to theological education, and Palestinian women encounter even greater obstacles. Familiar with these barriers, Grace seeks to design culturally adept educational systems to support women biblical scholars and theologians throughout the Middle East. Her dissertation focuses on how Arab Protestant women influence theological education.

Check out Grace's 2021 *Global Insights essay*, "Why Should Theological Education Include Women?" For a more extended theological treatment of this topic, see her 2019 article in the *InSights Journal*, "Theological Perspectives on the Theological Education of Women in the Middle East and North Africa."

Grace has taught and led the Biblical Studies Department at Bethlehem Bible College, where her husband Michael also served

as a chaplain. In addition, she has taught at Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, a client of the Vital SustainAbility Initiative, in Lebanon. ScholarLeaders supports Grace's doctoral research through the Persevere Scholarship.

GRACE SHARES THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE

The political context has been quite unsettling in Palestine, recently. There has been so much rising violence. We have witnessed heartbreaking bloodshed and turmoil.

Yet, amid a vicious, seemingly endless cycle of violence, a candle of hope remains lit. It is shining in the hearts of those who know the Lord, those who have seen Him in their difficult and challenging circumstances, those who cling to Him in faith for peace.

As a Palestinian native, I long to see peace in the land where the Lord of Light Himself was incar-

nated. He was born to overcome the darkness. He was born to give us hope when no hope could be found. The flame is still burning in our hearts thousands of years after the Lord appeared in our own little town.

God calls us as believers to walk in His ways, to put our faith into action and not to rely solely on doctrinal accuracy. He called us to be His witnesses, to be lights, and to help others see the "goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

As I pray for my nation, I am reminded of the psalmist's words in Psalm 13:

"How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? […] But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me."

How long must we endure conflict? How long must hatred rule? How long must we weep? Surely, joy comes in the morning.

In a broken land, we turn our hearts to God. Heal us, restore us, O Lord.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for peace to reign in our land. Please pray that people's hearts would be turned to Jesus.

Pray for strength and perseverance as I seek to complete my doctoral work in these final months. I thank the Lord for His faithfulness throughout this journey.

Please pray for further fruitfulness as I desire to see God's work flourish in the Middle East through my involvement in theological education in my beloved region.

Grace Al-Zoughbi Arteen

PRAYER COMMUNITY

Each week, our prayer community of ~700 intercedes for a Christian Majority World leader. If you subscribe to the list, you will receive an email that contains an introduction to that leader's work and home country, followed by a personal message from the leader with prayer requests.

SUBSCRIBE

UPDATE:
SL WORK IN UKRAINE

WAR, TRAUMA, & THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH: AN UPDATE ON OUR WORK IN UKRAINE

By: Evan Hunter

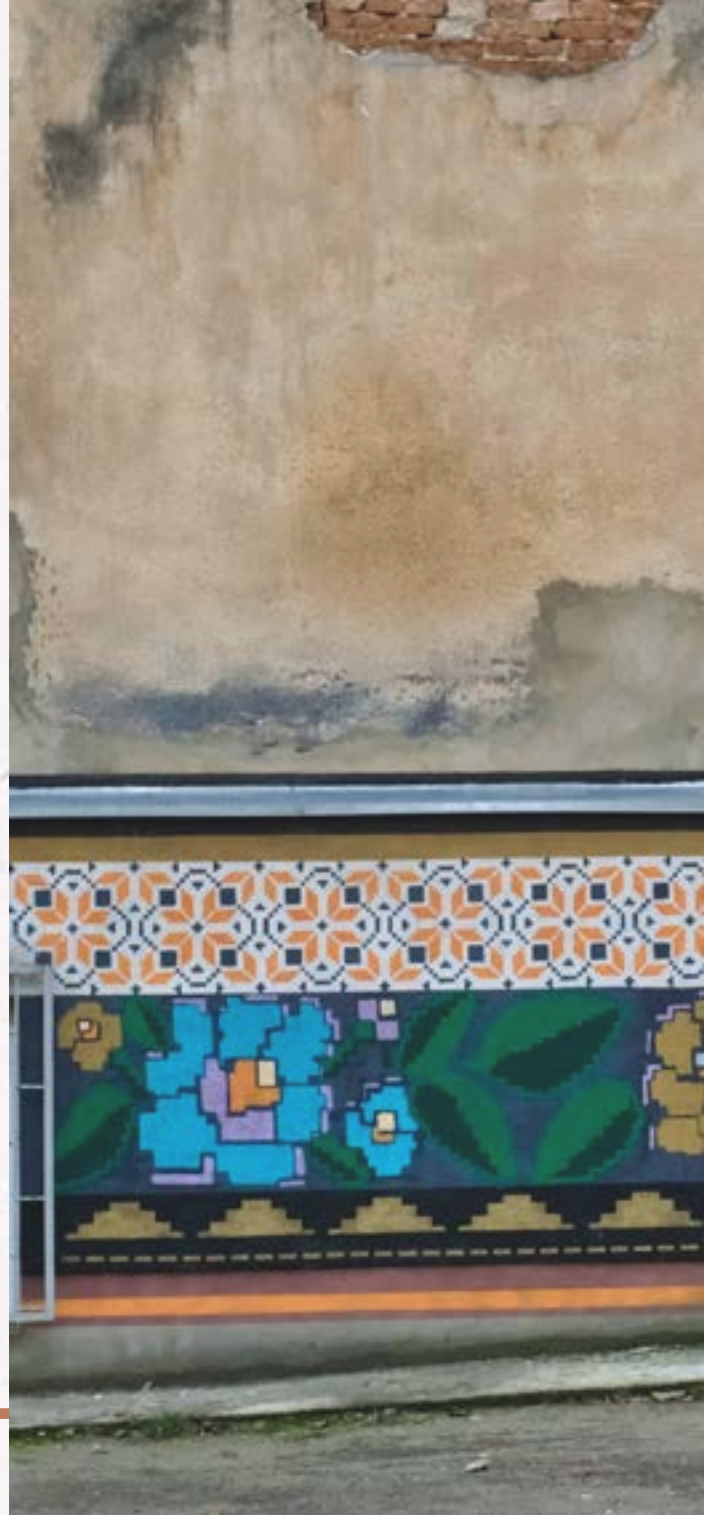
As I drafted this update, I received news of another massive attack on Ukraine. Christopher Hays and I recently visited Ukraine for our project to address theological issues facing the church and society in the context of the war. Word of another attack by Russia on infrastructure and civilian areas across Ukraine reminds us of how blessed we were to experience four days of uninterrupted work from March 3rd to 6th in Lviv. We continue to pray for those who bear the costly toll of the war that has now lasted more than a year.

This note updates you on our time with the Ukrainian project leaders, including details from their relief work and from our collaboration with them as they engage their first calling to train Christian leaders and address issues that are now prominent for society during the war. Thank you for contributing to this work.

RELIEF WORK

In partnership with Overseas Council, over the past year, we have mobilized over $1.8M for humanitarian aid in Ukraine. Having served over 400,000 people, these efforts, supported by the SL/OC Ukrainian Relief Fund, have directly impacted over 10% of Ukraine's internally displaced persons (IDPs) – officially estimated to be 3.7 million people:

- Seminary hubs have evacuated 11,075 individuals over the first year of the war. Evacuations slowed during the winter months. Seminary partners accomplished this with thousands of trips, transferring 2-5 people per trip.



- Housing IDPs on campus increased sixfold during Russian shelling from November – February. Seminaries were hosting over 2,700 people per day. Altogether, seminaries have offered residence to over 7,000 individuals, with hundreds still living at various locations. Most of those who remain come from areas under occupation or intense fighting. They have nowhere else to go. Seminary hospitality has saved them.

- Transiting IDPs (staying 3-10 days at seminaries) also rose again in the winter months, as many villages lost power because of Russia's attacks on infrastructure. During this first year, seminaries have helped around 43,117 people (total) transit through their campuses.

- Taras reports that the total number of people receiving food is just shy of 406,000, most of them IDPs. Food supply into villages surpassed 3,909 tons of food, along with thousands of medical supplies.

- During the summer, in partnership with the Ukrainian Bible Society, teams distributed nearly 80,000 Bibles and New Testaments to those seeking spiritual nourishment.

- In December, funds provided 18 generators and 12 Ecoflow rechargeable power stations that allowed seminaries and a few strategic churches to continue their work during power outages and serve as warming stations for thousands of those left without power in the cold. Seminaries also provided individuals with hundreds of solar-powered chargers, rechargeable lights, and blankets.

ADVANCING THEOLOGY & THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

Since August, I have made three trips to Ukraine to work with leaders as they re-engage their first calling, theological education:

▪ Drawing on our experience from the Vital SustainAbility Initiative (VSI), we are helping schools resume educational activities. We are guiding the schools as they develop new programs, think about financial sustainability, and reconsider their facilities. In particular, we are helping Tavriski Christian Institute determine where to open a new campus after their property was destroyed during the Russian occupation of Kherson last year. This work will be ongoing for the next 12-18 months. The schools currently enroll 2,635 students in short courses and degree programs. Challenges include the need for new faculty, as these ten schools have lost over 50 faculty to emigration and participation in the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

▪ We are facilitating the formation of a new theological alliance that will connect three dozen schools from Ukraine, Central Asia, the Baltics, and other parts of Eastern Europe. They are establishing values and objectives for efforts that will include quality assurance and the creation, production, and dissemination of theological resources for the region.

▪ We are advancing constructive research on three topics identified by the Ukrainian theological leaders as particularly important during the war. The leaders have created three interdisciplinary research teams that will explore 1) trauma and resilience, especially care for people disabled during the war; 2) citizenship and national identity and how Christians can develop political engagement and patriotism without becoming nationalistic; and 3) peacebuilding and reconciliation. These groups will address each topic through scholarly publications, seminary curriculum and training recommendations, and practical resources for the church and society. This project will continue through 2025.

LESSONS LEARNED

Over this last year, we have seen seminaries' importance to the church and society as they have responded to the war practically and theologically:

▪ Seminary coordination has made the relief response particularly effective and efficient. When the war started, the seminary leaders saw meeting immediate relief needs not as mission drift but as the right response for the church to care for people. Their leadership for the relief work has had a significant impact and allowed them to resume mission-centered work faster and with greater credibility. Our modest funds (by standards of war response) have directly impacted the lives of over 10% of the official IDPs in Ukraine. Local leaders have stewarded the funds well.

▪ Cooperation among leaders with shared vision, commitment, and trust is possible – and this cooperation leverages a ministry far larger than any single school could have alone. The trust developed by coordinating in the relief work has informed the new theological alliance and

will shape potential educational partnerships in the future.

- The government has recognized the church's quick, holistic, and well-supported response. Furthermore, the commitment of pastors and leaders who have stayed and served all people, regardless of religious identity, has strengthened the church's witness. Our Ukrainian colleagues refer to this as a theology of presence, which has introduced many people to the redemptive work of Christ in the midst of the horrors of war.

- Our previous VSI work with four schools helped prepare them to respond to this crisis.

Taras Dyatlik, SL Engagement Director and coordinator of the relief work, writes:

"*Our network, as a result of the faithful ministry of Overseas Council and VSI of ScholarLeaders, prepared our schools literally to meet and endure the consequences of the war by staying in the country regardless of all the challenges and serving the church and nation. Theological education did not collapse but is (humbly speaking) flourishing. Maybe not in a way we would want to see it, but flourishing for the Church, the Kingdom of God, for sharing the Good News in practice … if it is not a 'success' of VSI for our partner seminaries, then I do not know how we can define VSI in a better way under current circumstances. … yes, we are a little bit crippled mentally, spiritually, and emotionally, but we are called to do, even if some days it is only a couple of the mosquito steps, but still towards the Mission that does not change.*"

Thank you for contributing to this work and helping these leaders bring light and hope into the darkness of the war.

SUPPORT THE WORK OF SCHOLAR LEADERS

ScholarLeaders is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit ministry. GuideStar and Excellence in Giving recognize our commitment to transparency.

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SCHOLARLEADERS.ORG

MEET OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS

ERIN BARBER

Erin joins ScholarLeaders as Director of Advancement with nearly 25 years of experience in nonprofit fundraising. She has worked with a variety of organizations, including a domestic violence shelter, a community counseling center, and a health care organization serving the underinsured. Along the way, Erin has served in pre-K through 12th grade Christian education. She is thrilled to be returning to ministry in a Christian organization. Erin has a doctorate in Policy, Planning, and Development from the University of Southern California, with a concentration in nonprofit leadership and management.

TARAS DYATLIK

Taras is no stranger to ScholarLeaders. He has worked with us for many years, most notably, by serving as an advisor for our Vital Sustain-Ability Initiative in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. He has provided a critical leadership role in our ongoing work in Ukraine. We are thrilled to announce his recent appointment as a ScholarLeaders Engagement Director. He and his family will continue to live in Rivne, Western Ukraine. You can read Taras' 2021 *Global InSights* article "Speaking of Pain & Waiting" here.

Fuller Magazine recently spotlighted Yosam (LeaderStudies) and Grace Manafa from Uganda. The couple founded Missio Uganda, an organization focusing on the intersection of faith and public life.You can read the Fuller article here.

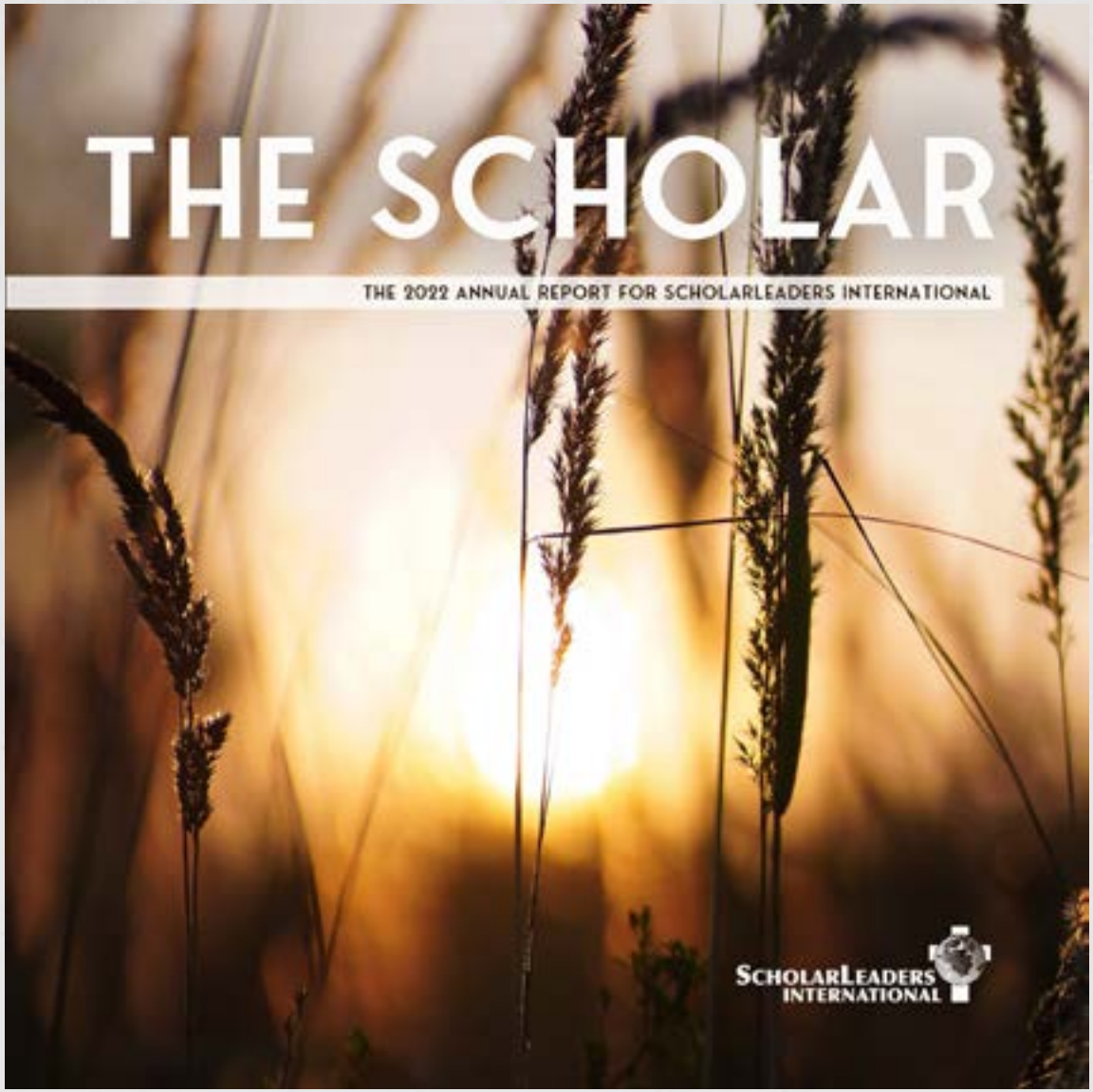
Evan Hunter recently joined Mike Woodruff, Pastor of Christ Church in Illinois, on "Press On" to talk about SL's ongoing work among church leaders in Russia and Ukraine. Check out their conversation here.

Look who's featured on the front cover of ATA news! It's Matthias Gergan, from India, who left a career in IT to pursue a PhD in theology with funding from ScholarLeaders. He brings his technical expertise to bear on the topic of online theological resources from Majority World leaders.

Now that a full year of the Russian war against Ukraine has passed, it's as important as ever to continue to pray and support our sisters and brothers ministering there. This article from Christianity Today features comments from Dr. Valentin Siniy (LS, VSI) discussing the Russian targeting of religious sites in Ukraine.

Although only 2% of Indians are Christians – many of whom live in India's northeastern or southern states – 2% of 1.41 billion people means that the Church in India is 28 million-strong and growing! Join us in praying for our Indian sisters and brothers as they proclaim Christ's gospel and minister in His name, often amid poverty and persecution.

This photo tells a beautiful story of the impact of investment in leaders. These six leaders from the Middle East earned their doctorates with support from ScholarLeaders. Now they are training to serve as doctoral supervisors for a joint PhD program led by Evangelical Theological Seminary - Cairo, Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (Beirut), and Bethlehem Bible College.



READ OUR 2022 ANNUAL REPORT TO CELEBRATE WITH US THE MANY WAYS GOD BLESSED OUR WORK THROUGH THE GENER-OSITY OF OUR DONORS IN 2022. IT'S CHOCK-FULL OF UPDATES, GRATITUDE, AND PRAISE.

November was a time of thanksgiving in so many ways. Scholars gathered in Izmir, Turkey, for ICETE's 18th global consultation, in Palestine for the Women's PeerLeader Forum, and in Colorado for a presentation of SL and TEI. We thank God for safe travel, warm fellowship, and the opportunity to be involved in Kingdom impact.

Should we pray for the total annihilation of our enemies? Read a theological reflection on the imprecatory psalms by Oleksandr Geychenko, President of Odessa Theological Seminary in Ukraine, in OTS's latest journal issue. Download the article and learn more about supporting Ukrainian theological perspectives on suffering and war at the news page on our website.

Pray for the Ayayee family in Ghana. Since 2003, Raymond has worked with the Great Commission Movement of Ghana, a ministry of Cru, and currently serves as the National Leader of Campus Ministries. Raymond and his wife Esther, who is also a missionary with Great Commission, live with their son Josh and daughter Aseye in Kumasi, Ghana.

In December, our ScholarLeaders team was busy burning grey matter and eating barbecue in Raleigh, North Carolina. While they stayed productive talking strategy, they also secretly enjoyed being together. Here's a group pic from our fellowship at dinner one evening. It's a joy to serve with those you love and respect.

There's so much we're thankful for as we reflect on God's kind provision in 2022. Please pray for the new scholars the Lord has allowed us to begin serving in 2022. You can learn more about them and download a prayer guide here.

In mid-October, Wageeh Mikhail, ScholarLeaders Engagement Director for Islam, organized our monthly "Theological Forum" in collaboration with the Middle East and North Africa Association for Theological Education. Reverend Suhail Saud was the guest speaker. He discussed "Reformed worship."

Christopher M. Hays and Vice President Evan Hunter presented Yohanna Katanacho (LeaderStudies) with his 2019 ScholarLeader of the Year award. It took a few years to deliver in person thanks to COVID, so we celebrate this moment!

Check out this interview with ScholarLeaders President Christopher M. Hays on the Stone Chapel Podcast. Host David Capes interviews Christopher about theological education in Ukraine after the Russian invasion.

This past November, many from our ScholarLeaders team spent time in Izmir, Turkey, for the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education's 18th global consultation. In addition to strategic meetings, they're had a lot of fun catching up with ministry partners. Here's Evelyn Reynolds, director of LeaderStudies, with scholar Sofia Quintanilla.

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