



VOICES FROM THE GLOBAL CHURCH

LATIN AMERICA

“Why send books and not shovels? Because we are called to write the vision - to make it plain and easily read. Because books can equip God’s people for their part of God’s work in God’s world - provoking new thinking, nourishing hope, and empowering for action.” Dr. Ruth Padilla DeBorst, Center for Interdisciplinary Theological Studies, Costa Rica

On October 3, 2017 friends and supporters gathered at the Network’s annual dinner to celebrate the work of our Majority World partners and to introduce a new initiative to further support Latin American schools. Our speaker, Colombian theologian Dr. Ruth Padilla DeBorst, presented a challenge:

*If theological books are truly going to contribute to faithful living on the part of Christians around the world, then the teaching must be clearly written in the language of the people from within their cultural context. There is growing acknowledgement on the part of the church in historic centers of Christianity that **God’s mission moves from everywhere to everywhere**. Could that acknowledgment be accompanied by a parallel realization that the theological production and practice of fellow Christians out there can contribute to faithful living here? How might the Network contribute to making heard the voices of theologians from around the globe? Creative responses could surely open new horizons and contribute to sowing hope in groaning lands.*

Here at the Network, we envision a day when every Christian college, university, and seminary in the Majority World has access to the educational resources it needs to equip church leaders. This vision includes the production and dissemination



of publications written by local scholars for local communities in the languages most accessible to those communities. It was with this vision in mind that the Network initiated projects such as, the African Theology Collection containing publications by African theologians, and the Centre for South Asia Research, an advanced research library on the campus of South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies in Bangalore, India, which provides regional scholars sabbatical opportunities for writing and publication.

This year we are thrilled to continue our mission of providing theological resources to Colombia as we continue to explore more opportunities to build our Spanish language collection. David, a Ph.D. theology student from Peru (**pictured above**) recently shared, “The need is huge. At the seminary where I taught, the library’s books were archaic. Public libraries were mainly filled with the popular thought on Christianity. This was dangerous because many students were often swayed by the thought of the times, rather than an in-depth theological understanding of the gospel.” Thank you for your continued support of this important mission. ■



RECENT SHIPMENTS

August through December 2017, we shipped 54,529 books serving 214 schools in 9 countries. In addition to foundational resources, these shipments included the following special collections: 148 Christian-Muslim and Faith and Science. Our largest shipments (one pictured to the right in the Philippines) included:

Uganda: 20,000 books arrived in early October for use by 37 schools thanks to donors at our first annual Fall Gala in 2016.

Philippines: 16,718 books arrived in December at our partner school and distribution hub, St. Vincent School of Theology in Manila, serving a total of 54 schools. ■



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Organizations:

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 Duke University Divinity School Library
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 Phillips Theological Seminary
 Pittsburgh Theological University
 Princeton Theological Seminary
 Seminary of the Southwest/Booher Library
 Vanderbilt Divinity Library

Individuals and churches: 112

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR BOOK DONORS!

For more information about donating books, contact Wayne Bornholdt, Director of Acquisitions, at wayne@theologicalbooknetwork.org

NETWORK AWARDED TEMPLETON GRANT FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM COLLECTION

One of the top requests we receive is for resources to support Christian-Muslim engagement and study of Islam. As Christianity and Islam grow and their followers increasingly work, worship, and live in close proximity to one another, our partners tell us how vital it is that the two faiths deepen knowledge of each other to cultivate better understanding and build bridges of mutual respect and cooperation. To do this, our partner schools in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East are increasingly offering more courses and opportunities in inter-religious studies.

Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST) provides one such example. Director Misgana Mathewos explains:

EGST provides the chance for both students and faculty to be engaged in interfaith study through specific courses that introduce students to other faiths. As part of this engagement EGST provides community services, particularly maternal, newborn, and child health

training to religious leaders from all faiths.

For schools like EGST, there is a pressing need for access to high-quality inter-faith theological resources. A partner in Cameroon explained:

Without relevant resources on Islam and interfaith dialogue, our students upon graduation are limited in addressing these issues as they encounter them on the ground. The lecturers themselves need relevant resources in order to better equip the students.

In response to this great need, the Network developed a project to provide 250 schools with a carefully-selected collection of texts that explore Christian-Muslim engagement. This project was made possible through partnership with the Issachar Fund, the John Templeton Foundation, Templeton Religion Trust, and an anonymous foundation.

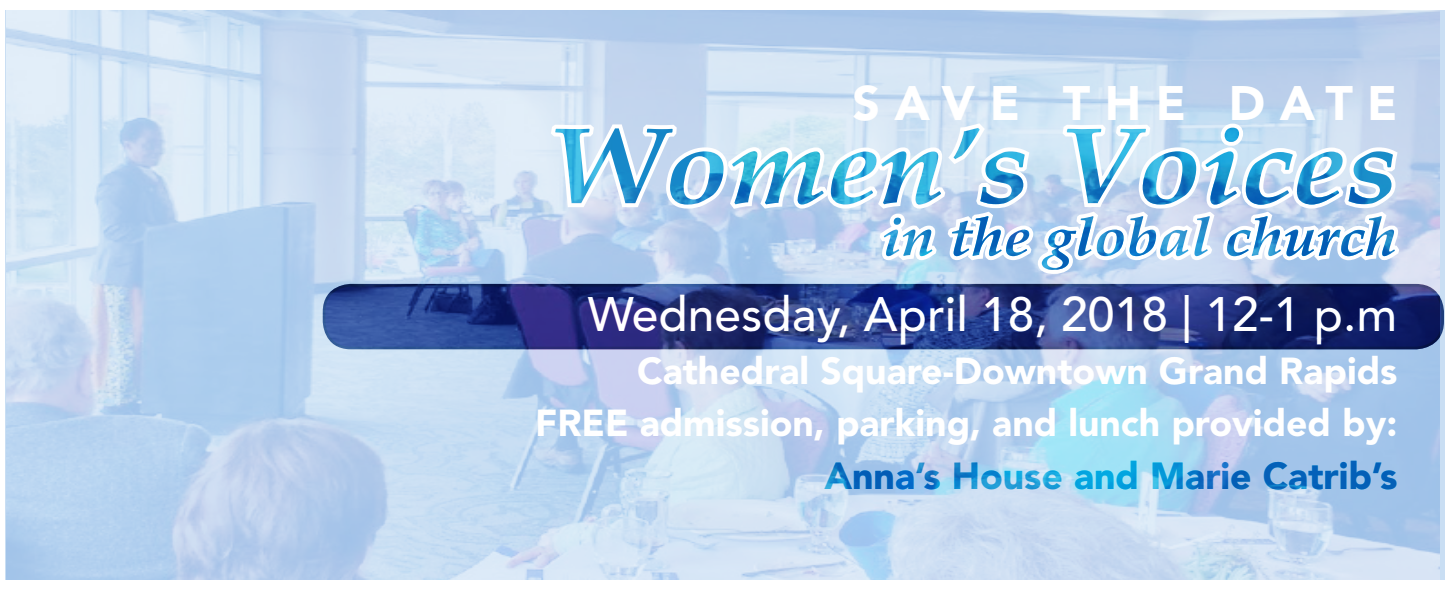
198 collections have been shipped to partner schools in 11 countries, and the remaining 50 collections will be shipped to schools in 7 more countries this year. ■

WHY I VOLUNTEER WITH THE NETWORK BY JUDITH K SIMONSON

When I first learned about the Theological Book Network, I realized that the name, at least, combined my interest in theology and my lifelong passion for books. I attended the Womens Voices event in the Spring of 2017 at then-President Nancy Arnison's invitation and was intrigued. I was very pleased to learn that books on topics that are important to me are being provided to libraries in seminaries throughout the Majority World and are making a difference. These

topics include gender and Christianity, poverty and inequality, Christian-Muslim relations, and stewardship of our natural world.

Volunteering has afforded me an opportunity to learn a great deal about the Network's growth and the work it has done. I hope that I can continue to be of service to the Network by doing tasks that will free the staff to focus on their important work. ■



SAVE THE DATE
Women's Voices
in the global church

Wednesday, April 18, 2018 | 12-1 p.m
Cathedral Square-Downtown Grand Rapids
FREE admission, parking, and lunch provided by:
Anna's House and Marie Catrib's



THEOLOGICAL BOOK NETWORK

3529 Patterson Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49512

NEW YEAR REFLECTIONS FROM NEW CEO, JEFF CLARK



In September, 2017, I started at the Network with a basic understanding of our mission. I could answer the “what do you do and why do you do it?” questions. I would say something like this: “God is growing His church rapidly in the Global South and

the church struggles to prepare enough theologically-trained leaders. In response, we support educational institutions with theological resources so they can produce more and better-trained church leaders.”

I wasn’t wrong. The core of the Network is books - books to shore up areas of topical weakness in our partners’ libraries, and books to enable the addition of degree programs. What I misunderstood was this: smaller strategies can also have an enormous impact. For example, a personalized collection can provide a mini-research library to a Ph.D. candidate. If successful, she will write solidly biblical, culturally-contextualized theology in her homeland for years to come. Also, we frequently create and distribute topical collections such

as Faith and Science, Christian/Muslim Engagement, Creation Care, and Poverty and Stewardship. While these are difficult to design and source, they have an incredible impact. Our Creation Care collection stimulated a joint effort with ECHO and Africa Renewal University to teach biblical principles and practical skills for sustainable agriculture to 30 pastors in Uganda. These smaller strategies may not contribute to the scale of our shipping statistics, but we have seen them be used mightily by God.

With a broad Mission Statement, we need to be attentive to the core business and, simultaneously, we need to discern how God may be moving in presenting opportunities. Second, everything I’ve described costs money. We source, screen, aggregate, and ship books as inexpensively as possible. But we can’t do it for free.

Therefore, we covet both your prayers for discernment and your financial generosity. Driven by a vision where every Christian college, university, and seminary in the Majority World has access to the educational resources it needs to equip church leaders, we ask that you prayerfully partner with us. ■