



2023 FOCAL POINT: SOUTH ASIA

STRIVING TO "CLOSE THE GAP" IN AN ERA OF UNCERTAINTY

There are well over 300 Bible colleges, seminaries, and Christian universities throughout South Asia. Despite a modest Christian population in the region, there is a long and rich history of Christianity. Yet our South Asian brothers and sisters in Christ live in a difficult context that grows more challenging each year. Groups like Open Doors and Amnesty International have highlighted that unlawful surveillance, democratic backsliding, legislation negatively impacting religious minorities, and the use of violence to suppress dissent have grown significantly in the past decade.

The political and social forces that have created this context will not likely be going away. In the coming years, these challenges are poised to persist and even worsen. The concern among many NGOs, including the Network, and our partner schools is that international aid will become increasingly difficult to deliver due to further regulations and pressures. The Network's capacity to support theological education in South Asia faces an uncertain future after mid-2024.

In 2023 and 2024, the Network will have a targeted focus to equip under-resourced theological schools in South Asia. Our goal is to help "close the gap" that exists within library holdings of South Asian theological institutions. The lack of well-stocked libraries largely stems from limited financial resources, high-costs of importation, and lack of access to international markets.

With the Network's help, schools can overcome these barriers and gain access to the books they need to support students and faculty. Over the next two years, we will endeavor to strategically equip our network of partner schools in the region. This will help build long-term capacities for educating and forming the next generation of Christian leaders in South Asia.



South Asia is home to approximately 2 billion people, less than 3% of which are Christian.

NETWORK NEWS

CONFERENCES AND CONNECTIONS

In late 2022, Network staff traveled to several conferences to connect and collaborate with partners old and new. The first was Asia Theological Association's (ATA) Triennial Meeting, held in Penang, Malaysia. With over 100 school representatives, we heard about and explored ways in which digital technologies can support and enhance theological education. We also found thoughtful consideration of technology's limitations. We were reminded how passionate, capable, and active the ATA network and schools are in their work of equipping leaders.

A month later was the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education's (ICETE) Global Consultation, held in Izmir, Turkey. Not only did we get a chance to participate in the broader conversation concerning ways forward in formal and non-formal global theological education, but we were also able to connect with dozens of partner school leaders and faculty. Attended by more than 400 institutions and organizations, it was a wonderful time to connect with partner schools, engage new partners, learn about what God is doing in the global church, and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Departing the ICETE conference, we headed straight to ETS and AAR/SBL conferences in Denver. Wayne Bornholdt volunteered to help staff the Network's booth with Scott Watson. We were visited by many folks, and the event provided an opportunity to reconnect with publishers, partner organizations, scholars, and donors about the Network's mission and upcoming projects. Publisher donations received at the conferences were significant, totaling over 5,000 newly published books, which will strongly contribute to projects in 2023.

PARTNER PROFILE: CHRISTIAN LIBRARY IN HO CHI MINH CITY

Bible Society Vietnam, along with multiple local Protestant groups and business leaders, has established a Christian library in Ho Chi Minh City. Navigating several months of government approval through a variety of agencies, "The Christian Library" finally opened in 2020. The library now has over 5,000 titles in its holdings.

This project looks to promote biblical engagement and study, making the Bible and Christianity more present and viable within Vietnam. Dr. Vu Le, Bible Society Vietnam's Executive Director, hopes that the library will become a "centre of Christian learning", providing much needed resources to the community. Faculty and students of the numerous Protestant theological education programs in the area will now be able to access the library's multi-disciplinary holdings.



Boxes of books from the Network being unloaded at the Library in Ho Chi Minh

BOOK SHIPMENTS

Recent Book Shipments:

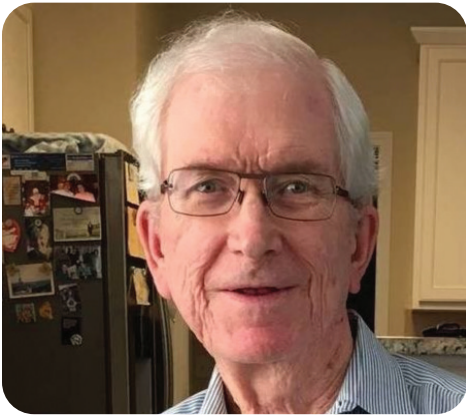
- Sierra Leone
- Northeast India
- Ethiopia

Upcoming Book Shipments:

- Northwest India
- Southern India
- South-central India
- Vietnam
- Kenya

Book donation questions?
Contact us at:
info@tbn.global

IN REMEMBRANCE: ROGER LOYD



On December 30, 2022 our friend and cherished colleague Roger Loyd passed away. Roger served on the Board of Directors for Theological Book Network for nine years, serving 2020-2022 as Chair of the Board. He will be remembered for his passionate support and tireless efforts for the Network, theological librarianship, global theological education, and his local church in Durham, North Carolina.

During his tenure as the Director of the Duke Divinity School Library (1992-2012), Roger became one of the early advocates and supporters for the Network, and regularly shared our mission among other theological librarians. Tens of thousands of books came through Roger's efforts and networks, books that went on to serve hundreds of Majority World institutions.

We lament Roger's passing. He will be missed. We give thanks knowing he rests in God's loving arms and take comfort in the resurrection hope we have in Christ. Roger's love for the global church and energetic support for the Network's mission will continue to inspire us!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Steve Crocco, Secretary

(Retired) Divinity Librarian at the Yale School of Divinity

Justin Holford

Executive Director, Theological Book Network

WELCOMING

MARIEL DELUCA-VOTH

It is our pleasure to introduce a new board member, Dr. Mariel DeLuca-Voth. Mariel serves as the Library Director and Assistant Professor of Global and Contextual Studies at Pacific Theological Seminary. She has extensive experience working with numerous theological schools and libraries in Latin America. We are glad to have Mariel serve on the Board of Directors to help support and guide the Network. Welcome, Mariel!





THEOLOGICAL
BOOK
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NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JUSTIN HOLFORD



At the Network, there has never been a lack of compelling and meaningful projects. Often, the leading challenge is that of discernment -- prioritizing needs and opportunities, where resources may best be used, and what to send. It is rare for missional need to intersect with strong urgency at a large scale. Most recently this occurred due to the pandemic, which created urgent need for affordable access to digital resources. The second has been unfolding in South Asia.

The difficulties and risks associated with shipping to South Asian countries have grown significantly in recent years. Additional legislation regulating international support, changes to importation requirements, and increased costs of been the leading challenges. Lamentably, this trend is very likely to continue. In response, we will be focusing the vast majority of our work and efforts to serve partner schools in South Asia.

In 2023 and 2024, we ask for your support and prayers for the Network's work in South Asia. Well-educated leadership is vital for the Church to thrive and God's to mission flourish. Please help us get books into the hands of students, faculty, pastors, and lay leaders throughout South Asia.

Justin Holford
Executive Director