Scholar Leaders

Newsletter

Spring 2024 Newsletter | Cultivating Theological Leaders *for the* Global Church

Scholar Leaders' New Season

As we enter our 41st year as a ministry, the team at Scholar Leaders thought it would be good to take a moment to reflect on what God has done in our organization as a whole and how he has clarified and strengthened our mission.

Scholar Leaders started as a ministry focused on granting scholarships to Majority World theologians so they could be better equipped to serve Christ in their countries. As we have tracked with those theologians and their ministry careers, we've developed programs to strengthen their leadership at seminaries and Bible colleges, given organizational insight and counsel, and listened responsively to the crises they faced in their context.

Today, the relationship we foster with theological leaders has expanded to include their institutions, their churches, and even their societies. We long to see God's kingdom expanded through these leaders as we invest in them, and the work they do, for lifetimes of impact.

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- Emmanuel Bellon Tribute

A Note from Scholar Leaders' President, Christopher M. Hays

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:19)

In this prophecy of the end of Exile, Isaiah describes the divine creation of new roads and streams, so that Israel could traverse unknown and unnavigable terrain. The metaphor has been circulating in my mind lately, as God is inviting Scholar Leaders down unforeseen paths into fertile new territory.

Unexpected opportunities have sprung forth to enhance the impact of the Christian thought leaders in our fellowship. New companions have joined us on the way.

I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might declare my praise. (Isaiah 43:20-21) Keep reading to learn how God is refreshing his people around the world. Join us in declaring Christ's praise.

Christopher

Ministry Feature: Church & Society – *No More* Project

It is often a matter of when, not if, abuse of power or sexual harassment will happen in a Christian context. In the United States, the recent abuse cover-ups by the Southern Baptist Convention and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the revelations of abuse by famous leaders like Ravi Zacharias, Bill Hybels, and others, offer a sobering insight into the reality many in church face as victims and survivors of abuse. This is no less the case in the Majority World, where many of the same dynamics of power apply in churches and seminaries.

In 2023, a group of theologians, activists, pastors, and psychologists began meeting to discuss how to equip global seminaries to implement decisive anti-abuse training in a holistic way, cascading from the accreditation associations that oversee seminary curriculum, to the classroom where pastors are trained, to the local church. Recognizing that when Christian leaders abuse those in their care, it causes both scandal and deep spiritual damage, Scholar Leaders devised a multi-year project to develop resources that will change the conversation on power in the church in various global contexts.

The No More Project seeks to confront abuse (sexual harassment, abuse of power, and assault) in churches, denominations, and institutions of higher theological education. By harnessing Scholar Leaders' unique understanding of global theological education, this project aims to equip and encourage theological leaders at various levels of society to confront abusive practices and support survivors.

Now, if you are thinking that this is a massive undertaking, you are exactly right. This is not a project one person, let alone 10, could do alone. Thankfully, in no small part because of the relationships Scholar Leaders has fostered over the years, we've been able to assemble a global working group of over 30 theologians, psychologists, and pastors, to form five teams. Each of these five teams focuses on a specific area—biblical theology, policies and practices, pastoral formation, contextualization, and curriculum development–and in preparation for synthesizing what each group produces and deploying it into diverse global contexts.

In 2024, we will gather in person twice so that each team can collaborate and learn from what the others are producing. This past January, we held our first global working group meeting in Dallas, Texas, where for two intense days, we did creative brainstorming, listened to experts and survivors, and structured each group's activities for the coming months. The second meeting will be in late summer, when we will reunite and push the work into its next stage.

We pray that through this project, theological leaders will be better equipped to proactively address abuse in their contexts, seek justice for survivors, and form healthier and Christ-like pastors for the kingdom of God. Please join us in asking God that this project will bear much fruit.

Scholar Leaders' New Season

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In the past few years, God has marshaled incredible resources—creative leaders and generous donor—to launch Scholar Leaders into a new season. We continue to identify the most promising theologians in the Majority World through scholarships and the Vital Sustainability Initiative. We are also growing our programs that target the most significant issues our fellowship of scholars faces: Christianity's engagement with Islam, Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, and sexual abuse and misconduct in Christian communities. You can read more about this last topic in the pages of this newsletter.

In the past 40 years, Scholar Leaders has become a dynamic and multi-faceted organization focused on cultivating the theological leader for a lifetime of impact on Church and society. We are deeply grateful to the many people who have caught this vision, and we look forward to sharing with you the next big thing God is doing through Scholar Leaders.

New Scholars Chosen!

At the February board meeting in Pasadena, CA, the Board of Scholar Leaders selected eight new scholars from over 140 applicants to receive PhD scholarships. We are excited to welcome this inspiring group of scholars as they begin their next academic journey, and we invite you to start praying for them now as they make important decisions and navigate moves, new cultures, and the challenges of academic pursuit. Look for the announcements on our Facebook and Instagram pages in the coming months.

Spring Ukraine Trip

"We hosted an event at our church for disabled soldiers, but then realized we did not have a ramp for them to get in." One of the participants shared this convicting truth during the theological colloquium led by the three research teams sponsored by Scholar Leaders who are addressing theological issues facing the church and society in Ukraine because of the war. This research team will provide theological guidance and practical resources to help churches care for the more than 30,000 people who have lost limbs as a result of the Russian invasion. Christopher Hays and Evan Hunter traveled to Ukraine last month to work with Taras Dyatlik, our engagement director for Ukraine. In addition to working with the research teams, they also visited with leaders from Tavriski Christian Institute in Kyiv as they explored new options for a campus in the city because Russian soldiers destroyed their property in Kherson during the occupation. After more than two years of war, the leaders show signs of weariness but continue with the mission to bring the hope of the gospel to the people of Ukraine.

Same Mission, New Brand

You may have noticed something different about this newsletter, or as a matter of fact, our new website, emails, and social media.

We have a new brand!

Our new logo features ocean colors to reflect our global fellowship of scholars, a strong font, and a distinctive S and L to emphasize the unique scholarship our ministry fosters. We see the cross marked along the lines of the globe, communicating the reality of contextual theology and God's embodied work in the world.

SCHOLAR LEADERS

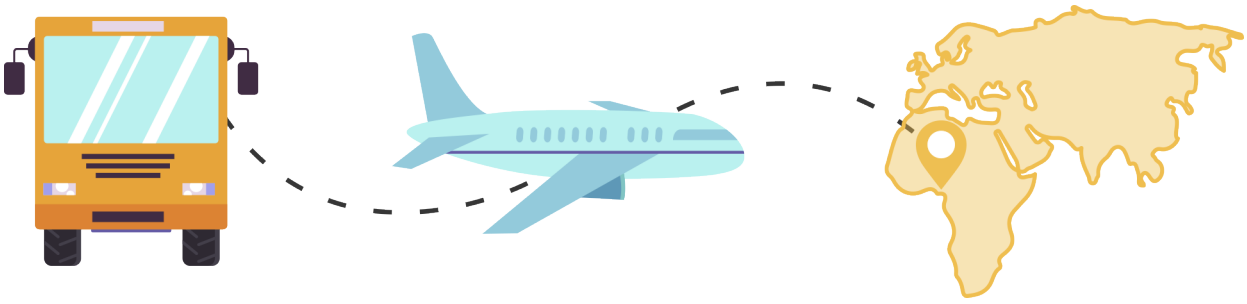
A Merging of Visions

Darshak Toma with a truckload of theological resources — over 10K books for 44 schools in Nigeria.

1 Truck

10K+ Books

44 Schools



Scholar Leaders is excited to share that at the February board meeting, we merged with an important and trusted partner: Theological Book Network.

We are excited and eager to have them on our team and include their work in our program areas. By merging with Theological Book Network, Scholar Leaders can have a greater effect on theologians and their books.

Theological Book Network is based in Grand Rapids, MI, where their staff process and ship more than 1 million books per year. They procure, curate, and ship pallets of books to theological libraries around the globe, working closely with seminary leaders to identify the resources their schools most need.

By merging with Scholar Leaders, both our organizations can address the educational needs of Majority World Christian scholars in ever more holistic ways, equipping them with the necessary resources to train pastors, teachers, and other leaders. We praise God for bringing our two organizations together and look forward to sharing more stories of scholars (and their books) with you.

Scholar Leader Team Updates

Marcos Orison de Almeida, PhD Vice President for Strategic Initiatives

Marcos joined Scholar Leaders' staff full time as the Vice President for Strategic Initiatives, after serving with the Vital Sustainability Initiative since 2016. He has worked at South American Theological Seminary in numerous roles, including as President from 2006-2010, and works with the Brazilian Department of Education evaluating theological institutions. He brings all these skills, and many years of experience with Scholar Leaders, to this new role.

Manivanh Kyh, Senior Advisor, Philanthropic Strategy and Innovation

With a deep commitment to philanthropy and global development, Manivanh brings over 15 years of experience to her role as a forward-thinking leader. Her journey is shaped by a rich tapestry of cultural and familial influences, driving her dedication to kingdom-minded change. From directing impactful grantmaking initiatives at First Fruit, Inc. to cultivating alliances across varied communities, Manivanh's professional achievements resonate with her diverse expertise gained from serving with the Peace Corps in West Africa, and furthering her studies from UC Berkeley, Pepperdine, and USC. She resides in California, where she enjoys serving on the board of her local Hmong and Lao church, baking sourdough bread, and solving Rubik's cubes with her husband and two children.

Darshak Toma, Collection Development Assistant

Darshak is an ordained minister with the United Church of Christ in Nigeria since 2004. He came to the United States to advance his studies where he is currently pursuing a PhD in Old Testament at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Since 2016, Darshak has been actively volunteering at Theological Book Network. His commitment has led to a part-time internship (Curricular Practical Training) position since 2022. Darshak and his wife, Nankal, are blessed with three children and reside in Michigan.

Aaron Harrison, M.Div., Manager of Donor Engagement

Aaron joined Scholar Leaders in January 2024 as the Manager of Donor Engagement. He combines passion for theological education with a fundraising skillset, having previously taught at Northern Seminary, and working with Advancement at Wheaton College. Aaron earned his M.Div. from Duke Divinity School, has been in pastoral ministry for 10 years, and lives with his wife and son in Carol Stream, IL.

Kaylie Nieboer, Administration

Kaylie just recently joined the team at Scholar Leaders and has loved the opportunity to reenter the workforce after 13 years spent staying home with her 6 wonderful children. She is married to the love of her life, Tim and they reside in Middleville, Michigan. Growing up as a pastor's kid, she understands the importance of strong leaders in the Christian community and is blessed to be a part of this ministry.

Rolin Timmerman, Warehouse Manager

Rolin came to the Theological Book Network in 2006 where he did a myriad of jobs from Office Manager, working in the warehouse and international logistics. Over the years he found himself doing several of the jobs at TBN before settling in as warehouse manager. Rolin attended Calvin University where he got his BA in Communications Arts and Science and had a 13-year job in radio where he was on the morning show at WLAV-FM. He resides in Grand Rapids Michigan with his wonderful wife Polly and daughter Emily.

Sandi Braunohler Nicely, Development Coordinator

Sandi joined Theological Book Network in 2023 after significant work with Forest Hills Public Schools as their Director of Youth Sports and Enrichment. Her passion for serving the underserved has led her to integrate her experience with Scholar Leaders' commitment to providing academic resources to the Global Church. She is married to Craig Nicely, has five children and twelve grandchildren, and finds immense joy and fulfillment in her family.

Scott Watson, Director of Acquisitions

Scott joined Theological Book Network in 2021, leveraging his years of experience within theological education and publishing. As the Director of Acquisitions, his role involves sourcing relevant inventory and carefully curating books to align with the specific needs of our Majority World partners. He collaborates closely with school administrators, faculty, scholars, librarians, and various stakeholders to achieve this goal. Scott holds a BA in Comparative Religion from Western Michigan University and a Master of Arts in Biblical Exegesis from Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. He resides in Grand Rapids, MI, with his wife and two daughters.

A Tribute to Emmanuel Bellon

This past year, the Revd. Dr. Emmanuel Bellon transitioned off the Scholar Leaders staff after many years of faithful and innovative service. His legacy is deep, as is his love for the people of God and the Church. At the SL staff meeting in January, we got to share our memories with Emmanuel in person. We are proud to further the work he began with the Vital Sustainability Initiative and continue to uphold the partnerships he created around the world.

Your Partnership with Scholar Leaders

Over the years, Scholar Leaders has been generously supported by churches, foundations, and individuals like you. You've responded when crises erupted, when a new opportunity emerged, and when an emerging scholar needed support to follow God's call. Thank you!

To give to Scholar Leaders, or one of our dynamic program areas, please visit scholarleaders.org/give. To find out more, contact us at contact@scholarleaders.org.

Join Our Prayer Community

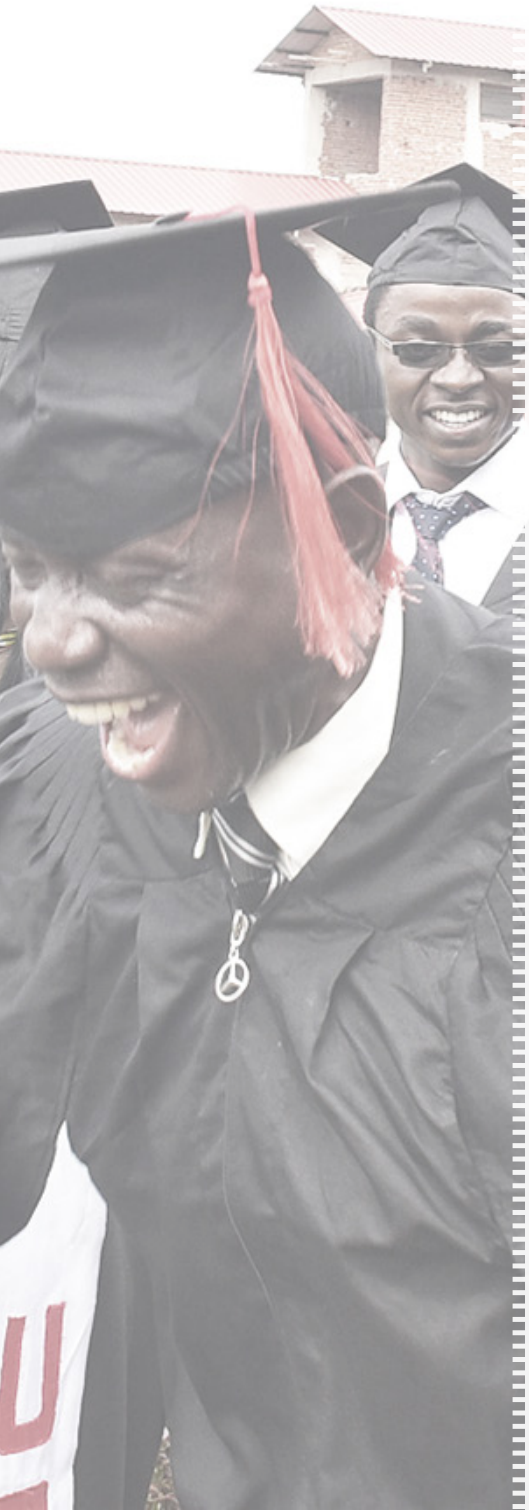
Each week, our prayer community of ~750 intercedes for a Christian leader from the Majority World. If you join, you will receive an email that contains an introduction to that leader's work and home country, followed by a personal message from the leader with prayer requests.

Read the *InSights Journal*

The InSights Journal for Global Theological Education seeks to enhance the global discourse on theological education by featuring non-Western perspectives, realities, and practices.

Scholar Dissertations

This Spring, several scholars in our fellowship have defended, or will soon defend, their PhD



We praise God for their work, for his faithfulness to them in this challenging season, and eagerly anticipate supporting them in their future theological work. Well done!

Serge-Armand Yao: Côte d'Ivoire; earned his degree from Université de L'alliance Chrétienne d'Abidjan; studied the topic of ethnicity in Esther .

Motuma Amante: Ethiopia; earned his degree in South Africa; studied the topic of genealogies in Matthew. He is currently on faculty at Mekane Yesus Seminary, a Vital Sustainability Initiative school.

Jean Musavuli: Democratic Republic of Congo; earned his degree from Oxford Centre for Mission Studies in the U.K.; studied the topic of rebuilding and leadership in Nehemiah. Faculty for Christian Bilingual University of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo .

Elias Ghazal: Lebanon; earned his degree from Lancaster in the U.K.; studied the topic of how religious leaders might help to end sectarian violence. Leader of Middle Eastern and North African Association for Theological Education, with which Vital Sustainability Initiative has begun to work.

Lucas Nascimento: Brazil; earned his degree from the Pontifical University; studied the topic of legal language in Job's final speech. Faculty for South American Theological Seminary, a Vital Sustainability Initiative school.