



Christian Witness in a COVID-Shaped World:

Worldwide INCHE Engagement

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In April, 2020 INCHE received a grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to enable INCHE worldwide professionals in Christian higher education to participate in multiple sections of **Christian Witness in a COVID-Shaped World**. This course was offered by Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary during June and July of 2020. These one-credit hour asynchronous sections provided a special developmental opportunity for INCHE faculty and staff professionals of all ages to think more deeply and carefully about our current witness based in worldwide Christian higher education. INCHE grant funds supported participant financial aid for many from the majority world.

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INCHE-members participated as auditors enrolled in a course section focused on their professional interests. In addition, INCHE provided members with three supplementary Zoom-based small group discussions. Each small group gathered once per week during the three-week course to connect INCHE leaders to each other and provide a forum for reflection and discussion.

Europe Region 8

41 INCHE members were identified as participating in this special course during the summer of 2020. These included 14 participants from Calvin Theological Seminary or Calvin University along with 27 INCHE participants from around the world. The 41 members were distributed across multiple sections of the course. Five of them participated across three different seminary-based sections. The remaining 36 members selected courses from within the university. It is noteworthy that fifteen participants selected the course section on *The Challenge of Technology and Christian Education*. Among them were twelve Africans and one each from Korea, Canada, and the United States.

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Of the 41 INCHE participants, 30 of them joined the Zoom-based small group discussions. The African participants included Mumo Kisau, the President of Scott Christian University (Kenya) and Aaron Mushengyezi, the incoming Vice-Chancellor of Uganda Christian University. Other participants were faculty members, administrative staff professionals, and university chaplains.

Latin America Region 15

The following participants are recognized for their participation in these courses and the related INCHE small group discussions: (continued on page 3)

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Beyond the Rivers of Babylon



Shirley Roels, Executive Director

By the Rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.

There on the poplars we hung our harps,

For there our captors asked us for songs,

Our tormentors demanded songs of joy;

They said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?

Psalm 137 is a Hebrew poem of lament by the Jewish people during their Babylonian exile. King Nebuchadnezzar had completed his two successful sieges of Jerusalem in 597 and 587 BCE and had deported the Kingdom of Judah and later remnants to Babylonia where they remained in captivity for more than fifty years. The children of Israel cried as they remembered their prior life before the abolition of their festivals and the destruction of their temple. Now they had a strange new existence in an unfamiliar place. They could not sing.

Over the centuries these first four verses of Psalm 137 have inspired music, art, and literature in multiple global cultures as a communal lament. Many cultures have expressed confusing pain through this Psalm. German Lutherans set these words to music in the 1500s. In the 1600s a German version of this psalm was adopted in Ashkenazi culture. Lord Byron versified a paraphrase in England in the 1800s which also was translated into French. Czech composer Dvořák set these verses to music in the 1900s. In the 20th century a Jamaican reggae group created a musical version; and a few years later Estonian composer Pärt contributed his own composition. Coelho, a Brazilian novelist, wrote a 1994 novel using themes from these verses in his book *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*. Across the world and over many centuries, we have identified with the heavy sadness, like that of Judah, that occurs when our communal hopes do not match reality.

During the past few months, I have been pondering how

the COVID 19 pandemic has similarities to the communal context of this Psalm. We feel like people in great darkness who do not know when our COVID captivity will end. We remember our former lives as better, when we had expected rhythms, with greater economic security, and more social stability. Now some INCHE member universities are closed completely until national governments allow them to reopen. Others have converted to online delivery of education which is foreign to many faculty members. Some are striving to open again for in-person education but with the burden of regular COVID testing, classroom social distancing, no large-group meetings, no communal worship, and acrobatic faculty juggling in-person and online instruction at the same time. This is not Christian higher education as we know it. Beyond our universities we have been plunged into the waters of rising national COVID counts, social problems exacerbated by the coronavirus pressure cooker, and many questions about governmental management of our situations. Our captor is a virus not a person. Still it seems like a dark foreign land in which our days are strange; and we should not sing for fear of spreading this contagion. This seems to be a long way from Zion.

So how do we proceed when hopes and dreams do not match reality?

First, we should get ready now. As I read this psalm, I remember the Biblical story of Daniel and his companions. They were determined to do more than lament when the Babylonian captivity began. They found themselves in strange circumstances, captive to forces that they could not control. But Daniel and company were not overwhelmed by nostalgia for what used to be. Instead, they adapted to change by learning the language, literature, and culture of their strange new land. When everyday life was wildly foreign and had continuing upheaval, they adjusted their strategies while remaining committed to Yahweh. They prepared for a different future, one whose builder and maker still was God, even though they did not know when or how God would help them create it. As Christian educators, while we continue to place our confidence in God, let us avoid becoming overwhelmed by nostalgia, believing that the future will be worse than the past. Instead, let us use this time to prepare for advancing God's mission through higher education in a new context. Get-ready time might involve deep scholarly reading or reflective writing. It may require one to learn and experiment with new IT skills for teaching and communication. Each of us should decide on specific steps to get ready for a different future in Christian higher education. How are you getting ready?

Second, we should attend to the next two verses of Psalm 137.

If I forget you, Jerusalem,

May my right hand forget its skill.

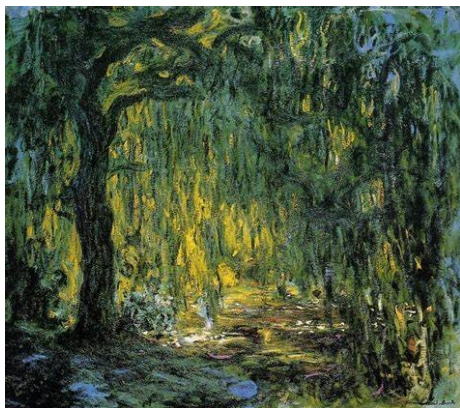
May my tongue cling to the root of my mouth

If I do not remember you,

If I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.

The Psalmist implores the captives to remember Jerusalem as the place of highest joy. For the Israelites, Jerusalem was the place where God dwelled. It was their space for communal worship, the locus of people praising and worshipping God, together as one. I imagine that tribal identity mattered less when every traveler who focused on the uphill Jerusalem trek was singing the same psalms of ascent. Their songs would be, "My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:2); or "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" (Ps. 122:1); or "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity (Ps. 133:1)." We should remember that the promise of God's new Jerusalem continues as our place where the rift between heaven and earth is healed through Christ. Because of Christ, we will sing our songs of Christian higher education again. Are you remembering this promise of God's presence?

When you focus on the picture below that accompanies this editorial, at first it may seem dark. The trees in the foreground are heavy and drooping. The path at the tree's base is fuzzy. At first it communicates a dreary lament. But look more closely. The light is out there, not too far in the distance. We can see it because we know what light is like. God has already created our light; and with God's help we can ascent. Now our task is to get ready for new songs and journeys into God's light, the new Jerusalem.



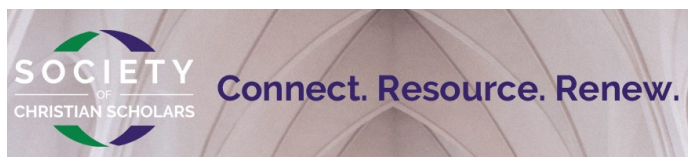
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Samson Abekhale, University of Mkar, Nigeria
 Timothy Akampurira, Uganda Christian University
 Dinah Akpera, University of Mkar, Nigeria
 Betty Akurut, Uganda Christian University
 Edwina Angayo, Scott Christian University, Kenya
 Andrew Ayebare, Uganda Christian University
 Jane Bruins, Calvin University
 Monica Chibita, Uganda Christian University
 Herb Fyneweever, Calvin University
 Diana Gonzalez, Northwestern College, USA
 You Jung Jang, Baekseok University, Korea
 Alex Kamoga, Uganda Christian University
 Martha Kirabo, Uganda Christian University
 Mumo Kisau, Scott Christian University, Kenya
 Victoria Kitonsa, Uganda Christian University
 Joseph Kiva, Uganda Christian University
 Maria Lam, Calvin University
 Sammy Linge, Scott Christian University, Kenya
 Paul Mbandi, Scott Christian University, Kenya
 Aaron Mushengyezi, Uganda Christian University
 Isaac Mutua, INCHE East Africa Coordinator, Kenya
 Olga Mugerwa Nakato, Uganda Christian University
 Beth Njaramba, INCHE East Africa Coord., Kenya
 Moses Olele, Vision Bible College, Uganda
 Margie Patrick, The King's University, AB, Canada
 David Rylaarsdam, Calvin Theological Seminary
 Pam Tumwebaze, Uganda Christian University
 Virginia Van Andel, Calvin University
 Geoff Vandermolen, Calvin Theological Seminary
 Florence Wanyenze, Uganda Christian University

INCHE Partners with SCS on Scholarly Christian Webinars

INCHE is pleased to announce cooperation with the Society of Christian Scholars (SCS) to support three webinars, one each on September 17, October 15, and November 19, 2020, all at 1400 GMT. All INCHE members are invited to participate.

INCHE will enhance each of these webinars by hosting follow-up small group video discussions via Zoom and providing suggestions for additional resources on the topic. Two Zoom discussion times will be available for each webinar so that they are accessible in varied regions of the world at reasonable times. Small group discussion opportunities will occur at 1200 GMT and 2300 GMT two weeks after each webinar.



The three webinar topics and leaders span the world including: the journey of Palestinian Christian scholar; insights into global hands-on STEM education, and a focus on the framework of politics in Africa.

A description of each webinar is available:

September 17: <https://scshub.net/webinars/the-spiritual-and-intellectual-journey-of-a-palestinian-christian-scholar-thursday-17-september-2020-at-1400-gmt/>

October 15: <https://scshub.net/webinars/building-stem-teacher-capacity-through-the-practical-education-network-thursday/>

November 19: <https://scshub.net/webinars/political-participation-and-the-politics-of-fate-and-entitlement-in-africa-thursday-19-november-2020-at-1400-gmt/>

To register for the webinar, go to the listed webinar link. To review dates, times, and registration for Zoom small group discussions, go to <https://inche.one/events>.

This is an excellent opportunity to extend your professional development as a Christian educator. Join us for one or all of these webinars!

INCHE Membership Dues

INCHE annual membership dues are essential to support our network mission and initiatives. There are three types of membership: institutional, affiliate, and individual. *Institutional members* are universities and colleges that have been approved by the INCHE Board of Directors. *Affiliate members* are typically scholarly centers or professional development groups that are INCHE partners but do not enroll significant numbers of undergraduates. *Individual members* include a wide variety of professionals who seek to learn from and support INCHE.

In early October 2020 the network office will request that both institutional and affiliate members pay their annual 2020-2021 membership dues. Each of these members will receive an email communication with an attached invoice. Further details about dues payment options will be included in that email. (In January 2021 individual members will be asked to renew their annual membership.)

The INCHE Board of Directors has three criteria to guide membership dues: the relative economic strength of a region; student enrollment levels; and dues equity among INCHE members. All of these factors are considered in determining annual INCHE dues.



INCHE Thanks Our Student Interns

In May 2020 INCHE student interns, Danielle Frempong and Nathan Herder, both graduated from Calvin University. After two years of serving INCHE as the communications coordinator and information technology coordinator respectively, they have both secured immediate opportunities.

Danielle graduated with a degree in international development studies which helped her reflect on her Ghanaian citizenship. She contributed to securing membership information updates for INCHE, tracked INCHE membership dues payments, and sent the INCHE monthly updates to members. Danielle spent many hours researching



stories for the INCHE newsletter and wrote some of its articles. Her creative and consistent pursuit of good newsletter design improved the visual appeal of the newsletter substantially. Danielle recently accepted a post-graduate internship with the Center for Civilians in Conflict, an organization that works to recognize, prevent, and protect civilians during periods of armed upheaval in their region. There she will assist the director in research and fund development before pursuing legal studies in the United Kingdom.

Nathan completed a major in computer science. In the process he served INCHE through the development of our platforms for the online newsletter, INCHE conference registration, website advances, the creation of the INCHE podcast series, and numerous ways in which he supported the INCHE director to create and sustain the network's online presence. During January 2020 Nate was able to broaden his international experience through an extensive trip to Vietnam and Thailand. Nate is now an information technology professional with Auto-Owners Insurance, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In June he entered their substantial training and development program but remained helpful to INCHE during June through August.

INCHE thanks Danielle and Nathan for their substantial and consistent service over the past two years. We wish them God's continued blessing on their



growth and development in both Christian faith and a life of service. INCHE will announce the selection of new student interns within the weeks ahead.

INCHE Call for Board Nominees

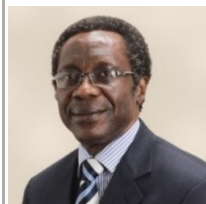
This year two current board members complete a term of INCHE board service. Peter Balla, the rector emeritus of Károli Gáspár University in Budapest, will complete six years of service. Beth Beech, now Director of Graduate Studies for Toccoa Falls Christian College, will finish her term of service for the Asia-Oceania region of INCHE. Recently she moved from Australia to the United States and now resides in a different INCHE region.

As a result, INCHE seeks board nominees for both its European and Asia-Oceania regions. By November 1, please send recommendations for potential board members including the person's name, title, and email address to: director@inche.one. The INCHE board will review nominees in its December 2020 meeting and recommend them for member consideration. Elections will follow in 2021.



INCHE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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1st Term Ends December 2020

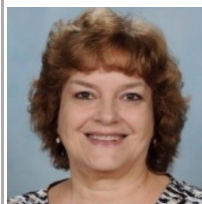


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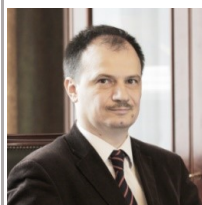


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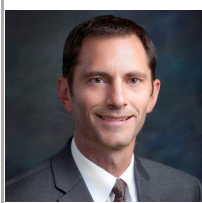


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The Nagel Institute: Research to Engage African Christian Realities in 2021-2024



The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, with generous support from the Templeton Religion Trust, has invited project proposals for "Engaging African Realities: Integrating Social Science within African Theology." Its aim is to support African theologians to engage in fresh social scientific integrated approaches with the goal of producing creative and original projects in grounded theology. Grounded theology is an attempt to realize the potential of theological creativity from the bottom-up, as opposed to a top-down. The project seeks to emphasize how grounded theology is compatible with grounded theory in social sciences as a method for seeking hidden patterns and meanings through ethnography, a way to unearth stories and enable answers to questions from African realities.

Beginning in January 2021, this initiative will select outstanding early-career African theologians with compelling research project ideas and make 12 grants of not more than \$50,000 USD each for three-year research and curricular development projects. The awards will enable grantees to participate in three intensive workshops on social science theory, methods and skills needed for grounded theology, and provide support for research on one of two topical areas:

1. Traditional values and spirituality with reference to religious experience
2. Religious innovation and competition focusing on African resources

In a recent Nagel Institute video available at <https://nagelinstitute.org/>, institute director, Retief Muller, and African scholars describe theological investigations recently completed. These projects involved the following:

- What if religion broadened its view about the practical relationship of sharing resources within healing spaces?
- What if theologians and city planners collaborated in building the future cities of Africa?
- What if the members of the church and the community at large looked beyond their affiliations?

- What if religion used poetry as a way to deeply understand the scriptures?
- What if we were to understand religion and theologize it?

Reflections from and about African Involvement in the Calvin Courses on COVID Witness

African participants who took the June-July 2020 courses reflected on their recent experiences. Dr. Sammy Linge, Scott Christian University, Kenya: wrote, "The small group was great. The facilitator did a good job. The participants enriched the group experience by sharing what is happening at their Universities. The small discussion group may be maintained for sharing experiences in the future. This may even be a virtual monthly meeting of sharing experiences." Dr. Samson Abekhale, University of Mkar, Nigeria commented: "I learnt much about discernment in the use of digital technology. The daily devotions and the relationship of each devotion to the topic of the day cannot be forgotten. I suggest that this auditing should be an annual event for INCHE members if sponsorship can be sustained."

Appointment of James Kombo as St. Paul's University Vice Chancellor



St Paul's University has appointed Dr. James Kombo as the new vice chancellor. In January 2021 Prof. Kombo takes over from the outgoing VC Joseph Galgalo, whose two terms have come to an end. Prof. Kombo becomes the third VC to lead the university. The first VC was Dr Timothy Wachira.

Making the announcement, the chairperson of the university council, Rev Jackson Naisore Ole Sapit, who is also the head of the Anglican Church of Kenya, said "We thank God for a successful tenure of office of Prof Joseph Galgalo, whose term of 10 years as the vice-chancellor of St Paul's University is coming to an end in October, 2020,"

Rev Sapit said after a marathon recruitment process the council settled on Prof. Kombo as the next VC. "Prof. Kombo is a professor of Systematic Theology with over 25 years of experience in university teaching, research and management," added Rev Sapit.

Prof. Kombo has served in top managerial positions at Daystar University for many years and is expected to assume office after completing his research leave.

J Selye University Has Become Part of The Scientific Platform in the Carpathian Basin

The Carpathian Basin Science Platform was established to coordinate the activities of teaching and researching professionals in the field of economics and with the participation of eight cross-border higher education institutions teaching Hungarian languages. The signing of the Founding Declaration shall be 31 December 2020. Its formulation took place on 25 February 2015 at the headquarters of the University of Debrecen, which coordinated the platform. The agreement was completed by representatives of the following higher education institu-



tions beyond the borders: Janos Selye University, Babes-Bolyai University, Kara of Central European Studies of Constantine Philosopher's University of Nitra, Christian University of Partium, Il. Ferenc Rákóczi at the University of Hungary, the Hungarian University of Sapientia Transylvania, the Technical College of Subotica and the Universitas Presoviensis Institute of the University of Eperjes. J. Selye University was represented by József Bukor, Vice-Rector of Science, Research and Accreditation. In addition to coordinating the activities of professionals in the economic field, the platform aims to cooperate with professional organisations, organise professional training, cultivate contacts, develop research and student mobility training and regional conditions, conduct joint research, and promote social innovation.

Ukrainian Institute of Arts and Sciences

The INCHE network office is pleased to announce our newest institutional member, the Ukrainian Institute of Arts and Sciences. The institute is located in Bucha in the Kyiv region. It has been in existence since 1995 and has raised a number of Christian changemakers. The institute is committed to its mis-

sion to provide everyone with accessible and high-quality higher education, which contributes to the formation of a holistic personality based on Christian values and responsibility to God and society. All its courses are centered on the university's educational purposes. They are:

Spiritual goal: To reveal to students the advantages of the Christian worldview. Contribute to their real meaning in spiritual union with God.

Intellectual goal: To help students orient and self-determine in the great variety of spiritual and material values accumulated by world culture over the centuries. Academic programs aim to broaden and deepen students' horizons. Particular emphasis is placed on the direct link between intellectual development and practical piety.

Professional goal : To prepare comprehensively educated specialists in various fields of activity and practical service in the Church and society and to promote their formation as worthy citizens of their country.

Social purpose : Contribute in every way so that students can reach social maturity as a guarantor of creativity in their lives, in the family and in society. The institute conducts seminars and events aimed at the development of harmonious interpersonal relationships, and fosters a responsible, mature approach to the relationship between the individual and modern society.

Healthy lifestyle: To enable students to acquire knowledge and skills of a healthy lifestyle. Academic regulations and rules of cohabitation strictly prohibit smoking, alcohol and drugs. The dining room and cafeteria of the complex offers nutritious and healthy food. Particular attention is paid to regular physical labor and activities that promote good health.



Welcome to this new NCHE member!

INCHE EUROPE Conference: New Dates



Based on the experiences and building on the outcomes of previous IAPCHE (International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education) conferences in the European region in 2009 and 2016, the next INCHE (International Network for Christian Higher Education) EU Conference will be held in Budapest (Hungary) between **March 17-19, 2021**. The theme is: **Building Community in Fractured Societies: Challenges for Christians in Higher Education**.

This conference of INCHE Europe aims to support European institutions of Christian higher education in their present situation where the value of community as such is degraded, and only community building may have the potential to reinforce social groups and Christian presence in society.

Registration: Because the April 2020 conference was postponed to March 2021, *conference pre-registration is now important for planning purposes*. By the end of October please complete pre-registration without payment at: <https://inche.one/inche-europe-conference-registration#!event-register/2021/3/16/inche-europe-conference-2021>. Registration with payment will follow before the year's end.

Jan Hol as New Chairman of the CHE Executive Board

The Supervisory Board of the Christelijke Hogeschool Ede (CHE) has appointed Jan Hol as chairman of the Executive Board beginning on 17 August 2020. Together with Pieter Oudenaarden, he forms the two-man board of the university of applied sciences. Jan Hol succeeds Harmen van Wijnen, who retired on 1 May as Chairman of the Executive Board.

Jan Hol (married, two adult children) lives in Veenendaal. He studied Pedagogy at Felua, one of the forerunners of the CHE and Political Science and Mass Communication at the VU. From 2013 he worked as Director

of Communication, Public Affairs and Philanthropy at Amsterdam University Medical Centers (UMC). Hol started his career with the public broadcasters and as head of internal communications at KLM. He also worked as Director of Communications at Koninklijke Ahold, Nuon NV and Océ NV. Hol has held various voluntary, administrative positions with charities in the fields of science, society and Christian faith.

Together

Jan Hol commented on his appointment: "In this job are many beautiful elements together. For many years now, the CHE has enjoyed the reputation of the best medium-sized higher professional education institution in our country with over 4,700 students and a nice portfolio of courses. It is very valuable to work together at the CHE based on the Christian identity. For me it is also a bit like coming home, because I once studied at one of the predecessors of the CHE. In addition to education and research, people development and a sense of community are also important characteristics of the CHE and I would like to contribute to that. I look forward to work-



ing with fellow director Pieter Oudenaarden, directors, employees, students and the professional field in the Foodvalley region and beyond."

For the World of Tomorrow

Pieter-Jaap Aalbersberg, chairman of the Supervisory Board (RvT) of the CHE is pleased with the appointment: "...The CHE wants to continue to be meaningful to society and the world of tomorrow."

Dugu-dong Church delivers one million won in development fund while keeping

Kosin University Sunday

Dugu-dong Church led by pastor Sang-gyu Lee, on July 12, donated one million won to Kosin University in development funds.

The Church invited President Ahn Min and Vice President Lim Chang-ho for the morning and afternoon service respectively. A core part of the service was honoring the work that Kosin University does.

President Ahn Min comforted members of the church who are facing several struggles and may have lost loved ones due to COVID-19. He stressed the importance of hope as Christ's gift to us and said that this period teaches the congregation to hope as children do. Pastor Lee Sang-gyu presented the development fund and highlighted that Kosin University is the pride of the denomination as the University makes tremendous effort to nurture church leaders. "We will continue to work together in prayer for Kosin University" he concluded.

The services ended with a special song from Kosin University's praising and sharing the grace of 'the very good Lord'. After finishing the service, they sang the encore song 'First Love' at the request of the members of the Dugudong Church and shared calming comforts to wean away the burden of coronavirus.



An update from the National Institute for Christian Education (NICE)

By: Chris Prior

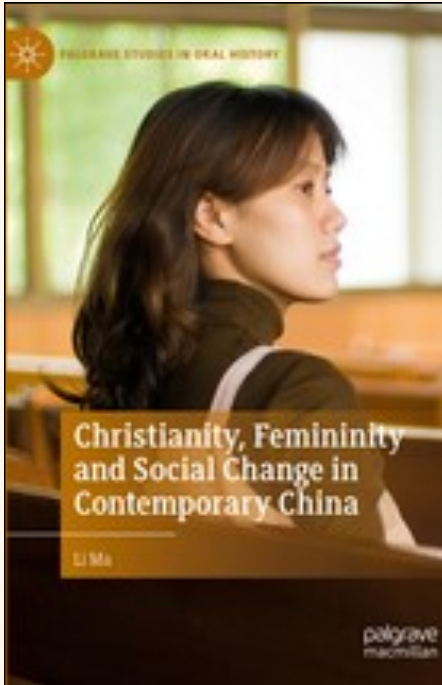
Recently, I was reading an article by former Principal of The National Institute for Christian Education (NICE), Dr. Doug Blomberg, who was reminding his readers that following Christ is not an automatic process. We can easily be tempted to embrace ideas that may not align with the biblical story. This can be true in Christian education when we adopt educational theory and pedagogical practices without adequate discernment. At NICE our goal is to assist Christian teachers in their practice through providing formative tertiary training grounded in biblical immersion that shapes cultural engagement, specifically in the arena of education.

2019 was a year of significant change for NICE. In addition to celebrating our fortieth anniversary as a Christian educational institute, we also entered into a third party agreement with Christian higher education provider Alphacrucis College. Through Alphacrucis College we offer Graduate Certificate and Masters courses in education. During 2019, we also farewelled our Academic Dean, Dr. Elizabeth Beech, who was instrumental in overseeing this change in partnership. Dr. Beech now holds the position of Director of Graduate Studies, Toccoa Falls College, Georgia.

This year, in partnership with Mount Evelyn Christian School, we have been piloting a new blended delivery (face-to-face and online) option. In an environment where tertiary providers are typically shortening their teaching periods, an at-school cohort of teachers has been participating in one of our core subjects over an extended teaching period (twice the usual thirteen week period). While this might appear to be counter-intuitive, it allows an appropriate length of time for busy teachers to participate in deeper, potentially transformative, learning. Next year we are hopeful another five schools will embrace our new NICE@School model.



Chris Prior, Principal and Senior Lecturer at NICE



***Christianity, Femininity, and Social Change in Contemporary China*
by Mary Li Ma**

Cham: Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019

Women make up the vast majority of Protestant Christians in China—a largely faceless majority, as their stories too often go untold in scholarly research as well as popular media. This book writes Protestant Chinese women into the history of twenty-first-century China. It features the oral histories of over a dozen women, highlighting themes of spiritual transformation, politicized culture, social mobility, urbanization, and family life. Each subject narrates not only her own story, but that of her mother, as well, revealing a deeply personal dimension to the dramatic social change that has occurred in a matter of decades. By uncovering the stories of Christian women in China, Li Ma offers a unique window onto the interactions between femininity and Christianity, and onto the socioeconomic upheavals that mark recent Chinese history.

About the Author

Mary Li Ma (PhD, Cornell University) has a doctorate in sociology. She is now a research fellow at the Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics at Calvin College. She is a speaker and author of three books, including ***Surviving the State, Remaking the Church*** (2017, with Jin Li), ***The Chinese Exodus*** (2018), and ***A Theological Guide to the Chronicles of Narnia*** (2018, with Jin Li). Her co-authored articles with Jin Li appeared in journals such as the *International Bulletin of Mission Research* as well as *Markets and Morality*. She is also a guest editor for the annual theological issues of *China Source Quarterly* and an associate editor for *VoegelinView.com*.



1. Your book tells the stories of contemporary Chinese Christian women. Why are their stories important to an understanding of Christianity in China, and why haven't they been researched previously?

Women's stories are important to our understanding of Christianity in China because the growth of Christian population there has been disproportionately feminized. For example, in urban churches that are made up of white-collar professionals in China's cities, women have outnumbered men by a great majority. Nevertheless, despite this fact, the lived experiences of women have been ignored by scholars in this field. Another reason why women's stories matter is that women as a social demographic group have been most impacted by the changes that took place in China. The question of Chinese womanhood and women's experiences has been central to China's modern identity.



There are multiple reasons for such neglect among researchers. First, for over a century, the most prominent narrative in the history of Chinese Christianity (in the English-speaking world) has been that it was the foreign missionaries, including men and women, who made history. Even when the topic of Christian indigenous leadership is introduced, scholars tend to favor the narrative that it was a select group of Chinese men who made history. Whenever indigenous leadership in the Chinese church is discussed, names of well-known male leaders are the first to be mentioned. Recent scholarly works concerning contemporary leadership figures in China also named only men.

For me, through decade-long research on Christianity in China, I found myself constantly hearing women's lived experiences. A motivation for writing this book is to present a more inclusive and in-depth lens on women's religious experiences. The focus is contemporary, especially on a post-reform generation of Chinese women (born around or after 1979) in China's booming urban economy. As I write in the book, "from illiterate, feet-bound grandmothers and semi-

literate mothers, women by the third generation in modern China might well be attending college, achieving postgraduate degrees, or even studying abroad." [1] Their identity is defined not only by familial roles of daughter, wife, and mother, but also as urban professionals and Christians. Their participation in churches and social life has reached extraordinary levels.

2. Why did you settle on a frame for your book that uses oral history methods and considers mother-daughter relationships?

The idea of writing this book came when I was collecting interviews in Chinese churches. I was able to conduct very in-depth conversations with many women about their personal history and family history. The oral history method helps give voice to this group whose stories are seldom heard, both in the history of Chinese society and in the history of Chinese Protestantism. The method is best used to humanize events and articulate the drama of an era. The mother-daughter relationship has always been a primary theme in all these interviews I collected, maybe partly because most of these women were the only child of the family due to the one-child policy after 1980. Using this mother-daughter relationship as a cross-generational comparison lens, I was able to capture how social mobility between two generations of women reshaped their worldviews and attitudes towards social and spiritual reality. The contrast between these two generations of women (those born in the 1950s and 1960s versus those born in the 1980s) could not be more dramatic. As I write, "They are offspring of contrasting childhoods, one marked by political indoctrination, material scarcity, and social rigidity, and the other by post-communist disillusionment, economic opportunities and self-fulfillment." [2] And because many of these stories reveal a turbulent drama of unmet expectations, judgment, rejection, conflict, loss, and brokenness, keeping the narratives of these women preserves the vividness, details and experiences of self-reflection.

I also use oral history or narrative history as a resistance against the often disembodied and reductionist methods of studying religion. Statistics may assist our understanding to some extent, but only the narrative form can present the tensions, the surprises, the disillusionments, and the achievements of actual experiences. So every narrative account in this book is a multidimensional moral cosmos with deep spiritual reflections.

3. Your book is constructed around four interpretive motifs—socialization in Chinese families, politicized culture, Christian conversion, and worldview conflicts. In summary, what does your research reveal about each of these four interpretive motifs?

These families are cultural locations where traditional elements such as expected filial piety and preference over male heirs are partially persevered, even after progressive and radical political movements. Today such expected reverence for parental authority may include accepting parental preferences in their decision-making of major life choices, ranging from career and marriage to religious faith and support for church ministry. For young women in this book, the mother-daughter relationship remains the most formative one in their lives, either before or after conversion to Christianity. Sometimes the conversion may bring a sense of traumatic shock and radicalism to the parents, which then led to ensuing conflicts.

China's politicized culture from the 1950s to the 1970s produced a post-traumatic generation. For many, fear of political persecution led to detachment in relationships or paranoid with regard to anything that sounds unorthodox with the Party line. Christianity definitely falls into the latter camp. For the younger generation of women, their experiences continue to be shaped by China's political culture through a massive state propaganda machine. Issues today include the phenomenon of female singleness. For example, with the All-China Women's Federation officially defining "single women older than 27" as "leftover women" in 2007, the stigmatization of single, educated, and professional women in China has reached a climatic point. The same force of marginalization also targets Christianity. As a result, many young Christian women feel these political forces more intensely. Some of their mothers may fear that the Christian faith has brought disadvantages to these young women, both in marriage and in general life chances. In some cases, the state-sponsored anti-Christian sentiments may lead to the mother-daughter relationship internalizing Chinese politics.

Conversion to the Christian faith generally enables young women to enter into the suffering of their mothers. Also, many conversion stories show the importance of overseas experiences. Credible individual Christian witnesses in cross-cultural contexts help catalyze the conversion process. Nevertheless, more

often than not, Christian conversion of young professional women is also the beginning of a troubled family relationship as they try to live evangelistically towards atheistic parents and relatives.

Lastly, the motif of worldview conflicts. As explained earlier, these young Christian women and their mothers enjoyed different opportunities in life and cultural exposure to the outside world. Out of cultural hostility or political aversion, sometimes the older generation was quick to directly attribute family conflicts to the Christian faith itself. While these young women reckon their faith in God as the ultimate salvation, their family members may regard it as a further alienating factor. So worldview conflicts are often intertwined with strained emotions.

4. What did you find most surprising about these women as you compiled and summarized their stories?

The most surprising thing, among many, was that these young women all lived through very intense trauma within their family, and embracing the Christian faith does not mean an immediate healing from that trauma. Instead, sometimes, it could even get



worse because of the politically marginalized or even stigmatized status of Christianity in general in China, especially given increased social hostility towards it. We often talk about conversion as life-changing in a mostly uplifting and positive way; our evangelical culture almost sets the positive tone for giving testimonials for these changes. But the Christian faith can be very disruptive to people's lives while being life-changing too. The stories of Christian women in China present these nuances for understanding how suffering is sometimes ongoing with organic spiritual growth.

Another theme is a sense of how much broader is the realm of God's work than just within the church or Christian institutions. It is a deeply humbling and

almost mystifying experience in listening to young people's conversion stories in China. How do you discern divine presence in all of these happenings, including intense trauma and conflicts? What can be outside of God's working out of reality? The storytelling form gives you this sense of awe. Not all reality can be quantified and theorized, as researchers tend to do most of the time. But the lived experiences told with deep self-reflections are so humanizing that to some extent you see the *imago deo in them*.



5. Christian universities and colleges provide excellent spaces in which students, both female and male, can learn to understand the faith of their mothers. These are also excellent places in which women students should be encouraged to ponder the relationship between their Christian faith, femininity, cultural context, and God's call to varied roles. What themes and questions should be considered in the education of women students?

All women in this book never had the chance to get a Christian education like many young people in the United States. None of them grew up in a Christian home. Their experiences show how "big" God's work is. In the context of Christian institutions here in America, there are certainly a different set of questions. But I think the understanding of how the Christian faith and our identity as women are

embedded in the broader culture (including political culture, consumer culture, and Christian or evangelical sub-culture) is still key. Young women in Christian colleges may need to resist sexist norms or theologies the same way Christian women professionals do in their own social circles. The first group might be more cocooned into a subculture of stability, theologically and socially speaking. Nevertheless, different generations of Christian women in America may very much also internalize politics within family circles as our world has become increasingly politicized. I think no matter where we are as women, we need to keep asking questions about the substance and reality of life. Life is not a neatly organized artifact to behold. Intrusive facts and overwhelming chaos may be the way God speaks to us. The most important thing is to listen with self-reflection, and to speak so that we hear ourselves with clarity. What does my past in my family mean for who I am? Do I understand the political culture of my day? What stories of pain and change are coming from my



women friends of the same generation? Do I listen to them enough? Has my theological understanding of God's work in this world been static? How do I practice inclusiveness by reading experiences of people who are very different from me? I think attending Christian colleges is the best time to mature into a theology of openness and change. As Canadian ethicist Douglas John Hall writes, "the being of the creature *Anthropos*, that is, its becoming, implies movement, openness, the readiness to exchange one moment for the next, one experience for the next, ... if anyone wanted truly to love God he or she would have to love change."^[3]

Change in The Rector at the Evangelical University of Paraguay (UEP)

Dr. Alfred Neufeld, an author, theologian, pastor and teacher, who served as the Principal of the UEP, recently passed away this June. Before serving in UEP, he was a director of the Asunción Biblical Institute (IBA), and served as the dean for the Faculty of Theology, the Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences, and of the Faculty of Living Languages. Of Anabaptist heritage, he was a global leader in the World Mennonite Conference acting as chair of the MWC Faith and Life Commission from 2008-2018. He represented MWC in several ecumenical dialogues, and played a major role in bringing together Mennonite churches in Paraguay to plan the MWC Assembly in 2009. He served as co-chair of the Trilateral Dialogue commission on baptism with representatives from MWC, Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He contributed to shape Anabaptist theology globally, writing the book *What We Believe Together: Exploring the 'shared convictions' of Anabaptist-Related Churches*" (New York, GoodBooks, 2015). He also was related to the Latin American Theological Fellowship and published with Ediciones Kairos (2006) the book *Living from God's Future*.

On August 20, Dr. Esteban Missena del Castillo was appointed as the new Rector of the UEP after years of serving as Secretary General of the University.



Dr. Alfred Neufeld



Dr. Esteban Missena del Castillo

New Health Agreement between the Evangelical University of El Salvador (UEES) and MINSAL

At the beginning of 2020, the UEES signed a Cooperation Agreement with the National Institute of Health-Ministry of Health of El Salvador (MINSAL). The objective of the Agreement is to establish joint working mechanisms to carry out a diagnosis of human resource needs in health and to contribute to the strengthening of competencies, as well the joint management of funds with international entities, to carry out research and training processes. The agreement signing act was chaired by Dr. Ana Orellana Bendek, Minister of Health; Lic. César Emilio Quinteros, Rector UEES and Dra. Xochil Sandoval, Deputy Director of the INS.



Evangelical University of Boliviana and Southwestern Christian University, USA

Dr. Timoteo Sánchez, the rector of the Evangelical University of Boliviana and Dr. Reggie Wenyika, President of the Southwestern Christian University of Oklahoma, USA signed an agreement that will allow progress in scientific research, project development, and student-teacher exchange, in addition to a double degree for graduate students from both universities.



Inter-American University of Puerto Rico (UIPR) - INTER ONLINE TV

Aware of the difficulties that some students may face at the beginning of the academic year 2020-21 in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UIPR has created *INTER Online TV*. This is a project for the production, recording and transmission of educational content and university courses of the General Education Program (PEG) that will be broadcast on the ABC Puerto Rico channel. *INTER Online TV* seeks to support the immersion of students, especially newcomers, and will be an additional support resource with some courses. The president of the UIPR, Manuel J. Fernós, comments that "UIPR and its decade-long tradition of being a leader in technology and its more than 20 years of experience offering online classes, allows us to offer you excellent higher education services in the midst of this pandemic. Not satisfied with that, we present *INTER Online TV*, which is a complementary service to all the study modalities that UIPR offers in these times of pandemic, such as 100% online classes, 100% virtual classes with virtual classrooms and hybrids, which will be 50% virtual and 50% face-to-face, when permitted by the Executive Order of the government. We are very enthusiastic about this project that will facilitate the teaching work for our students."



Seventh Latin American INCHE Conference / LATF 50th Anniversary

The INCHE Latin America Conference, dubbed "Higher Education, Christian Identity and Public Advocacy in Latin America" was postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19. However, a related conference is now going to be held virtually between the **1st to the 3rd of December 2020** with sessions from **2 pm to 5 pm (ET)**.

This conference is sponsored by the Community of Interdisciplinary Theological Studies (CETI) and the Latin American Theological Fraternity (LATF), and will also mark the 50th anniversary of the LATF. Initially, 30 to 40 participants were expected, including academics

(professors and researchers) and administrators (Presidents/Rectors or Vice-presidents), with two thirds of the participants giving presentations. However, because it is going to be held virtually, the number of participants and slots can be expanded. In addition to the opening keynote presentation "Challenges to Christian Higher Education (CHE) for the Latin American Church and Society in the 2020s", the following discussions will be held:

- *Christian presence in the academic environment of Latin America.*
- *Specific contributions of CHE in the region: developments*
- *Theological programs and interdisciplinary research centers*
- *Humanities, education and communications*
- *Politics, social sciences and development.*
- *Panel with conclusions: Considerations regarding CHE and its incidence in the region*

Further registration details will be forthcoming from INCHE.



Dr. Fernando Bullon's article, "Religious Changes in Latin America and Concerns Regarding Protestantism" was published in the May 2020 edition of the *Journal of Latin American Theology* (JLAT). This journal is edited by Dr. Lindy Scott, an INCHE member, who has been a professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies at Whitworth University until retiring earlier in 2020. The May 2020 edition of JLAT (No. 1, Vol. 15) completed a set of articles on Latin America that began in the former issue (Vol.14, No. 2, Nov.2019). Together these two journal issues create an excellent text for universities and seminaries that seek to understand Latin America today. The Journal is available by subscription through Wipf and Stock publishers. Further updates about Dr. Scott are available at: <https://www.thewhitworthian.news/news/2020/5/17/lindy-scott-wraps-up-time-at-whitworth>

About the Author

Dr. Bullón is currently professor of theology and development with the Latin American Doctoral Program (PRODOLA), and a member of the adjunct faculty of the Universidad Evangélica de las Américas (UNELA) as well as at the Seminario Nazareno de las Américas (SENDAS), both in Costa Rica. He is a member of the Latin American Theological Fellowship (LATF). Dr. Bullón has an interdisciplinary background in fields of agro-industrial engineering (B.Sc. & Lic. Eng.), anthropology (Dip.), economics (MSc), educational administration (MA), development studies (Ph.D.) and Latin American studies (D.Phil). He received his Ph.D. in economic and social studies at the University of Manchester and did specialized studies in theology and development at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS), both in the U.K.



Dr. Bullón has served many roles in his career including as a pastor, general secretary (student & professional org.), executive director (development programs), academic dean, professor, author, and board member in various organizations and projects around Central and South America as well as with INCHE. He has authored several books and other publications on the topics of mission, ethics, and Latin American and development studies. He continues to serve as the INCHE Latin America coordinator.

In December 2017, he co-edited the book, "Where is Protestantism Going in Latin America? A Multidisciplinary and Prospective Vision at 500 years from the Reformation." The book was a result of the 6th INCHE Latin American Consultation, held in Lima, Peru, in July 2017 with the cooperation of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL) and the Comunidad de Estudios Teológicos Interdisciplinarios (CETI).

1. In your article you note how the religious composition of Latin America has change over five decades to include a greater number of Protestants in many countries. Still, you note that conservative and progressive economic and political inclinations are evident within both Catholicism and Protestantism. The divisions are not clear-cut. So, to what do you attribute the different cultural inclinations to either preserve the status quo or to change society? What factors are mixing with Christian commitment and theology to create varied perspectives among both Catholics and Protestants?

In complex human reality, various factors concur to explain a certain situation; there is no exclusively mono-causal issue. It is obvious that cultural and educational factors (formative and life ethos - family and primary institutional relations, community traditions, the media and other secondary relations, etc.) influence decisively. In general, there are certain minority sectors that have access to higher education, reaching higher levels. These will be less subject to traditions and open to transformations, including in the religious sphere which is a more resistant setting to changes in values and certain traditions. In both cases, the Catholic and Protestant sectors, there have been individuals with higher educational levels who have been able to influence and promote certain ecclesial or social changes. Thus, if one analyzes the theological renewal movements that have occurred in the past decades: in the Catholic sector, with the case of Liberation Theology, it was with elements located in its universities. In the Protestant sector, both in its most ecumenical and in its most evangelical subsectors, there were also elements linked to their university movements: Student Christian Movement (SCM) and International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) respectively. The people of SCM (MEC in Latin America) with the Church and Society movement (ISAL) are of a liberationist nature; those of IFES promoting the Latin American Theological Fellowship (LATF) support its comprehensive or holistic mission thinking.



2. While Protestant expressions of Christianity have been growing in number, you also note that this growing percentage seems to correlate with Latin American societies with greater economic and social inequality, concentrated wealth, and increasing environmental disasters. You suggest that the Protestantism in Latin America has taken

on a client-patron, anti-democratic tone that is more hierarchical. It is not informed by the values of European social democracies. What emphases in Latin American Protestant theology or practices seem to contribute to less community-oriented democracy and less care for God's natural world?

The growth of Protestantism has been mainly due to the growth of the Pentecostal sector (in its varieties), currently reaching practically two-thirds of the Protestant population. This majority weighs in such a way that it is almost customary to identify what Protestantism does with what corresponds to this sector. Referring to formation and social awareness, with very few exceptions the Pentecostal subsector and certain groups of the evangelical subsector are considered to be the most deficient— theologically as well as in related specialized social disciplines. This, due to its denominational ties with churches in the USA (or even being independent groups with no ties to USA), is with very conservative and right-wing positions within the political spectrum. They represent the anti-enlightened and anti-reform or social change positions. In previous moments they had represented a 'spirituality' that disregarded the social with anti-social action stances. However, due to their numerous members, they have been accessing political and public functions after electoral processes, but reflecting these conservative and clientelist positions. At best, they provide an innocuous community development approach, with positions that confuse the fight for justice and equity with "socialism" or "communism", an issue that is well established in many religious subsectors of American origin.

3. One important trend within Protestantism has been the growth of Pentecostalism. While the growth of Christian commitments may be heartening, you are concerned about the alignment of Pentecostal Protestants with limited human rights, tight boundaries on acceptable forms of family living, and an allegiance to neoliberal economics. There could be several causes for such alignment related to social marginalization, limited education and training, or the influence of North American Pentecostals. What are the most influential factors contributing to the perspectives of Latin American Pentecostals?

Of course, as mentioned above, there can be combined factors. But the religious factor weighs heavily, whatever the educational level one has, according to various anthropological studies. Considering the religious factor specifically, a misunderstood theological perspective is decisive. In the various subsectors or Pentecostal groupings - be they connected with foreign missions, or of more independent origin - shared or inherited theology places them in such reductionist perspectives and loyalties. When it comes to social ethics, there is a main gravitation around issues of sexuality and a limited pro-life perspective; but a total disregard for serious social analysis; even less in a macro sense. More specifically in relation to the economic aspect, an anti-socialism, and

and even a certain McCarthyism is strongly established in the Protestant imaginary (connected with North American missions), blindly accepting the neoliberal economy as "endorsed by the Word of God." Obviously, here it is important to mention the lack of formation of the pastoral leadership in the fields of social sciences, so as to be able to orient its parishioners to the consideration of alternatives that, paradoxically, coincide more with axiological postulates from the Scriptures, a position of strong solidarity. But in general, an anti-progressive thinking against communitarianism or socialism is also established in the imaginary of society through the dominance of the media and control of institutions by conservative sectors.

4. As you explore ways to address these challenges, your article suggests that Protestantism needs to recover its own history regarding the mix of spirituality and intellectualism. How do you further explain the meaning of this suggestion? What needs to be recovered? How can Protestants become more fully prepared for public engagement?

A better balance between evangelization and social responsibility, needs to be recovered, seeing the latter in its public and macro dimension. An awareness of the social and cultural transformations of Protestantism worldwide that have brought about advances in justice, human rights, peace and development, is needed. We must give adequate place to the educational area, especially at the higher levels, stimulating interdisciplinary formation. Indeed, a special effort is imperative to contribute to a better formation of pastoral leadership, so that they in turn can stimulate secular and public vocations in service to the Kingdom of God and his justice in their own countries' projections in politics and public administration, in the educational sector, the media, and environmental offices. In general, all disciplines and sectors need this perspective. Unless there is a clear understanding that the fundamental composition of the people of God is laity located in different responsibilities in society, what will be had is a clericalization of this and an evasion and inconstancy regard the social transformations that society needs. Reviewing relationships—between Latin American churches and those located in the USA with whom they maintain denominational ties—is also urgent. Latin American churches must exhort the leadership of their denominations or church networks to also keep these concerns in mind and prioritize the formation and preparation of their leadership and members. Otherwise, the missionary work is only a transmission belt of bad practices.

5. Your article also suggests that greater cooperation between Protestants and Catholics is needed on evangelism and social action not only on matters of moral behavior; and governments need to develop a more robust sense of pluralism in relationship to the religious

identities of their citizens. In this regard, what are the responsibilities of Christians involved in Latin American higher education? How can we build thoughtful, shared Christian frameworks and practices for our civic life?

In spite of the advances after Vatican II, and the growth of Protestantism in Latin America, the latter's position in relation to the Catholic official sector is still subordinate in access to sectors of influence over society, whether public institutions (powers of the State: the legislative, judicial or executive), media, educational establishments, or others. In this sense, it is still necessary to firmly establish a real state. Where there is still no formal secular state, strive to achieve it; and where it exists 'legally', fight so that this is not mere nominalism, allowing equal treatment and access for the different traditions of religious thought.

More specifically, from the perspective of Christian higher education (which includes not only Christian universities but all Christians serving in the middle of higher education), even if they are secular centers, it is necessary to contribute via its own essential functions: to train competent professionals with values for service to their countries; to advance in research and the frontiers of knowledge that make it possible to confront the critical human problems that afflict our countries; through its university extension programs to be already in connection with actions, programs and projects that provide relief and overcome the problems that affect especially the most disadvantaged sectors.



INCHE Celebrates the life of John Kok



It is with great sadness that INCHE recognizes that longtime member of INCHE, Dr. John Kok passed away on Sunday July 5, 2020. The INCHE network office wishes to extend our condolences to his wife, Sanneke, and the family of John Kok and to recognize the leader and intellectual that Dr. Kok was. While mourning his transition, INCHE celebrates him as an asset to the family of

Christian higher education.

Dr. John Henry Kok, professor emeritus of philosophy at Dordt University, was 71 years old when he passed away at home due to a brief illness. Kok and his wife, Sanneke, were married in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1969, and had seven children. As stated in his obituary, "John and Sanneke enjoyed traveling and visiting their children and grandchildren around the world. His family is grateful to God for his life and love."

Kok earned his undergraduate degree from Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, and a Ph.D. at the Free University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He began work at Dordt in 1983. Kok taught philosophy for many years, served as Dean of Humanities and Dean for Research and Scholarship, and was Director of the Andreas Center for Scholarship and Service before retiring in 2014.

He also worked as the managing editor for the Dordt College Press for 20 years, publishing many books. Several prominent publications within Christian higher education passed through his hands and many can testify to his excellent work.

"On his own, he became an editor, a one-man publishing house, Dordt College Press, turning out books and translations almost single-handedly, books he deeply believed the community he served and often led needed for the tough tasks of stewardship," wrote James Calvin Schaap, professor emeritus of English, in his essay titled "John Henry Kok."

Dr. Karen An-Hwei Lee Appointed Provost at Wheaton College

Wheaton College President Philip Ryken on 12 June 2020, announced the appointment of Dr. Karen An-Hwei Lee as Provost of Wheaton College. She began her appointment in August.

Reporting to the President, Dr. Lee will lead the Senior Academic Leadership Team (SALT), serve on the Senior Administrative Cabinet (SAC), and oversee all aspects of the academic division including—in addition to the faculty—records and services, centers and institutes, global programs and studies, institutional research, library and archives, intercultural engagement, and military science. Dr. Lee will also hold faculty rank as Professor of English.

Dr. Lee succeeds Provost Margaret Diddams, who announced last year she would be stepping down at the end of June 2020. Dr. Lee earned her B.A. Magna Cum Laude in English from Brown University. She received an M.F.A. in fiction writing from Brown and an M.A. in English (poetry writing) from the University of California, Berkeley. She earned her Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Berkeley.



As noted in the Wheaton College announcement, President Ryken said, "Throughout the interview process Dr. Karen Lee impressed faculty members, staff, ad-

ministrators, and trustees with her vibrant testimony of faith in Jesus, her grasp of current issues in higher education, her grounding in both science and the humanities, and her infectious love for faculty members and the students they serve. Her leadership promises to advance Wheaton's Christ-centered mission by deepening our love for liberal arts learning and broadening the global reach of our diverse community."

"I'm honored to support Wheaton's time-honored mission of Christ-centered liberal arts," said Dr. Lee. "It will be a pleasure to serve Wheaton's distinguished faculty and highly accomplished students."

"As Wheaton's next provost, Dr. Lee will bring an im-

pressive array of academic leadership experiences, a value-based approach to decision making, and an interpersonally astute leadership style that will serve the academic division well in the challenges that lie ahead," said Search Committee Co-Chair Terri Watson, Dean and Professor of Psychology, Counseling and Family Therapy. "She is a highly accomplished scholar and exceptional communicator who exemplifies Christian liberal arts commitments and values."

Alan Cureton of UNWSP comments publicly on death of George Floyd and racial strife

Alan Cureton, President of INCHE member, University of Northwestern-St. Paul, spoke publicly about the May 2020 death of George Floyd in his university's home region. His full comment is available at: <https://unwsp.edu/news/message-from-dr-cureton-regarding-recent-events>. In brief he said, "...People in this nation should not live in fear because of the color of their skin. People in this nation should not live in fear of authority, especially those who have been appointed to serve and protect...why does this behavior continue to happen? We know why. It happens because there is evil in this world. As professing followers of the living Savior, we are commanded to act justly, reflect mercy, and walk humbly with our Lord. In faithful obedience of this instruction (Micah 6:8) we must speak out against all types of evil and peacefully ensure the protection of our neighbors. If we don't speak out, who will?"

Worship Symposium: 2021 Online Options



Art by Virginia Wieringa

You are warmly invited to engage an **online learning experience** around key topics and themes in worship and the Christian life at the **Calvin Symposium on Worship: January 6-26, 2021**. Join with participants from around the world through online media to learn and connect together. The online Symposium will feature flexible learning options designed for learners of all ages: faculty, artists, musicians, pastors, scholars, teachers, worship leaders and planners, and all other interested worshippers around the

world. Participants will be able to access the following on-demand viewing at their own pace and time frame for the following:

- o **Topical video panels** featuring key themes in public worship and the Christian life
- o A **podcast series** featuring interviews with worship leaders and authors of recent books and resources on topics related to the life of the church
- o A **Psalm Gallery** featuring a curated psalm experience through song, prayer, art, and drama
- o **Articles** related to the topics and themes
- o **Livestream learning and worship**
- o **Webinars** with panelists and authors on key topics in worship and the Christian life

There is **no fee to access** the Calvin Symposium on Worship. **But participants must register**. The website will be updated in the months ahead. **Join the email list** at: <https://worship.calvin.edu/about/mailling-list.html> to stay connected and receive an email message when registration opens.

Global Scholars Canada at 25 Years

On June 6, 2020 Global Scholars Canada, an INCHE member, celebrated 25 years since its founding. They hosted a virtual evening of video clips from scholars worldwide and conversations with their staff and board. Global Scholars Canada seeks to support a guild of Christian academics around the globe, developing faith-filled educational opportunities for the cultural leaders of tomorrow. In their celebration they recognized the influence of Dia Diafwila in supporting the first cohort of students in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to complete graduate studies in the areas of pastoral care and ministry leadership. They also celebrated the influence of Adrian and Wendy Helleman as well as Glen Taylor in the first cohort to complete the Christian Religious Studies Program in The Gambia. Wendy is the coauthor with Musa Gaiya of the recently published volume *Early Christianity: A Textbook for African Students*. Global Scholars Canada hopes to follow up in 2021 with an in-person anniversary celebration.

Opening the Red Door

The Inside Story of Russia's First Christian Liberal Arts University
(IVP Academic, 2019)

by **John A. Bernbaum**

After the Berlin Wall fell, a group of Christian colleges in the U.S. seized the opportunity to begin strategic exchanges with universities inside the Soviet Union. After seventy years of fierce religious persecution under communism, the Russian-American Christian University (RACU) was born. In *Opening the Red Door*, Bernbaum presents an insider's account of the rise and fall of a Russian-American partnership. *Opening the Red Door* offers unique insight not only into Russian culture and post-Cold War history but also traces the dynamics within international educational institutions and partnerships.

The following review by Mark Elliott, editor emeritus of the East-West Church and Ministry Report, www.eastwestreport.org. comments on this book and experience. This article first appeared on *ChristianityToday.com* on Feb. 17, 2020. Used by permission of *Christianity Today*, Carol Stream, IL 60188.

Lessons from the Long-Shot Bid to Bring Christian Liberal-Arts Education to Russia

The Russian-American Christian University had a brief lifespan and a limited enrollment. But the school planted seeds that might flower in the future.

In 1995, I taught a non-credit night course in Russian church history for what would become the Russian-American Christian University (RACU). It was a memorable experience on multiple counts. The class was held in rented space on the old campus of the Patrice Lumumba People's Friendship University, where



a larger-than-life bust of the school's namesake Congolese communist martyr was on display in the lobby. Outside my classroom windows were the walls of the Donskoi Monastery, where the Bolsheviks imprisoned Russian Orthodox Patriarch Tikhon until his death in 1925. I team-taught in a stimulating partnership with a friend, Orthodox journalist and future priest Yakov Krotov. And I was teaching unusually attentive students as eager to learn as any I have ever encountered.



For a few short years, less than two decades (1996-2011), an American-style Christian liberal arts university sought to plant seeds in Moscow, where the soil would grow increasingly rocky and thorny. Explanations for RACU's demise are easy to come by. They include an evangelical constituency limited in size and financial wherewithal, economic instability (including the 1998 ruble crisis and the 2008-09 recession), a political order devolving from pseudo-democracy to authoritarianism, deteriorating Russian-American relations, growing xenophobic nationalism, and a declining pool of college-age youth. Above all, RACU could not overcome increasingly crippling state restrictions on private higher education and the lack of an established rule of law, which fueled (and was fueled by) pervasive corruption. Though the school was predominantly evangelical, it made earnest efforts to develop positive relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, efforts that were successful with some hierarchs but less so in the im-

mediate neighborhood of its new building, which barely opened before pressures on all sides forced its closure and sale.

Fighting to Survive

Taking into account the overwhelming odds against RACU, a key question comes to mind: How did the



school manage to survive as long as 17 years and produce ten graduating classes? Part of the explanation for its

endurance lies in the enthusiastic support it received from elements of the U.S. Christian college network, as well as generous contributions from evangelical donors on and off its board. (Full disclosure: I was a member of that board.) But the chief reason for RACU's resilience was the competence and character of its founding president, John Bernbaum, who writes about his experience...

Bernbaum's preparation for the post included a Ph.D. in European history, work in the U.S. State Department, decades of teaching and administrative experience with the Washington-based Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, and a gift for networking and donor development. Just as critical to the enterprise were Bernbaum's abiding sense of God's leading and a seemingly inexhaustible reservoir of energy, optimism, fortitude, and perseverance.

In the context of global Christianity, RACU was part of a rapid, multi-continent expansion of faith-based higher education over the past half-century—a phenomenon ably documented in the 2014 volume *Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance*. Com-

pared to Asian and African newcomers, RACU's imprint was quite modest, at least quantitatively. With a student body that never exceeded 200, it was dwarfed, for example, by the 3,500 students of South Korea's Handong Global University (founded one year before RACU) or the 10,000 students of Nigeria's Bowen University (founded in 2002).

So why write an entire book on a school with such a limited lifespan and a quite modest enrollment? For one, the saga of RACU's hard-fought, short-lived existence bears telling because it played out in Russia, a nation that rightly commands the world's attention, for good or ill. In addition, RACU's promise and plight serves as a cautionary tale demonstrating the obstacles confronting any institution struggling to prevail in an environment of widespread corruption, economic uncertainty, and the arbitrary exercise of power.

Bernbaum's account features constant combat with corruption and bribery. Refusing to grease palms meant protracted, energy-sapping delays in obtaining an educational license, accreditation, and construction permits, to mention just the most obvious hurdles in Moscow's bureaucratic mazes. RACU gave witness to its ethical integrity through a persistent refusal to engage in the commonplace bribery that marked Russian higher education. The school never traded precious admission spots for favors. It never doctored test scores, final grades, or transcripts. And it never sold diplomas, although one enterprising fraudster did advertise a bogus RACU diploma for the equivalent of \$500.

To date, it appears that RACU is one of only two Protestant higher education programs to have obtained Russian state accreditation (along with Zaoski Adventist University), a remarkable achievement given the partiality the state affords the Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, in 2009 the Ministry of Education abruptly changed a critical requirement for accreditation, ruling

that doctorates issued by American universities were no longer valid in calculating the number of RACU faculty with higher degrees. This left the school with an albatross it could never shake.

Risk and Reward

Throughout its history, Russia has exhibited a love-hate relationship with the West, repeatedly alternating between periods of slavish imitation of Western ways and xenophobic rejection of all things foreign. The clash of Westernizers and Slavophiles in the 19th century is but one of many examples of this phenomenon.

RACU was born during the fleeting ascendancy of pro-Western, reform-minded, Yeltsin-era higher-education administrators. They were soon eclipsed by officials unsympathetic to private institutions, Protestants, and liberal-arts education. As a result, RACU's higher-education model—which stressed faith-based character formation and the creative stimulus of the liberal arts—has little purchase in Russia today. But that could well change if the country, in a post-Putin era, tamps down on nationalistic fervor and once again welcomes the influence of educational models from abroad. In its short existence, RACU's students came to appreciate the marketability of their new English-language and computer-science skills, but they also valued the school's spiritual stress on personal integrity, cross-cultural sensitivity, and lives lived for others. At some future date, the success of RACU's graduates could build momentum for a renewed experiment in a Christian liberal-arts education.

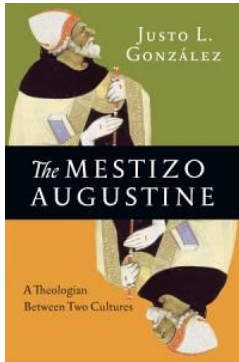
RACU's unsuccessful fight for long-term survival also serves as a case study for any institution determined to pursue a Christian mission in an unpredictable environment. To what extent should risk management inform decision-making? Was it prudent to invest so much time, effort, and money in a Christian university plant-

ed where the rule of law is lacking? Was it hopelessly naïve on the part of Bernbaum, his board, and his donors to paddle against the current? Certainly in rational, practical terms the odds against RACU were daunting. So to what extent are Christians to base their kingdom work upon rational, practical calculations?

For over a decade, I held a joint faculty-administrative appointment at a Christian college whose chief financial officer advised against short-term support for RACU, even as other Christian colleges with far smaller endowments proved willing to pitch in. I was told that the idea of a Christian college in Russia was too risky a venture. The irony is that this same American college never would have come into existence had its founder exercised a similar measure of caution and risk-aversion. To be sure, any Christian giving of consequence should involve the head and the heart alike, as Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert argued so eloquently in their book *When Helping Hurts*. And it's no surprise that a financial officer, looking at all the relevant factors, would advise against investing in something as improbable as RACU. On the other hand, should the school's stakeholders be faulted for taking risks to fund a Christian liberal-arts university in such a strategic location?

God willing, the day may come when forces of hope, liberty, and freedom of conscience regain ascendancy in Russia. And in that day, something like the Russian-American Christian University, which performed so ably in its brief life, might flourish the way its founders intended.





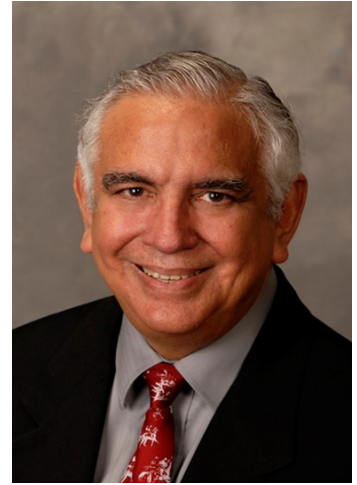
The Mestizo Augustine: A Theologian Between Two Cultures

by Justo L. González

Few thinkers have been as influential as Augustine of Hippo. His writings, such as *Confessions* and *City of God*, have left an indelible mark on Western Christianity. He has become so synonymous with Christianity in the West that we easily forget he was a man of two cultures: African and Greco-Roman. The mixture of African Christianity and Greco-Roman rhetoric and philosophy gave his theology and ministry a unique potency in the cultural ferment of the late Roman empire. Augustine experienced what Latino/a theology calls *mestizaje*, which means being of a mixed background. Cuban American historian and theologian Justo González looks at the life and legacy of Augustine from the perspective of his own Latino heritage and finds in the bishop of Hippo a remarkable resource for the church today. The *mestizo* Augustine can serve as a lens by which to see afresh not only the history of Christianity but also our own culturally diverse world.

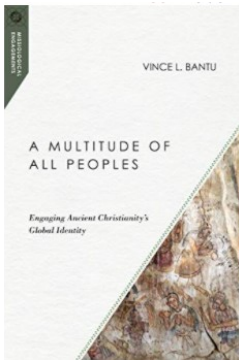
NOTE: Reviews are taken directly from the publishers' promotional materials and should not be considered reviews by INCHE.

Justo L. González is an ordained United Methodist minister, a retired professor of historical theology and author of the highly praised three-volume *History of Christian Thought* and the two-volume *The Story of Christianity*. He previously taught at the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico and the Candler School of Theology of Emory University. Besides his continued research and publication, he spends most of his energy promoting the theological education of Latino and Latina leaders.



INCHE Podcasts Have Begun

In May 2020 INCHE launched its ongoing Podcast series entitled "Inching Forward". The goal of this series is to deepen resources for and about Christian higher education. INCHE will release a new Podcast once a month. Since May three podcasts have been released. The first one focuses on LCC International University and its work in Lithuania. Two young staff professionals are interviewed. The next two podcasts focus on a young theologian from West Africa who is rising in influence, Victor Emma Adamah. INCHE podcasts are a membership benefit that can be accessed with your login and password at: <https://inche.one/multi-media-resources>. Questions about access can be sent to: **office@inche.one**.



A Multitude of All Peoples

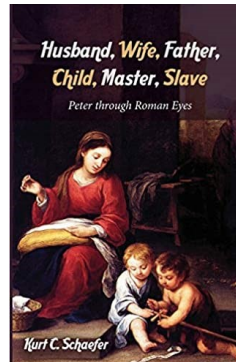
By Vince L. Bantu

IVP Academic; Illustrated Edition, 2020

Christianity is not becoming a global religion. It has always been a global religion. The early Christian movement spread from Jerusalem in every direction, taking

on local cultural expression all around the ancient world. So why do so many people see Christianity as a primarily Western, white religion? In *A Multitude of All Peoples*, Vince Bantu surveys the geographic range of the early church's history, revealing an alternate, more accurate narrative to that of Christianity as a product of the Western world. He begins by investigating the historical roots of the Western cultural captivity of the church, from the conversion of Constantine to the rise of European Christian empires. He then shifts focus to the too-often-forgotten concurrent development of diverse expressions of Christianity across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In the process, Bantu removes obstacles to contemporary missiological efforts. Focusing on the necessity for contextualization and indigenous leadership in effective Christian mission, he draws out practical lessons for intercultural communication of the gospel. Healing the wounds of racism, imperialism, and colonialism will be possible only with renewed attention to the marginalized voices of the historic global church. The full story of early Christianity makes clear that, as the apostle Peter said, "God does not show favoritism, but accepts those from every people who fear him and do what is right."

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Husband, Wife, Father, Children, Master, Slave: Peter Through Roman Eyes

By Kurt C. Schaefer

Wipf & Stock, 2018

When the New Testament speaks of slaves and masters, is it affirming an institution that we find reprehensible? Biblical

scholars across the theological and political spectrum generally conclude that the answer is "yes." And in the same passages the Bible seems to affirm male dominance in marriage, if not in society at large. This book meticulously places these passages, the Bible's "household codes," in their historical and literary context, focusing on 1 Peter's extensive code. A careful side-by-side reading with Rome's cultural equivalent (Aristotle's household code) reveals both the brilliance of the biblical author and the depth of 1 Peter's antipathy toward slavery and misogyny.

Finding Dr. Bennie J. van der Walt's Books and Articles

Dr. Bennie J. van der Walt, an INCHE network founder at the 1975 conference in South Africa, continues to receive requests for his books and articles in English. There are three websites through which readers can acquire possible digital copies of his publications. They are:

Dr. Steve Bishop (UK) at [allofliferedeemed](http://allofliferedeemed.com) (personal e-mail): stevebishop.uk@gmail.com

Dr. Jan H. Boer (Canada) at [www.SocialTheology](http://www.SocialTheology.com) (or blog MyWorld-MyNeighbour) or personal e-mail: _boerjf@hotmail.com

Dr. Chris Gousmett (New Zealand) who is starting a third website for reformational Christian materials (called "Thumbwidth Press" at <https://www.thumbwidthpress.net>) (personal e-mail: gousmettc@gmail.com)

TESTIMONIAL

A Pile of Clothes Serves a Deeper Purpose

A sewing needle logo next to a photo of a student with a face cloth covering their mouth and nose.

On a cold and dreary day in mid-March when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Michigan, Freshta Tori Jan left her dorm room behind and headed to her home in Rockford, Michigan.

Tori Jan, a second-year student studying political science and pre-law at Calvin University, was doing what many students across the country were doing at that time, transitioning from residential to online education for the remainder of the semester.

Upon returning home on this cold afternoon, she decided to sip on some tea and turn on the news, and ... "I hear that the homeless have been hit the hardest by COVID-19," said Tori Jan. "That touched my heart and I couldn't imagine what they could be going through.

Homeless shelters were closing because of the fear of the virus spreading, meaning access to showers, food, lodging, all were now in jeopardy for an already marginalized population

"I didn't know what to do," said Tori Jan.

But that didn't stop her from thinking.

From uncertainty to action Tori Jan saw a big pile of clothes on her floor that she intended to take to Goodwill. But, the stores were closed. And good thing they were, because that pile of clothes had a bigger purpose.

"I remember growing up back home, all girls were required to learn how to sew," said Tori Jan who grew up in Afghanistan. "Why not use my basic skills to help make masks for the homeless?," she wondered.

That thought turned to action.

"I remember this one day we were taking the masks downtown and people driving by saw us and asked: are you selling these masks? We said 'no, they are free, they are for the homeless,'" recalled Tori Jan.

But people insisted they wanted to pay for them, and Tori Jan said the requests to make masks just kept coming in. So much so, that on April 8, 2020, she decided to open an online store.

"I can make these masks and customers can either purchase for themselves, for their family or friends, or they can make purchases for the homeless and I can deliver them downtown," said Tori Jan.

A passion shaped through suffering

Growing up in Afghanistan, Tori Jan's family faced injustices daily. Her parents were tortured, some of her close friends were killed. She faced religious persecution, and in eighth grade, the Taliban shut down her school.

"I was so broken, I felt this was so unfair, this couldn't be the end of my dreams, this couldn't be the end of me trying to make a change in my country, around the globe, in any way that I can."

And it hasn't. These events shaped her.

Before her senior year of high school, Tori Jan moved to west Michigan with a passion to work and serve toward her mission "which is fighting inequality in any system in any way that I am able to," said Tori Jan.

Living out her mission wholeheartedly

She applied to and was accepted to a number of colleges and universities. "I kept praying for God to show me what school was right," said Tori Jan. "I can't explain how many different signs there were that Calvin was the right school."

Her experience so far at Calvin has confirmed that calling, equipping her and supporting her as she lives into her mission.

"When I started at Calvin, I got so much support, I was able to get involved in a lot of organizations, I was able to go to a number of conferences and really able to work and serve toward my mission. I got a lot of help from my professors who were always encouraging me, always writing my references ... just working at Calvin's Career Center, I felt like I was surrounded by family that would constantly pray over me, that would anoint me. Every time I'd go speak at a conference, everyone there would pray over me. Calvin has a very special place in my heart, and I can't imagine how else it would have been if I hadn't been here," said Tori Jan.

Tori Jan says the proceeds from the masks sold on her online store will help fund supplies to make masks and will also go towards feeding the homeless. To learn more about Tori Jan's story and mission, visit sewtrueproducts.com



CONTACT

ABOUT INCHE

The International Network for Christian Higher Education, INCHE, is a web of institutions and individuals worldwide committed to advancing Christian education through training, capacity building, scholarship, and networking in ways that reflect both the universal (shared view of Christ's centrality in our identity and work) and the local (attending to the specific realities and practices of who and where we serve).

INCHE's Mission is to be a higher education network that facilitates contact and mutual assistance, acts as a catalyst for research and training, and encourages biblical and contextual responses to critical issues in contemporary society. Through such initiatives INCHE helps people serve the Lord Jesus Christ in an integral way.



Contact is the official newsletter of INCHE. It is published quarterly to provide members with Christian higher education news from the many world regions in which INCHE operates and to resource its members for their development as Christian educators. If you have news items to share with INCHE members worldwide, contact INCHE at: office@inche.one.



Have news you would like to share with other INCHE members?

Members should email contributions to: office@inche.one. We suggest articles of 400 words or less.

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