



Contact

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Speakers and participants from around the world gathered at LCC International University in Klaipėda, Lithuania (February 29 – March 4) for a conference focused on "Living with Fragile Identities," exploring the complexities of identity in today's rapidly changing and often traumatic world. Speakers and workshop leaders with expertise in trauma and peacemaking from areas of conflict around the world led attendees in exploring their own identities, including stories of pain and victimhood, but also in understanding how identity contributes to conversations and to creating inclusive communities.



The focus was on the goal of peacemaking and the role of asking insightful questions and listening to the answers, both for oneself, and for others. Workshops highlighted the challenges and wisdom of Christian peacemakers and others across Europe as well as the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

On day one, Dr. Duncan Morrow, the plenary speaker visiting from Northern Ireland, set the tone with a thought-provoking address on the dynamics of identity. He emphasized that identity is a relationship and a whole-body experience. It always takes place in telling each other stories, and it is a human experience. The evening ended with a theater experience led by Raffi Feghali, Lebanese peacebuilder, and actor. He led participants in a discussion and solo performances around exploring their identities.

On day two, participants delved into perspectives from the Baltic States, followed by perspectives from Post-Yugoslavia. A peace vigil was held where participants engaged in a Taizé song, accompanied by six individuals sharing concerns and hopes for the future of their own country.



Story continues on page 3

INCHE NETWORK NEWS



Shirley Roels, Executive Director

INCHE Strategic Plan: Regional Priorities for the Years Ahead

The September 2023 issue of *Contact* included an overview of the INCHE strategic plan that will guide the network through 2026. In that article, we discussed network origins, current strengths and opportunities, ongoing challenges, and the core strategy of regionalization.

Building and supporting each of the five INCHE regions is essential. It is for, with and through our **regional leaders** that action occurs. No single strategy fits every region; so, INCHE must develop regional champions who can analyze how to strengthen Christian higher education in their contexts.

The INCHE Board of Directors expects that a regional champion will support at least two encounters per year, either in-person or online. INCHE cannot afford to provide institutional salary support from standard membership dues income; But the network may provide honoraria or consulting fees when warranted. The INCHE hub office will train regional champions, support the costs of materials and travel for their events, promote these encounters, and encourage the publication of articles that arise from them.

In the March and June 2024 issues of our newsletter, we now describe the strategies for each of our five global regions. This issue focuses on Africa and Asia-Oceania.

Africa

For INCHE Africa, we observe that the digital infrastructure for education and professional development is growing. This allows more professional learning options than were available five years ago. Digital channels can support short question and answer exchanges; presentations with dialogue; small group discussions; synchronous livestreaming, and asynchronous learning. New IT strategies allow for professional development that can reshape curricular content. The intention is to align curricula more closely with Biblical worldviews and connect theological ideas to education in applied fields of study. Topics of interest include economic life and structures; environmental challenges; and the ethics of development.

In addition to these opportunities and needs, on a practical level, INCHE expects to:

- Seek a young, enthusiastic faculty member to promote INCHE in Africa, share resources among members, guide universities to focus on their core Christian mission, and foster connections to current African scholarship.
- Produce a short video describing INCHE history, membership, and benefits.
- Create webinars on topics such as the integration of Christian faith into teaching and learning; faith and science; faith and economics
- Highlight leading institutions that have capacities as centers of influence while highlighting key departments and faculty leaders. These will provide models for other universities and colleges.
- Coach administrative professionals concerning the mission of Christian education and Christian approaches to educational leadership.

Asia-Oceania

For INCHE Asia-Oceania, digital access also can improve professional development and advisory services for institutional development. In regions such as Korea and South Asia, a curricular focus on educating students with values and practices to combat civic corruption would be valuable. INCHE should also work to enhance its membership among Australian Christian colleges and universities.

On a practical level, INCHE hopes to:

- Host a significant cross-regional conference in Asia-Oceania that benefits current members and attracts new ones across the region. (Note: This occurred when Handong Global University directed the June 2023 INCHE regional conference. Since then, INCHE has gained additional members in south Asia.)
- Use the INCHE partnership with the de Vries Institute of Calvin University to support Christian faculty development through asynchronous online modules in their Reflecting Faith series. Also explore the nature of Christian research and scholarship with faculty members in this region.
- Provide seminars, webinars, and other training programs for department chairs, deans, and provosts.
- Develop a cluster of senior Christian executives to support and challenge each other, particularly in how they engage non-Christian government entities effectively.
- Establish an advisory service of former presidents and vice-chancellors who know Asia and Oceania to share insights with current leaders.

INCHE invites your feedback and your aid regarding these priorities in Asia-Oceania and Africa. In the same way, the June newsletter issue will focus on the Americas and greater Europe.

INCHE NETWORK NEWS

Cover story, continued:

Day three commenced with insightful perspectives from speakers including Tricia Van Dyk on "The Self as Gift: Religion's Promise of Peace vs. Power" and María León-Olarte on the resiliency and healing actions of Women of Faith in Colombia through spiritual foundations. It also included conversations on how peace building revolves around pulling people out of violence. Participants also took excursions around the city of Klaipėda, and to historical sights of resistance, violence and harm in villages outside of the city. They also included a trip to the town of Šilutė, visiting a concentration camp to get a glimpse of Lithuania's history.



Day four transpired with challenges in the ways in which people work at peace and the complexity of the world they live in. A reminder was provided that peace making is about going into the hard spaces. Additionally, participants explored the idea that peace is about how new relationships come into being, and the naming of practical steps in creating and shaping opportunities to meet and encounter one another in a new way that is rooted in people and in hope.

The organizers hope that the insights, conversations, and connections ignited during the conference will continue to guide participants in forging a more compassionate and inclusive world.

Welcome to New Institutional Members



Nazareth College of Education for Women

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

The Nazareth School System started in 1976 as a nursery school. Today, the Nazareth School offers education to more than 7000 students. Opened in 2006, Nazareth College of Education is a secondary teacher training institution with the objective of training teachers to perform with commitment the noble profession of teaching. The college is affiliated with TamilNadu Teachers Education University and recognized by the National Commission for Teacher Education (NCTE).



NLA University

Bergen, Norway

NLA University College is an accredited private university college with campuses in Bergen, Oslo and Kristiansand, Norway. NLA has a Christian foundation of values, but students from all backgrounds are equally welcome. Based on a Christian understanding of nature, humanity, culture and society, NLA University College sees its purpose as promoting formation, empowering individuals for service both in and outside of the home, and contributing critically and constructively to meeting local, national and global challenges. NLA University College considers its most important tasks as those involving research, development, instruction, guidance and communication, and further seeks to facilitate a good professional, social and Christian environment for students and employees, where respect for the individual's world view is maintained.



INCHE ANNOUNCES 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION EVENTS

Save the dates in 2024 and 2025!

We hope to meet you in person at these and other local events around the world celebrating 50 years of God's faithfulness in Christian Higher Education.

October 2024: Latin America San Jose, Costa Rica — "New paradigms for persistent problems: Toward Christian higher education in 2030"

October 2024: North America Grand Rapids, MI, USA — "Integrated Education in a Reductionist Age"

April 2025: Europe and Global Biezenmortel, The Netherlands — More information in the coming months

July 2025: Africa More information in the coming months

INCHE NETWORK NEWS

Dr. Elijah Ayolabi Approved as New INCHE Board Member

In its December 2023 meeting, the INCHE Board approved Dr. Elijah Ayolabi, Vice-Chancellor of **Mountain Top University** (Nigeria) as a board nominee from our INCHE Africa region. Voters in that region affirmed his nomination in February.



Dr. Ayolabi is a specialist in environmental geophysics, as well as engineering and exploration geophysics. He has executed several environmental and exploration studies for reputable organizations such as Schlumberger. He is a member of Nigerian Mining and Geoscience Society (NMGS), Nigerian Association of Petroleum Exploration (NAPE) and Science Association of Nigeria. Dr. Ayolabi has trained over 100 postgraduate students successfully with over 90 articles in journals and referred conference proceedings, locally and internationally. He became the first Vice-Chancellor of Mountain Top University in 2015.

Recently, Dr. Ayolabi visited with Calvin University leaders in the United States to discuss the foundations of Christian universities. After joining INCHE, Mountain Top University participated in the INCHE grant project on Educating Redemptive Change Agents. Dr. Ayolabi supported his team's engagement; but he also offered his university as the November 2023 hosting site for the INCHE West Africa teams. During this gathering, he met several INCHE Africa leaders from other West African universities.

Shirley Hoogstra Retires from CCCU



Shirley Hoogstra retired as the president of the **Council for Christian Colleges & Universities** (CCCU) by December 31, 2024.

During her tenure, Hoogstra's unwavering devotion to the CCCU mission resulted in many legislative wins. Under Hoogstra's leadership the Council filed hundreds of letters and dozens of amicus curiae ("friend of the court") briefs in the appellate courts and the Supreme Court of the United States. She improved organizational finances and strengthened CCCU relationships with donors and foundations. Under Hoogstra's leadership the Council completed "Pursuing Excellence: 2023-2027," a new strategic plan. Membership grew during her

tenure and now proudly includes over 185 member institutions today in 19 countries. As a front-line leader, she shaped, defended and strengthened Christian higher education's place within the ecosystem of higher education in the United States.

Hoogstra has a long-standing career in Christian higher education. Prior to the CCCU, she served as the vice president for student life at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Before that, she was a litigator in a private practice in New Haven, Connecticut. Using her skills and bridge-building talents as an attorney and higher education professional prepared her for leadership on the national stage.

De Vries Institute Presents New Online Course

In May, The De Vries Institute for Global Faculty Development invites scholars from around the world to join an online course to explore the topic **Humanity in God's Image**.



Participants will analyze the biblical theme of humanity created in the image of God by studying selected texts from Scripture and the Christian tradition as well as interacting with contemporary theological explorations. In addition, they will encounter examples of how scholars in disciplines outside of theology have related the idea of the image of God to their work while developing ideas about how viewing humans as image-bearers might inform their own work in higher education.

To register, create an account at learn.calvin.edu then navigate to the Calvin Offerings list to find the course. The cost is \$100, but discounts are available in the registration process for those with financial need. Contact dvi@calvin.edu with questions.

INCHE Board of Directors to Meet

On May 21, 2024, The INCHE Board of Directors will gather online in the first of its two regular meetings for this calendar year. During the meeting, we will consider progress on the strategic plan, events during the 2024-2025 celebration of our 50th anniversary year, and INCHE budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. If you have questions or comments for the Board of Directors, you can send them directly to your regional board representatives. Each regional board member is described [here](#). If you do not have email addresses for your regional board members, please send your comments or questions to office@inche.one.

AFRICA REGION

Daystar University Hosts International Higher Education e-learning Technologies Conference

—Nairobi, Kenya

From February 21-23, **Daystar University** hosted the HiETec-2024 hybrid conference. Co-organized by with Amref International University ODeL directorates, the conference provided a platform for higher education stakeholders and experts to learn from cutting edge research presentations and case studies on the dynamic use of disruptive eLearning technologies. There was opportunity for networking in the industry and examining emerging and evidence-based best practices in delivery of quality virtual training in higher education.



Higher Education in developing countries is undergoing rapid transformation necessitated by generational shifts in learning behaviors, emerging virtual learning technologies and challenges posed by unpredictable pandemics among other factors. Higher education

is no longer confined to spaces between stone walls; knowledge resources are now ubiquitous and versatile. Thus, there is growing concern about how responsive and adaptive higher education ecosystems are to the opportunities being offered by disruptive eLearning technologies.

The conference examined:

The role of emerging disruptive education technologies in optimizing learning outcomes.

Stimulation of social learning through digital innovations in higher education.

Application of online pedagogy to impact on learners' behavior in distance education.

The role of strategic partnerships and collaborations in delivery of distance education.

Innovative disruptive technologies and pedagogies for special populations.

Edited from Daystar [press release](#)

INCHE Gratitude to Dr. Sam Afrane

—Kumasi, Ghana

INCHE is grateful to Dr. Samuel Kofi Afrane, the President of **Christian Service University College**, for his six years of service on the INCHE Board of Directors. He began his board leadership efforts in early 2018. Dr. Afrane's attention to INCHE was exceptionally valuable as the network shaped its strategic plan for 2022-2026. He made several astute observations in board meetings about essential features of a strategic plan, INCHE structures for decentralized leadership, and effective monitoring of the plan. In July and August 2022, he contributed substantially to online discussions about the future of INCHE on the Africa continent. Then In October 2022, he hosted Kenyan board member, Dr. Faith Nguru, in Accra, Ghana. Together, the two of them joined all INCHE board members for an online meeting of several hours to shape INCHE worldwide plans for the future. Then Dr. Afrane continued to aid INCHE in finalizing the plan that the Board approved in early 2023. His Christian faith, values, and loyalties have been valuable over these past six years; and INCHE invites his continuing contributions to our network in the future.



A Passing of the Torch at PAC

—Nairobi, Kenya

On February 23, 2024 **Pan Africa Christian University** welcomed their 4th Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dionysious Kihika Kiambi. Retiring Vice-Chancellor Prof. Margaret Muthwii, seen here passing the literal and figurative torch to her successor, held the post since 2014.



Dr. Kiambi holds a PhD in Biological Sciences from the University of Birmingham. He previously served as the Director of Research and Dean of Graduate School at PAC. He has accrued 34 years of experience in agricultural research and development in sub-Saharan Africa and has coordinate national, regional, and international programs and initiatives.



ASIA-OCEANIA REGION

Promoting Health Care as Prevention in Indonesia

Karawaci, Tangerang, Indonesia

This year, **Pelita Harapan University (UPH)** had the honor of hosting the National Leadership Summit (NLS) for the Center for Indonesian Medical Students' Activities (CIMSA) organization from 19-25 February 2024. This year, the NLS was attended by 300 CIMSA members from 33 universities, both public and private.

As part of a Town Hall meeting at the gathering, the Indonesian Minister of Health (Menkes),



Ir. Budi Gunadi Sadikin, outlined a more preventative model for healthcare, noting, "Health professionals do not treat sick people, but keep them healthy. The approach is to build public awareness to stay healthy through promotive and preventive efforts."

Budi Gunadi Sadikin revealed that before he served as Minister of Health, 80 percent of the budget at the Ministry of Health was used to treat sick people. To overcome this, the Ministry of Health has reformed the health sector through changes to the Health Law through the "Six Pillars of Health Transformation."

One of the main pillars of this change is Primary Care Transformation which includes improving promotional and preventive services, developing infrastructure, improving the quality of Human Resources (HR), as well as improving management in all primary services in Indonesia. In the transformation of primary services, Minister of Health Budi emphasized the importance of building understanding so that people stay healthy through approaches to maintaining and improving health (promotive), as well as preventing disease.

Pelita Harapan University (UPH) believes that as an educational institution, universities have a key role in creating the young generation to become future leaders, including in the health sector. The involvement of UPH students in CIMSA reflects the university's commitment to educating young people who have high integrity, are transformative, and have good character.

Edited from UPH [Press Release](#)

NICE Hosts Research Symposium

The **National Institute for Christian Education's** July 2024 Research Symposium aims to bring together Christian education scholars from around Australia and overseas to exchange scholarly research, insights and innovations, in order for our Christian education sector to flourish and grow.



The current education landscape is changing rapidly, presenting new complexities and challenges across education policy and practice, between generations and their changing social imaginaries, and across social and demographic divides. The 2024 Symposium, **Educating for Hope in this Cultural Moment**, will bring together scholars and educators who are committed to advancing research on Christian education. It will explore three research areas key to current educational challenges, each through the lens of culture and hope.

Community and Connection

How do current cultural challenges necessitate new and effective forms of communication and connection in education environments? How can classroom educators, leaders, or governance bodies respond to challenges in hopeful ways to complex and challenging issues?

Biblical Love, Justice and Peace

What is the role of Christian education in promoting justice, including the relationship between Christian education and the biblical imperative to practice being loving communities that reflect the diversity of the body of Christ, and are equitable and socially inclusive?

Whole-person Formation

What are key culturally-driven areas of formation in education? How have these been changing? In response to these, how can Christian education foster deep whole person formation that grounds the hope of all learners in Jesus? What role does hope play in a Christian philosophy of education?

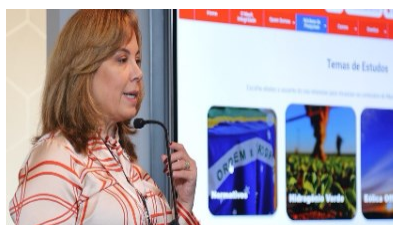
For more information and to register, visit [National Institute Symposium | ITEC24](#)

INCHE India Hosts Leadership Meeting

In May of 2024, Heads of School from across INCHE Institutions in India will meet at **Pope's College**, Sawerpuram to focus on the theological and biblical perspectives of leadership, ways to inspire and motivate students towards goal attainment, building trust, passion and values in students, using technology to encourage critical and creative thinking in students, and demonstrating empathy and purpose through effective communication, mentoring and emotional intelligence.

LATIN-AMERICA REGION

Mackenzie Center Leads Conversations on Sustainability and Innovation



On November 21, the **Mackenzie Center for Advanced Studies in Public Policy and Policy Integrity (CEMAPI)** known as Mackenzie Integridade, held a National Congress on 'Energy

Transition and Green Economy' to discuss public policies that promote low-carbon businesses and urgent attention to socio-environmental ecosystems, aimed at decarbonizing Brazil by 2050.

The president of Mackenzie Presbyterian University (UPM), Milton Flavio Moura said, "We are already a country with one of the best performance in renewable energy in the world. Energy represents one of Mackenzie's values, which is communion, because these projects unite us and bring us closer. Mackenzie wishes to contribute so that these climate issues are addressed in academia." Cácia Pimentel, the executive secretary of Mackenzie Integridade, announced the forthcoming Mackenzie Portal, which will share their findings with the public.

Prominent professionals from representative public and private organizations such as Petrobras, BNDES, Santander Brasil, Deloitte, Ambev and the Gestora de Fundos de Investimentos participated in two panels: 'Opportunities for the Energy Transition' and 'Green Economy, Energy Transition and Infrastructure.'

At the end of the congress Professor Francisco Rezek, the former Foreign Minister of Brazil and former Minister of the Court of The Hague, reflected in his speech, "The most scandalous polluter is the arms industry, which governments prefer to invest in. Therefore, we must not lose sight of the... importance of ethics. We should devote some of our energy to a more ecumenical outreach [sharing] our understanding of what needs to be done to avoid contaminating the world, of everything that could destroy it."

INCHE Leaders Share International Reach

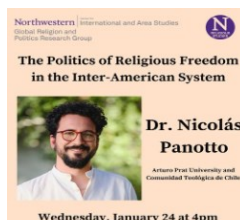
Dr. H. Fernando Bullon, regional coordinator of INCHE, participated in the consultation "Ecology in relation to Theology and other disciplines," organized by the Latin American Theological Fellowship [FTL]. In February he published an article on 'The Solidarity Economy' in the book *Rethinking the*

Church in the 21st Century, a result of a Latin American consultation organized by the Esdras Center of Guatemala; this book also has contributions from **Christopher Wright, Ruth Pa-dilla, Nicolas Panotto, Harold Segura**, among others.

Dr. David Mesquiati, board member from Brazil, gave a presentation on "The manipulation of evangelicals by far-right politicians in Brazil", at the XX Symposium of the Faculdade Unida de Vitória (UNIDA), in Vitória, Espírito Santo. He also gave lectures on "Pentecostalism and Everyday Life" at the Assemblies of God Convention Center, February 10-13, in Mantena, Minas Gerais. And he provided technical advice to both the Brazilian Ministry of Education and its agency CAPES, as well as to the Faculdade Teológica Sul Americana (FTSA) and its graduate program in Theology, March 5 to 6, in Londrina, Paraná.



Dr. Nicolás Panotto, board member, took a sabbatical at Northwestern University, Illinois. During his research period he presented papers on 'The Politics of Religious Freedom in the Inter-American System' and 'Between Faith, Activism and Academia: Latin American Experiences of Intersectionality.' He also participated in meetings at the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington DC, exploring how the Inter-American System could learn about and adopt the experience and mechanisms developed by [UN] Human Rights in matters of Religious Freedom. During this visit he was also able to hold two important meetings between the Special Rapporteur for Religious Freedom



at the United Nations, Nazila Gahena, with the OAS Secretary General, Luis Almagro, and the Secretary of Access to Rights and Equity, Maricarmen Plata.



INCHE IN LATIN AMERICA [RIESC]

October 2024

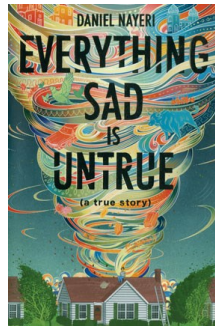
San José, Costa Rica

Preparations are being made to mark INCHE/RIESC's 25th anniversary. In the next *Contact* newsletter, details of specific topics to be discussed, and main speakers who will participate will be shared.

NORTH-AMERICA REGION

Wheaton College Unites Around Immigrant Experience

Wheaton, Illinois —Wheaton College chose Daniel Nayeri's young adult novel *Everything Sad is Untrue* as its Core Book for this year. Now in its seventh year, the Core Book program invites students, staff, faculty, alumni, prospective students, parents, donors, and the local community to engage in enduring questions together through interdisciplinary responses to literature and storytelling.



Nayeri's novel represents the first time a contemporary young adult (YA) work has been chosen as the Core Book. "Everything Sad Is Untrue is one of the most welcoming books I've seen or known," said Associate Professor of English Dr. Tiffany Kriner."

The book weaves Persian legend, family history, and spiritual autobiography into a work that emphasizes the life-changing power of storytelling in community with others. It addresses important and timely topics related to religious differences, human migration, refugee crises, and how stories of faith are shaped and narrated. These core questions present a key opportunity for interdisciplinary engagement among Wheaton's community. For example, Kriner and faculty in the Human Disaster Institute discussed ways to amplify the disaster relief conversation on campus, sparked by the book's spotlight on refugee crises. A local collaboration, titled the Community Stories Project, connected Wheaton students in the visual arts, literary studies, creative writing, history, Christian ministry, and theater with older adults and middle school students.

In October, Daniel Nayeri joined fellow authors Beth Moore and Esau McCaulley on campus for a discussion of faith through storytelling.



Adapted from [Wheaton College News](#).

The Public Reading of Scripture is a Spiritual Discipline at Calvin Seminary

Grand Rapids, Michigan— Each Tuesday, the Calvin Theological Seminary community gathers for Public Reading of Scripture (PRS) thanks to a \$20,000 grant from the



Grace & Mercy Foundation. PRS is grounded in 1 Timothy 4:13, which instructs, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching."

In addition to promoting community through regular listening to Scripture, PRS is an important spiritual discipline because it trains believers for godly living, helps combat false teaching, promotes regular study, and reinforces the importance of public Scripture reading as worship and renewal.

Through the regular Public Reading of Scripture, Calvin Seminary aims to form disciples of Jesus Christ who are trained for godly living and equipped to combat false teachings, who regularly study God's Word, and who recognize the importance of reading Scripture as an act of worship and spiritual growth.

Adapted from [The Banner magazine](#)



Institute for Christian Studies Examines Political Polarization

Toronto, Ontario —

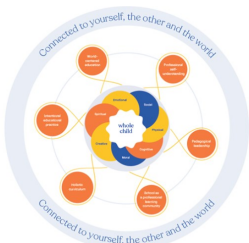
Senior Member Neal DeRoo is organizing the spring conference: "**Beyond Culture Wars: Fostering Solidarity in an Age of Polarization**" taking place April 18th-20th. This continues ICS's partnership with Martin Luther University College, and a new collaboration with Vision Ministries Canada. This conference will be an opportunity to reflect on the role Christianity can have in addressing the polarization in North America. The conference will feature keynote speakers James K.A. Smith and Kristin Kobes Du Mez, as well as several workshops and conversation sessions.

EUROPE REGION

Driestar Christian University's Teacher Training Shifts the Focus to the Whole Child

In 2020, four teacher training institutes in the Netherlands joined forces. Representatives of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, University of Applied Sciences Leiden, University of Applied Sciences Windesheim and **Driestar Christian University for Teacher Education** formed a learning community together to conduct research. Project leadership was taken up by the NIVOZ foundation, a Dutch think tank for educational practices. Together with a number of elementary schools, they wanted to draw lessons from an international movement called Whole Child Development (WCD) for Dutch education.

In opposition to the prevailing understanding of education "as the individual performance of the pupil. Usually in different subjects," the NIVOZ Foundation's preliminary study found that "this view denies the basic psychological need of every individual to do things primarily with and for trusted others. Education that is too individualized and compartmentalized ignores the fact that in the real world everything is interconnected." They arrived at a first description of WCD's countermovement as "a framework for a broad education of the whole child" that "values all dimensions of human development".



Years of exploratory and in-depth discussions followed, which developed a common attitude and language to train teachers for a broad, holistic education – and to actively give this a place in their various courses. The project has now entered its fourth and, for now, final year. The research has already led to the identification of a number of building blocks for holistic education.

Experience with this methodology has been built up at Driestar Christian University. Learning communities are active within two (multi-ethnic) Christian elementary schools focusing explicitly on the broad formation of future Christian teachers. Driestar is incorporating the insights from the entire project into its own curriculum, including a continuous, well-integrated learning pathway for (world) citizenship. A dissertation on the broad citizenship education of Christian teachers for the pluralistic society is currently being developed.

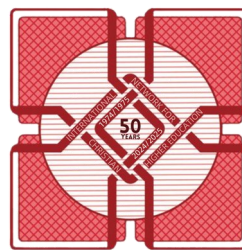
Excerpted from a paper by Peter van Olst

Partium Christian University Hosts INCHE Europe Leaders

On April 11, 2024, the leaders of **Partium Christian University** in Oradea, Romania will host senior leaders and international officers from INCHE Europe. The daylong meeting will include times for inspiration, reflection, and planning. At the beginning, leaders will welcome NLA University College in Norway, the newest member of INCHE Europe. Then everyone will hear from Dr. George Harinck, Rector of Theological University Utrecht. He will present thoughts on the "Threats for Democracy and the Challenges for Christian Higher Education in an Europe Perspective", Then Dr. Claire Ozanne, Vice Chancellor of Liverpool Hope University, will respond with her reflections on his remarks.



After a shared planning session, lunch, and tours of the university building, presidents and international officers will separate into distinct meetings to consider INCHE agendas that are specific to their university roles. International officers will discuss plans for a shared student programme in 2025 and other mutual opportunities. Presidents will consider how the INCHE 50th anniversary conference and the INCHE Europe conference will be conjoined on April 7-11, 2025, in Biezenmortel, the Netherlands. They will discuss



conference themes, potential speakers, concurrent sessions, and meeting logistics. This will be a full day of learning and planning for INCHE Europe and for the 50th anniversary of our global network.

INCHE Europe Conference 2025

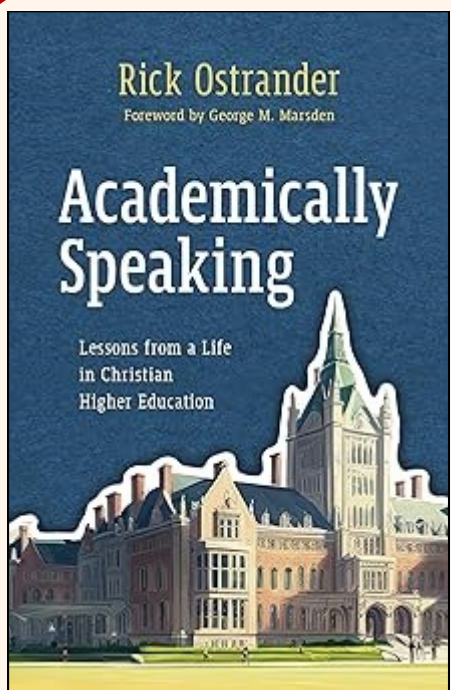
7-11 April 2025

Biezenmortel (The Netherlands)

Information about the theme, the speakers, and program as well as the registration form for this conference will be announced in the coming months.

In case of any question or remarks, please contact the INCHE Europe Coordinator: Ms. E.L. (Lydia) Bor (INCHE-Europe@inche.one)

SPECIAL BOOK FEATURE



Academically Speaking: Lessons from a Life in Christian Higher Education

By Rick Ostrander

Eerdmans, February 2024

A personal odyssey through the world of Christian higher education, narrated by a professional who has worked on both sides of the faculty-administrative divide.

What is the world of Christian higher education really like? Rick Ostrander's thirty-year career in Christian academia equips him to provide an insider's perspective on the field and its future.

Ostrander cut his teeth as an undergraduate at Moody Bible Institute and the University of Michigan before completing his PhD with George Marsden at Notre Dame. From there he worked as a professor and administrator at various Christian colleges, a vice president at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, and an independent academic consultant. Throughout, he witnessed the many dramatic transformations of Christian higher education. Ostrander traces an attempt to cultivate evangelical intellectualism in the '90s to the political and economic forces that shake Christian colleges today.

Through lively storytelling, Ostrander highlights the qualities and quirks of Christian higher education. His experiences offer readers insight into how Christian colleges can flourish in an age of uncertainty.

About the Author

Rick Ostrander serves as Executive Director of the Michigan Christian Study Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He previously served as vice president at the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities and in leadership positions at Westmont College and Cornerstone University. A graduate of Moody Bible Institute and the University of Michigan, Dr. Ostrander earned his PhD in history at the University of Notre Dame. He currently serves on the INCHE Board of Directors.

From the Introduction to *Academically Speaking*:

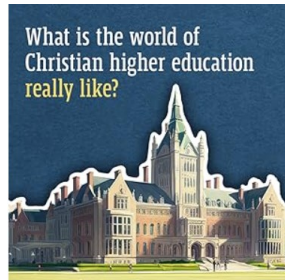
An autobiography about a life in academia isn't necessarily a page-turner, but this one might be more interesting than most, if for no other reason than its variety. My decades in higher education include a Bible college, a public university, a Catholic university, an emerging for-profit university, two evangelical universities, the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, an educational technology company, a Christian liberal arts college, and finally a Christian study center. My roles at these organizations have included that of student, professor, administrator, consultant, salesperson, and entrepreneur. Finally, my story has included successes, unexpected failures, and attempts to discern God's leading and trust in his goodness amid times of uncertainty.

In the process of telling my own story, this book also narrates a larger story—the efforts by American Christians to institutionalize their commitment to loving God with their minds.



SPECIAL BOOK FEATURE

Shirley Roels: Your book's opening describes your student years at Moody Bible Institute, an American Bible college. Historically, when and why did the Bible college movement arise in the United States? Are there similar roots for Bible colleges in other nations? What are the core strengths of Bible colleges and some of their challenges?



Rick Ostrander: The Bible college movement arose in the early 20th century. It was both a response to the growing secularism of mainstream higher education and an attempt to provide students with practical preparation for full-time Christian ministry. There were similar institutions created in the United Kingdom, since Bible colleges were influenced by the Keswick Holiness movement that impacted both Britain and the U.S. in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Admirably, Bible colleges provide a strong grounding in biblical content and an intense focus on spiritual and moral formation. What they don't always do as well, however, is expose students to rigorous thinking and study across a wide variety of subjects and disciplines.

SR: After your Bible college years, you transferred to the University of Michigan, a governmentally-funded university that is well known, nationally, for the scope of its excellent academic programs and its substantial research. You note this university as your place of "academic awakening." Yet you identify some important educational factors related to worldviews and frameworks that were underdeveloped. Can you provide a couple examples that illustrate the Christian factors that are missing or downplayed in a governmental university? Would you classify the state university from which you graduated as "completely secular"?

RO: I'll start with the second question: I would classify my alma mater, Michigan, and other state universities, as "pluralistic," not completely secular. When functioning well, they welcome a variety of perspectives, including religious ones, in order to provide true "viewpoint diversity," not just racial and ethnic diversity. Also, there are a number of religious ministry organizations that typically operate on such campuses. What governmental

universities don't provide, of course, is a Christian grounding for the learning process or the opportunity to consider Christian implications of a particular subject in the classroom setting. For example, I took a course entitled Human Evolution at Michigan, which began with the instructor asserting that one's spiritual beliefs and scientific conclusions operate in completely separate spheres. It was actually an excellent course and I learned a lot in it, but I had no resources at the time to help me consider how my Christian beliefs might impact the subject, or vice versa.

Another valuable feature that was lacking for me at Michigan was any sort of mentoring by Christian faculty, which is an important component of Christian universities. As a Christian student at Michigan, I had great classes, and also was involved in a local church, but had no Christian academic influence to help me to connect these separate worlds. If there was a Christian professor at Michigan, I had no way to find that individual.

SR: The key influences in your graduate education were a few professors who taught advanced courses and supervised your dissertation. Your doctoral work occurred at the University of Notre Dame, one of the best-known Catholic universities in the United States. Yet it doesn't seem that the mission and culture of the university was a strong shaping influence. Is it simply the nature of post-graduate education that the university itself is somewhat less influential while select advisers/teachers/mentors are the core source of shaping doctoral students? From your experience as a Fulbright scholar in Europe, did you observe that senior professors are similarly influential on European graduate students while the universities themselves are not?

RO: In the U.S. system, graduate education is essentially a trade school for professors: The purpose isn't character formation but rather training scholars in their particular disciplines and giving them the skills needed to get a job in academia. I remember my first lunch at our department chair's house with other new graduate students. "From this day on," the chair



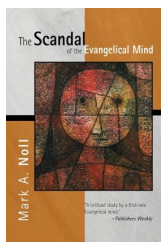
SPECIAL BOOK FEATURE

informed us, "you are competing with students at Harvard, Cornell, and the University of Michigan for jobs in academia, so you'd better start building your research portfolio soon." I was fortunate in that at Notre Dame I was mentored by an amazing Christian scholar, George Marsden, who modeled to me what it means to love God with both heart and mind. But that was just George's own doing, not any intentional goal the institution as a whole.

I observed a similar phenomenon as a Fulbright scholar teaching at a German university. Professors sought to mentor their graduate students in the craft of academia, but the university as a whole seemed less relevant to the formation process.

SR: Subsequently, your book describes your teaching years at a U.S. Christian fundamentalist institution of higher education that was gradually opening up to a deeper understanding of Christian higher education. In what ways did the university at which you spent twelve years change the approach to its educational mission and practices? Why did you regard such changes as a maturation in the university's efforts? What factors encouraged these changes to occur?

RO: I think that in general, the university began to pay more attention to rigorous academic inquiry across a range of disciplines, and most importantly, began to value the liberal arts more highly, despite its heritage as a vocational institution. Two important ways that we did this were by revising the general education curriculum, and by taking advantage of the buyers' market in U.S. academia to hire several first-rate Christian professors who were coming out of graduate school at the time.



This was a maturation of the institution in that historic Christianity has valued learning and has created strong academic institutions that produce quality scholarship. Many evangelical universities in the late 20th century were learning to reclaim that heritage. There are many factors that I could point to, but to just highlight a couple: By the 1980s and 1990s, American evangelicalism had more institutional and financial resources to devote to developing quality higher education. Second, one can't underestimate the influence of Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, which was

published in 1994 and inspired a new generation of Christian academicians.

SR: From your experience as a university's chief academic officer, you have several observations about the nature of academic leadership in a faith-based university. What did you regard as distinctively Christian about the way in which you conducted yourself in this role?

RO: It's difficult to say what might be distinctively Christian about my actions as a provost, but here are a few possibilities: First, I always sought to value each person in the institution as an individual, to visit professors regularly in their offices, to listen well, and to apologize when I messed up. Second, I worked hard but also sought to protect Sundays as a day of rest and renewal, and I encouraged that practice among my faculty and staff. Third, I saw my role as stewarding a sacred resource that God had entrusted to me and thus always sought to make decisions that were in the best interests of the university, not necessarily myself. I doubt that I did so perfectly in every situation, but that was my goal.



SR: Now you have become the first Executive Director of the Michigan Christian Study Center. This Center is associated with the University of Michigan but it is not an institutional part of the university. What is the role of such a study center? Beyond the United States, are there other nations where such Christian study centers have emerged in association with governmentally-funded universities?

RO: A Christian Study Center seeks to foster a Christian learning community within a pluralistic university, for the good not only of Christians at the institution, but also to benefit the broader institution. As our mission at the Michigan Christian Study Center states, we "enrich the University community by providing a place of authentic community that connects Christian faith and academic life." This is one example of Christians practicing a "faithful presence" in modern society that was encouraged by sociologist James Davison Hunter in his book, *To Change the World*. I suspect that there are organizations like this in other countries, but I haven't had an opportunity yet to seek them out. I would love to see an international network of Christian Study Centers in the future, perhaps under the auspices of INCHE.

SPECIAL BOOK FEATURE

SR: Your book includes the description of several perplexing times when you felt called to contribute to Christian higher education but were unemployed. Yours has not been a straight, well-defined career path. What advice about calling and vocation do you have for younger Christian academics who seek a future in Christian teaching, scholarship, or administration?

RO: Actually, fortunately there was never a time in which I was unemployed, but there times when I had to be more intentional and aggressive about seeking out work for myself, and to discern what new role God would have me occupy. And you're certainly correct that I have not had a straight career path. My general advice is that planning is overrated. We don't know the future. I have some good friends for whom God has called them to an entire career at a single institution and in a single role, and that's great. For others, such as myself, God leads us to different pastures at different times. The trick is to be fully present and engaged in your current role, but also to hold it loosely enough that God can move you to something else if he so chooses.

SR: In what ways could American Christian higher education be strengthened because it is actively engaged with Christian universities and colleges from other continents?



RO: That's a great question that I will try to answer briefly in three ways. First, Christian colleges and universities outside the U.S. often have more experience than American Christians with operating in a truly pluralistic—and perhaps even hostile—setting. We Americans can learn from others how to engage positively and prophetically with a non-Christian culture, both in academia and beyond.

Second, in many cases, Christian colleges and universities in other continents have learned to operate with a scarcity of resources which has forced them to focus on the essential tasks of Christian education—forming students and producing quality scholarship—rather than getting bogged down in some of the peripheral activi-

ties that U.S. institutions can sometimes become preoccupied with.

Finally, I think that currently many U.S. institutions are missing an opportunity, through interaction with universities in other continents, to provide valuable cross-cultural experiences to their students. Developing partnerships with non-U.S. universities that enable students to spend a semester studying at a Christian university in a different culture would greatly benefit both the students and the institution hosting those students. Perhaps this is something that INCHE could facilitate with its members!



For Further Reading



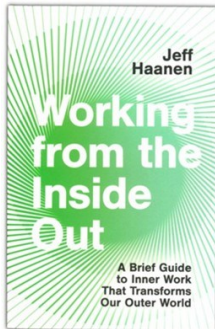
Did you know that INCHE members have full online access to the *Christian Higher Education* journal?

Christian Higher Education is a peer-reviewed archival journal that features articles on developments being created and tested by those engaged in the study and practice of Christian higher education. This

journal addresses issues in institutional mission, finance, enrollment management, innovative teaching methods, higher education administration, program assessment, faculty development, curriculum development, and student services. Each issue offers a balance of essays on current research as well as programs and methods at the cutting edge of progress.

To access the journal *Christian Higher Education*, go to the [INCHE website](#) under the Resources tab. Select "member resources." Then use the INCHE login and password provided to your university or college for access to news and resources. The login is: inche@gmail.com. The password is INCHEnewsnow. After clicking "resources" on the navigation bar, select the journals tab. Click the link for *Christian Higher Education* at the bottom. This will open descriptions of current and past journal issues and display the table of contents for the journal issue selected. You can conduct keyword searches, read article abstracts, and download full journal articles.

RESOURCES & BOOKS



Working from the Inside Out: A Brief Guide to Inner Work That Transforms Our Outer World

By: Jeffrey Haanen

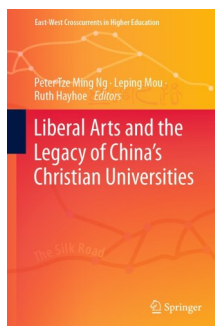
INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2023

Many today are experiencing social isolation, deep anxieties about the future, and various difficulties in the workplace. For too many of us, work seems tedious, painful, or meaningless. And

we don't know what to do about it.

Working from the Inside Out pulls back the veil on the deep emotional and vocational challenges faced by the majority of workers and shows how work can become a way to love God, serve our neighbors, and demonstrate the gospel to the world. Bringing together emotional, relational, vocational, intellectual, and civic health through the seamless thread of vocation, Jeff Haanen offers a way out of the disintegration of our culture and toward a reintegrated life lived in response to God's voice.

The inner work of transformation leads to external transformation of our relationships and our work, and that good work influences our cities and the culture around us. Living from the inside out can change our work and heal our world.



Liberal Arts and the Legacy of China's Christian Universities

Edited By: Peter Tze Ming Ng, Leping Mou, Ruth Hayhoe

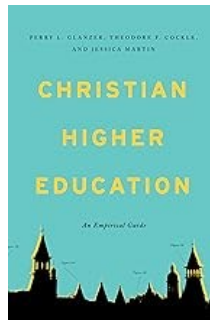
SPRINGER 1st ed. 2023 edition

This book brings together English translations of thirteen research papers published in recent years by Chinese historians, sociologists, and educators. These papers investigate various dimensions of

the legacy of China's historic Christian universities which continue to inspire higher education reform in China even in the twenty-first century.

This book focuses on Christian universities, which fostered a particularly notable liberal arts education in the Chinese context. Besides embracing some ideals in common with liberal arts education developed in the West, their liberal arts curriculum had an emphasis on readings in the classics, history, philosophy, religion, ethics, and literature which conveyed traditional Chinese values. The Christian universities also shared a strong commitment to moral formation, community service, and global citizenship education. This book emphasizes liberal arts education that focused on the whole

person, where academic knowledge, skills, and character were equally valued. The book presents distinctive characteristics of the study of Christian higher education in China and the interplay between globalization and localization.



Christian Higher Education: An Empirical Guide

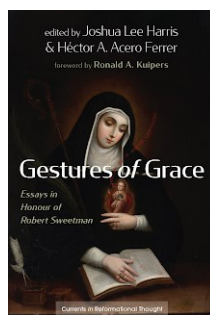
By Perry L. Glanzer, Theodore F. Cockle, Jessica Martin

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2023

The Christian higher education landscape confuses many people. Future students, parents, staff, and even faculty often do not understand the important subtleties and nuances. They need a guide that empirically

explores the ways Christian universities operationalize their Christian identity. This book will guide them through the field of Christian higher education and introduce our Operationalizing Christian Identity Guide (OCIG), which identifies the major ways Christian colleges and universities use their Christian identity to make mission, marketing, membership, curriculum, cocurricular, and other decisions (an online spreadsheet of OCIG scores for all the Christian colleges and universities in North America updated in real-time will be available to readers). These markers are identifiable by anyone, no matter their religious or nonreligious background.

The OCIG is then employed to provide readers a tour of Protestant, historically Black, Catholic, evangelical/multidenominational, and Eastern Orthodox institutions in the United States and Canada. Parents, students, staff, and faculty will be equipped to engage Christian higher education with a clearer understanding of these key elements and their importance to the mission and purposes of individual institutions and Christian higher education at large.



Gestures of Grace: Essays in Honour of Robert Sweetman

Edited by: Joshua Harris and Héctor Acero Ferrer

WIPF & STOCK, 2024

Bob Sweetman has been a dedicated professor at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto for several decades. This is the latest volume in the [Currents in Reformational Thought](#) book series supported through the

Center for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics. The essays included honor Dr. Sweetman's legacy.

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

RESOURCES & BOOKS

NEW JOURNAL:



International Journal of Faith & Management

IJFM is an annual peer-reviewed research journal to produce quality literature exploring the intersection of management and theology, incorporating insights from diverse disciplines such as psychology, economics, and technology.

The Journal focuses on framing new models and constructs to be implemented in the workplace, for its flourishing (shalom). It gives a platform for academicians, researchers, and practitioners to publish their research articles investigating management solutions based on Christian principles.

This multi-disciplinary academic journal will publish empirical and analytical research works, review articles, case studies, and innovative concept papers.

The papers will cover topics including but not limited to, governance, accountability, leadership, marketing, finance, human resources, entrepreneurship, organizational behaviour, resource mobilisation, legal compliance, ethics, decision-making and corporate social responsibility. For more information and to read the call for papers, go to: ijfm.cimcourses.in/index.php/ijfm

PODCASTS:

Saturdays at Seven:

<https://christianscholars.com/saturdays-at-seven-podcast/>



A who's who of Catholic and Protestant thinkers in Christian higher education across and beyond the United States. Hosted by Todd C. Ream, Honors Professor of Humanities and Executive Director of Faculty Research and Scholarship at Indiana Wesleyan University, Senior Fel-

low for Public Engagement for the CCCU, Senior Fellow for Programming for the Lumen Research Institute, and Publisher for *Christian Scholar's Review*.

Check out offerings from:

[Alistair McGrath](#) (Univ. of Oxford),

[Dennis Holsneider](#) (Catholic)

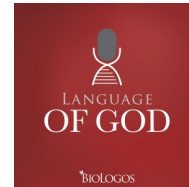
[Mark Noll](#), [George Marsden](#), [Russell D. Moore](#) (U.S. Evangelical Protestant)

[Willie Jennings](#) (Yale University)

Biologos: The Gift of Food

<https://biologos.org/the-gift-of-food>

[Biologos](#) podcasts share stories of people who have found a



better way of understanding the harmony between science and Christian faith. This five-part series focuses on food as a "great connector. It connects us to the ground and the soil that produces food, to the animals and plants that become food, to the people that grow and cook the food, and to the people who sit around the table with us. Food also connects us to God, the giver of all good gifts. In this series we explore what it means to think about food as a gift. We look at where food shows up in the bible, the science of taste, the ethics of eating animals, and the fellowship that food can bring about."

VIDEOS:



The Institute of Faith and Learning of Baylor University:

9 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKpW2Fa4tf0>

The Institute of Faith and Learning (IFL), an INCHE member, celebrated its 25th anniversary in October 2023. In

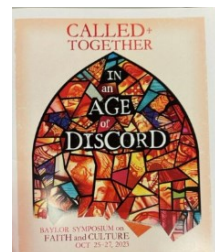


this short video they describe why they created an institute to support faculty, staff, and student development related to the university's Christian mission. The video illustrates why and how an institute can contribute to historic, current, and future embodiment of its mission.

Christian Higher Education as Communal Means of Grace: 55 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMUlnvUzi1Q&t=13s>

Three panelists consider how Christian higher education can overcome difference and discord to become a means of Christian grace within a Christian university community. Following an introduction by Joe Creech, Director of the Lilly Network for Church-Related Colleges and Universities, the panelist reflect on this theme. Panelists include Alison Noble, Interim Provost, Messiah University; Shirley Mullen, President Emeritus, Houghton University; Amos Yong, Professor of Theology and Missions, School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary. This panel was presented on October 25, 2023, at the Baylor University Symposium titled "Called Together in an Age of Discord."



Contact

Contact is the official newsletter of the International Network of Christian Higher Education (INCHE). It is published quarterly as a way of informing its members about news from across the many world regions in which INCHE operates. If you have any news items you would like to share with INCHE's members worldwide, please contact INCHE at:

Email: office@inche.one

Website: www.inche.one

Tel: +1-616-526-7906

3201 Burton Street SE,
Grand Rapids, MI 49546, USA



ABOUT INCHE

INCHE is a network 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 where and who we serve).

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



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

Members may email articles to office@inche.one. We suggest articles contain 400 words or less.