

THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS' NETWORK

(TINET)

NETWORK NEWSLETTER 1

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KOBE LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, JAPAN
LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, HONG KONG
LUTHERAN INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION, THAILAND
SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY, NORWAY

The First Year of TINET

In September 2004 the four TINET member institutions gathered for a network conference in the School of Mission and Theology (MHS), Stavanger, Norway. The institutions have all signed the *Theological Institutions' Network (TINET) General Agreement* and the *TINET 2004-2007 Network Plan*, both of which may be read electronically at the MHS website (<http://www.mhs.no>; click 'Network'). The networking institutions have committed ourselves to cooperating in five areas, which comprise (1) Student Exchange, (2) Exchange of Teachers, (3) Professional and Research Cooperation, (4) Library Cooperation, and (5) Communication.

The TINET Newsletter is one expression of the communication between the networking partners. It is to be published twice a year in both electronic and printed editions. The electronic version of the TINET newsletter will be displayed accumulatively on the MHS website (<http://www.mhs.no>; click 'Network'), so that in the future one may also find and read the earlier published issues. The next newsletter this year will be issued in November.

Faculty Exchange

During the 2004/2005 academic year several of the MHS faculty have been visiting Asia. Since his return to Norway from Japan in 1999, Associate Professor Knut Alfsvaag has been a visiting professor at KLTS for several weeks every year during May-June, teaching church and mission history. This year is his sixth assignment, and the lectures are organized by the KLTS in association with Asia Graduate School of Theology in Japan (AGST/J). Associate Professor Thor Strandenaes spent two months of his sabbatical leave in 2004 at LTS, Hong Kong, doing research on children and worship. Lecturer and Ph.D. student Kari Storstein

Haug is doing field research for her doctoral dissertation in Bangkok from June to September. During this period she is also teaching a course in LITE on Old Testament Theology over a period of 16 weeks. Finally plans have been made for Professor Jan-Martin Berentsen to teach theology in KLTS as a visiting professor for a full semester in the Fall of 2006.

President Hashimoto of KLTS characterizes this kind of faculty exchange within the framework of TINET “as a model for future implementation of professor exchange in every direction, West to East, East to West, and East to East.” Hence, concrete plans should be made for East to West and East to East faculty exchange between the TINET partners.

Network Conference

In the 2004-2007 Network Plan it is envisaged that the network cooperation will be evaluated in 2007. Now we are in the process of carrying out the different plans and commitments. Among other things the partner institutions have agreed to explore the possibility of arranging a joint conference in 2007 on a topic relevant to the network. One topic which has been met with favour in several of the institutions is *Spirituality in the City*. The nature of this topic makes it possible to combine biblical, historical, systematic and practical aspects of spirituality in the city. It also opens for fruitful exchange between theologians in Asia and in Norway. The layout and program of the 2007 conference will be carefully planned, but TINET-related faculty should feel welcome to come forward with suggestions to the TINET contact person in one’s respective institution. Such suggestions may include other main topics of interest as well as sub-topics relating to spirituality in the city. Individual faculty may even wish to start preparatory studies and research relating to the main topic. In this way the 2007 conference may also relate to ongoing studies in the member institutions. Early in the upcoming Fall the network contact persons will engage in the program planning process for the conference. At present efforts are made to secure financial support for the conference.

Student Exchange

In the TINET General Agreement and 2004-2007 Network Plan the networking institutions have pledged to promote and facilitate various forms of student exchange. It is hoped that we may gradually have regular East to East, East to West and West to East exchange of students. Students who are interested in such exchange should contact the academic dean and/or the TINET contact person in their institution for planning such a study venture. It is important that plans are made early and that the other relevant TINET institution be contacted well in advance in order to successfully facilitate such student exchange.

Faculty should also be on the look-out for interested and worthy candidates for such student exchange and possibly recommend them to the academic dean and the TINET contact person in one’s own institution. The TINET contact persons

will be looking into how such student exchange may best be promoted and implemented, both academically and practically.

Prayer Items

TINET is not only an academic network for faculty and student exchange, research and library cooperation. The networking partners have agreed to exchange items of prayer and thanksgiving which we encourage all students and members of faculty to share with us in community prayers and individual prayer life.

Hence, each member institution will normally include such topics for prayer and thanksgiving which our partners are invited to share in. In general we are encouraged to pray for students, faculty and other coworkers in the TINET member institutions. Further, for teaching, research and student life, as well as for recruitment of students and staff. And finally, we are asked to pray that our institutions may be willing and useful instruments for God's mission wherever we are called to serve.

Thor Strandenaes
Editor

NEWS FROM MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

In this first TINET Newsletter we bring highlights from the member institutions focusing on students, faculty, research, publications, special projects and prayer items. For a full introduction of each of the networking institutions, including history, degree programs, personnel and ongoing activities, their websites may be visited. The TINET member institutions' website addresses are as follows:

Kobe Lutheran Theological Seminary:	http://www.koluthse.jp
Lutheran Theological Seminary:	http://lts.edu
Lutheran Institute of Theological Education:	http://www.lite-edu.net
School of Mission and Theology:	http://www.mhs.no

The following information and news have been reported by the network contact persons. These are: President Akio Hashimoto (KLTS; MGH02510@nifty.ne.jp), Professor Ted Zimmermann (LTS; liaison@lts.edu), Director Suk Prachayaporn (LITE; lutheran@loxinfo.co.th), and Associate Professor Thor Strandenaes (MHS; thor.strandenaes@mhs.no).

(1) KOBE LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (KLTS)

Historical Background

KLTS was established by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) in 1957, which means that the institution may celebrate its "Half a Century Anniversary" in two

years. In 1972 three other partners joined the operation of the seminary. These included the two national Lutheran churches, Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC) and West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (WJELC) - both of which are the fruits of the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) and NLM respectively – and NMS.

Since 1957 the seminary has produced about 180 graduates for work as pastors, evangelists, missionaries, teachers, etc. The personnel has not been trained for KELC and WJELC alone, but also for other evangelical denominations throughout Japan. Other information about KLTS may be found at the seminary website (<http://www.koluthse.jp>), which is mainly operated in Japanese but with some links also to resources in English.

Student Enrollment and Graduates 2005 Spring

KLTS offers a M.Div. program, accredited by Asia Theological Association (ATA). And, being a member of the consortium called Asia Graduate School of Theology in Japan (AGST/J), KLTS also provides opportunity for those students aspiring for higher theological studies within Japan with degree programs leading to M.Th., D.Min., and Th. D.

KLTS also operates a three year curriculum of theological studies for pastors and evangelists, as well as a two year curriculum for those who may aspire to serve churches more and beyond lay commitment as their second career. Currently 25 students are enrolled. Additionally there are 5 auditing students who attend various classes.

A total of 11 students graduated in the spring, whereof 6 were awarded the M.Div. degree and 5 received their diploma upon completion of the Ministers' Course.

Special Student Activities

From June 9 to 11 the KLTS president and the 5 graduating students went on a pilgrimage trip together to the Southern Main-Island of Kyushu. The trip also included one of the many small islands around where the 17th century (Roman-Catholic) Christians were persecuted and martyred. Because of their faith in the Lord Jesus, an estimated 4000 were killed under many forms of unheard-of severe torture. It was not difficult for the pilgrims, visiting various martyr sites and seeing “relics,” to imagine how severe their suffering must have been, but at the same time how sincere, strong and authentic was their faithfulness to and love for their Lord. The seeds once sown even in this remote part of the world shall surely grow abundantly in God's appointed time.

Faculty

KLTS is already enjoying fruits of the TINET West to East faculty exchange. (For further information about this, see the entry **Faculty Exchange** on page 1 above).

Research

Prof. Makito Masaki, the academic dean, is presently now doing research on the theme "Two Types of Righteousness in Martin Luther's Thought."

Prayer Item

KLTS would like to work for the furtherance of God's Kingdom not only in Japan but elsewhere in Asia and throughout the world together with the TINET partners.

(2) LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (LTS)

Historical Background

The Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) was jointly founded on July 1, 1977, by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (ELCHK), the Chinese Rhenish Church (CRC), the Tsung Tsin Mission (TTM), and the Taiwan Lutheran Church (TLC). The roots of LTS date back to 1913, when its immediate predecessor was founded at Shekow, Hubei, China and later (1948) moved to Hong Kong Kong, where it has since been operating. Further information on history, degree programs and activities may be found at the LTS website (<http://lts.edu>) which is operated in both Chinese and English versions.

Student Enrollment and Graduates 2005 Spring

In the LTS a number of study programs are offered. See Programs of Study on the LTS website <http://lts.edu> for details:

- Ministerial Leadership Programs: B.Th., B.R.E., M.Div.
 - Advanced Ministerial Programs: M.Div., D.Min..
 - Lay and Special Ministry Leadership Programs: Diploma of Theological Studies (Dip.T.S) and Master of Art (Theology; MA).
 - Academic Theological Leadership Programs: S.T.M., M.Th., D.Th.
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- Student enrollment, Spring 2005: 313 students in the various day-time degree or diploma programs and 264 students in degree or certificate programs in the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program.
 - Graduates, Spring 2005: 37 graduates in the day-time programs and 28 in the evening TEE programs.

Special Student Activities

The Student Association organizes a number of student and community activities. Tree activities in the LTS deserve to be mentioned especially. They are (1) the Holy Week Retreat and Worship, which is an annual retreat for students and staff; (2) the Annual Music Worship (April 16th); and (3) the Mission Day (June 1st).

Faculty

Information may be found at the LTS website (<http://lts.edu>) about faculty (click 'Teaching Staff') and their publications (click 'Writings'). Three new professors

have joined the LTS during the last academic year. They are Dr. Göran N.G. Wiking from Sweden (Practical Theology and Comparative Religions), Dr. Gabriele Hoerschelmann, from Germany (Systematic Theology), Dr. Eric Au Kin Ming (Contextual Theology), Dr. Jane Tam (Practical Theology, Counseling), Dr. Matti Ijas returned from Finland (Church History) and Ms. Heather Helgeson, from U.S.A. (English)

Research

The LTS has three special research centres or institutes in operation: (1) Institute for Mission and Cultural Studies, (2) Institute for the Study of Luther in the Asia Context, (3) Tao Fung Spiritual Formation Center. Further information about the purposes and activities of these centres may be found at the LTS website (<http://lts.edu>) under the heading 'Research Centres' and writings by faculty and students under the heading 'Writings'.

Prayer Item

From November 2004 to November 2005 the LTS has a fund-raising project of HK \$900,000 for a Churches Leadership Development Fund for the Mekong Region. The LTS has launched this project for several reasons: (1) People in the region need support to share the Gospel in their lands; (2) the churches in the region are under political pressure and often persecuted; (3) the region lacks theological seminaries for training church workers; (4) the churches in the region have asked for LTS support.

(3) LUTHERAN INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION (LITE)

Historical Background

LITE was established in 1986 and is owned and operated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT). It is a member of the Asia Theological Association. For further information, see the LITE website <http://www.lite-edu.net>

Student Enrollment and Graduates 2005 Spring

- Enrollment, spring 2005: a total of 21 students in three study programs: 17 B.Th., 2 Dip. Th., and 2 Certificate of Church Ministry (CCM).
- Graduates, spring 2005: 6 B.Th., 2 Dip.Th., and 2 CCM graduates.

Special Student Activities

- Evangelism outreach. Every summer (April and May) students take two weeks doing evangelism together with local congregations. May 1-12, 2005 they went to North-East and Northern Thailand (doing visitation with the Hill Tribe people).
- Art workshop: Mine Art and Flower Arrangement Art. In these two workshops LITE gives opportunity to church members to participate.

Faculty

Three new members have joined the faculty: Mr. Pekka Hitunen and Miss Ritva Halmesma (both from Finland), and Miss Kanjana Narong (Thailand).

Research (Publications:)

- Series: The LITE Annual Book, published in Bangkok by LITE:
- 2002: *Holy Play: Aspects for the Liturgical Renewal in Asia*, Lilja Kinnunen-Riipinen (Ed.). (English and Thai version; translation: Sakunee Kriangchaiporn and Brian Wheeler).
- 2003: *Holy Bible: Aspects for the Old Testament Research*. Lilja Kinnunen-Riipinen (Ed.). (English and Thai version; translation: Sakunee Kriangchaiporn and Brian Wheeler).
- 2004: *Holy Deaconess: Aspects for the Diakonia Research in Asia*. Lilja Kinnunen-Riipinen (Ed.) (English and Thai version, forthcoming July 2005; translation: Sakunee Kriangchaiporn and Brian Wheeler)
- Lilja Kinnunen-Riipinen, *Drama and Dance in the Christian Church: 20 Centuries, 20 Classic Productions*. (English and Thai version; translation: Sakunee Kriangchaiporn, Duangkamon Lualai, Brian Wheeler). Bangkok: LITE, (2003) 2nd Edition 2004.

Prayer Item

LITE is going to build a new 4 floor building, at a cost of US\$142,500. The project has so far been supported by the Finish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), the Norwegian Mission society (NMS), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT) with total grants of US\$ 87.500.

The development project still needs another US\$ 55,000 to be fully financed.

(4) SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY (MHS)

Historical Background

MHS was established by the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) in 1843 and has since been owned and operated by the NMS. The institution and its study programs on bachelor, masters and doctoral level are recognized by the Department of Education and Research of the Norwegian Government. More information about the history and study programs may be found at the MHS website (<http://www.mhs.no>) which is operated in both Norwegian and English versions.

Student Enrollment and Graduates 2005 Spring

- Student Enrollment: A total of 285 students were enrolled in five programs. They include B.Th.: 102; M.Th. & M.Phil. in Theology: 48; Diploma in Practical Theology: 5; Bachelor of Religion and Intercultural Communication (BRIK): 122; and Ph.D. in Theology: 8.

- Graduates, Spring 2005: B.Th. 7; BRIK 6; M.Phil. 6, M.Th. 6; Dip. P.T. 5, altogether 30 graduates.

Special Student Activities

(1) Assoc. Prof. Ove Conrad Hanssen led a study group of students and pastors on an excursion to England in May. The purpose was to study how the Church of England engages in new ministries in order to meet and overcome a steadily decreasing church membership. (2) Profesor Vinoth Ramachandra (Sri Lanka) held the annual Karl Ludvig Reichelt memorial lecture at MHS (May 12) and led the research seminar the previous day. The theme of his lecture was, "The scandal of Jesus: Christ in a multireligious context".

Faculty

Information may be found at the MHS website (<http://www.mhs.no>). The following new faculty have recently been recruited: Prof. Torrey Seland (New Testament), Prof. Baard Maeland (Ethics and Philosophy of Religion), and Assoc. Prof. Knut Alfsvaag (Dogmatics).

Research

(1) MHS is engaged in the *Africa & Old Testament Program*. The MHS website (<http://www.mhs.no>) includes information on the Africa&OT Program News, Projects, Publications and other matters relating to research. (2) On this website is also found the *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* (BOTSA) in its online edition, dating back to the first issue in 1996. (3) Further, MHS is an active partner in the Norwegian *Centre for Medieval Studies* (CMS). CMS is a Norwegian Centre of Excellence (CoE) appointed by the Research Council of Norway. MHS professor Torstein Jørgensen is the project leader of "Religion between Unity and Variety" which is one of four major projects in CMS. In May the CMS also became a Nordic Centre of Excellence (NCoE). Details are found at the MHS website.

One recent publication by MHS faculty should be mentioned: Odd Magne Bakke, *When Children Became People. The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*. (Translated by Brian McNeill) Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005.

Prayer Item

For good integration of new students and faculty in the fall semester 2005.

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