

prayer alert

SUMMER 2021-2022

WHO'S WHO?

KEY PEOPLE IN LOCAL ONLINE: A GLOBAL STRATEGY



INSIGHTS FROM

AFRICA

LATIN
AMERICA

ASIA

AUSTRALIA



INTRODUCING JOSHUA GEORGE

INTERNATIONAL GUEST SPEAKER MARCH/APRIL 2022

Joshua George is a husband, father, minister, and teacher. Supported by OCA, he completed his MDiv and MTh at South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) in 2019. He and his family have planted a thriving church in India and Joshua also teaches at SAIACS.

As an outstanding candidate, he has now received an OCA Faculty Study Grant to undertake doctoral work researching how urban educated young people in India respond to preaching. He is currently completing his PhD through Malyon College in Queensland*, whilst continuing to teach at SAIACS.

**Joshua will be visiting Australia and speaking with OCA supporters from
25TH MARCH – 10TH APRIL 2022**

You will enjoy his insider's perspective on what it's like to be an OCA faculty study grant recipient and how important theological education is for the rapidly growing church in India.

Stay tuned for dates that Joshua will meet with small groups in your area.

**Although it is usually OCA's preference for grant recipients to study within their own country, we occasionally support faculty members to complete their doctoral studies through online or modular education with international theological colleges.*

1ST – 5TH DECEMBER 2021

WE GIVE THANKS

FINANCIAL UPDATE – CALENDAR YEAR, 3RD QUARTER

After the elevated giving of June each year, our third quarter for the calendar year is generally a low-income period. This year, of course, it has been pleasantly distorted by receiving a donation of \$1.5mil for Local Online: A Global Strategy. These funds are for costs through to mid-2022 and represent the first of three donations.

On the basis of this donation, we have adjusted our budget up for the calendar year to \$3.3 mil but expect to exceed that as well. Our costs are tracking slightly below budget.

PLEASE PRAY

Lord, we thank you for all those who support OCA's projects prayerfully and financially. We praise you for the joy it is to give to your work and see lives changed in the name of Jesus. Please use all of OCA's programs to expand your kingdom and train thousands of workers for the harvest. Amen.

WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS & COMMENTS!

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Overseas Council Australia is not required to hold an authority to fundraise in Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory or the Northern Territory.

COVER: Rev Daniel Ciin Suan Piang, Faculty member at Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LOCAL ONLINE: A GLOBAL STRATEGY

This edition of Prayer Alert focuses on our new Local Online: A Global Strategy. It picks up where the emergency assistance that OCA contributed last year to our partner Bible colleges 'left off'.

That 2020/21 strategy was called 'Shoulder-to-Shoulder' and it imagined not just the emergency, but the possibility that a new day may dawn in theological education. Our guess has come to fruition. There is now a huge uptake in online education around the world and a new opportunity to train even more people for Christian ministry. The categories of support with Shoulder-to-Shoulder map neatly onto the new Strategy, but the new format expands, extends and in some ways completes the earlier model.

Local Online has some key characteristics which are in line with our consistent ministry goals. We want to avoid the dominance of Western ways of operating and Western content. You will get a real feel for this and other concepts as you read and pray through this 'Who's who?' edition.

The global launch of the strategy was held in late October, and the video continues to be viewed around the world by supporters and leaders of our partner Bible colleges. If you haven't seen it yet, it is still available on our website front page. It tells the story of dozens of leaders cooperating and the potential of thousands of faculty members upskilled. Hundreds of thousands of future pastors and church planters will be blessed through the strategy.

I hope you enjoy this edition and rejoice in God and pray for his servants as they work with Local Online.



03 Stuart recording the Local Online launch video.



CMA STANDARDS COUNCIL ACCREDITATION

OCA is, by government requirement, accredited by the Australian Charity and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).

In addition, we have also undertaken to be accredited by the Christian Management Australia Standards Council which has a requirement for a higher level of diligence and, of course, a Christian value system expressed through its standards.

After many months of OCA staff and Board working to document the qualities that demonstrate we are a competent organisation, we were delighted to be accepted and announced at the recent CMA conference as one of the newest members of a small group of organisations (less than 25 so far).

As would be hoped, the process of reaching this award has clarified and lifted our way of operating in many areas.

This accreditation can assure our supporters that we are well governed, diligent in our processes, and complete in our management activities. We are confident this will help us serve our vision to an even greater degree.

Rev Dr Stuart Brooking, Executive Director

PLEASE PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank you that the Shoulder-to-Shoulder strategy has expanded to become Local Online: A Global Strategy. Please use the strategy to upskill thousands of faculty members and bless hundreds of thousands of future pastors and church planters in the developing world. Thank you for the hard work of OCA's staff and board to be accredited by the CMA Standards Council. May OCA's good governance and diligent processes bring glory to your name and confidence to all supporters.

Amen.

BACKGROUND BRIEFING – LOCAL ONLINE: A REALLY GLOBAL STRATEGY!

Rev Dr Stuart Brooking, Executive Director of Overseas Council Australia

Cast your mind back to early 2020.

I left Australia in February relatively unconcerned. As I travelled to Cairo, Lebanon, and the UK and we moved into March things had changed. I could feel the growing edginess of airports and the growing uncertainty. The week after I returned the lockdowns were imposed and the Australian stock market tanked.

I had often said to the OCA Board that the best predictor of OCA income was the strength of the ASX, so I did some quick revision of our numbers and contacted numerous key donors. After a few days I knew we could turn our attention away from looking inward at the organisation and reassuring staff to focus all our energies on our partner colleges.

We made some guesses about what would be needed and devised the Shoulder-to-Shoulder Strategy. In some form or other, the others in the OC Network did the same and we cooperated around raising over USD 1mil within a few months to support our partners.

Shoulder-to-Shoulder was an emergency setting. We suspected new things would develop if the pain of the first and second waves could be ridden through at a personal and organisational level.

'Local Online: A Global Strategy' was born out of the realisation by hundreds of college leaders and faculty members that online education was now

possible. The lockdowns accelerated by years, or even decades, the uptake of technology for training future Christian leaders.

A number of us in the OC Network floated ideas. We were all seeing the same needs and many of the same opportunities. OCA developed a strategy in the context of a donor possibly making a large contribution. This led to a \$4.8 mil pledge over three years. The OC Network members wanted to raise more from their regions as well, and so we constructed two plans; a \$6 mil conception and a \$10 mil conception of the strategy. We can do well with \$5-6 mil but we are working towards the higher number.

One beautiful feature of the strategy has been the initial phase where the OCA Local Online team (Dr David Turnbull, Linda Peterson and myself) have interacted with dozens of 'leaders of leaders' in each region of the developing world. Everyone is on board. In fact, everyone could immediately articulate why they had been wanting exactly the elements of this strategy for the good of their country or region.

Cast your mind forward, to say, 2025.

Local Online will have trained thousands of Bible college faculty to use online education well. Hundreds of thousands of students will have had a positive experience of learning. Tens of thousands of new students will be able to study God's word and ministry to equip them for the work God has called them to. Each locality, each country, each region of the developing world will be enriched.

The crisis has created the opportunity for a new global expansion in training leaders for the church and for mission.



PLEASE PRAY

How good you are Lord to bring good things even from bad situations. We thank you for the new strategy and the potential to improve and increase the training of Christian leaders in every region of the developing world. Please provide the extra funds so even more can be done through the Strategy. Amen.

“ICETE Online is an exciting new ministry which will come alongside colleges worldwide to further strengthen their courses through outstanding teaching materials from experts within Majority World contexts.”

DR MICHAEL A. ORTIZ

International Director of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE).

“When I heard about Local Online, it was like a breath of fresh air. There’s a desire (from the colleges) to move forward, but how do you do it? Local Online is now providing that way forward ... it is very positive in terms of an initiative to assist seminaries in Asia”.

DR JOANNA FELICIANO-SOBERANO

Regional Director for Southeast Asia, Overseas Council.

“For the tens of thousands of church pastors that are out there in the Majority World slugging it out – I just love how this program not only strengthens existing schools in their formal programs, but also expands their reach into the (high percentage) of pastors that will never sit in the classroom and get a degree.”

PETER DENHAAN

President of reSource Leadership International, Canada.

“What I like about Local Online is the possibility of bringing to the table school leaders and faculty members to listen to each other; sharing and exchanging ideas... this is a great opportunity to help them to enrich each other during this process.”

PS JOSUE FERNANDEZ

OC Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

PLEASE PRAY

Almighty God, we submit all our plans to you. We pray: 1 Chronicles 29:11-13 (NIV)

“Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.” Amen.

WHO’S WHO IN LOCAL ONLINE: A GLOBAL STRATEGY?

Rev Dr Stuart Brooking, Executive Director of Overseas Council Australia

In this edition you’ll be introduced to some of the key organisations and people involved in Local Online: A Global Strategy. This is a quick guide:

1. Funding by OCA and OC Network affiliates.

2. International staff provided by:

- a. OCA** – Nancy Njagi, Dr Pauline Golder, Drs Dick and Caroline Seed, Diane Hockridge, and more appointments to be announced next year.
- b. OC USA** – Dr Paul Clark, Dr Ashish Crispal and 9 Regional Directors: Ps Josue Fernandez, Dr Joanna Feliciano-Soberano, Dr Jaison Thomas, Dr Magdi Gendi, Dr Mardochee Nadoumgar, Dr John Jusu, Taras Dyatlik, two un-advertised Regional Directors and several other consultants.
- c. OC Europe** – Dr Verena Schaforth
- d. ICETE** – Dr Marvin Oxenham

3. Domestic Staff in the OCA office:

- a. Dr David Turnbull** – Local Online Project Director
- b. Linda Peterson** – Local Online Project Manager

4. Key organisations other than the OC Network:

- a. ICETE** (International Commission for Evangelical Theological Education which is part of the World Evangelical Alliance). They host ICETE Academy which Local Online will boost for training faculty in online education. Local Online will also work to create ICETE Online, which will be a repository of video and other material that faculty can integrate into their online courses.
- b. Horizon Education Network** – experts in online education to train faculty in the developing world.
- c. Theological Book Network** – experts in book sourcing including an online library.
- d. Relay Trust** – innovating new IT for mobile phone use in low/no connection environments to cater for the least IT resourced regions.

PLEASE PRAY

We praise you Lord of all, that you have brought so many Christian organisations and leaders together in the service of the vision of Local Online. Help them to deepen their cooperation so that hundreds of thousands of pastors and church planters are well trained year after year through new online capabilities. Amen.

See overleaf for more information on key organisations.

KEY ORGANISATIONAL COLLABORATORS FOR LOCAL ONLINE: A GLOBAL STRATEGY

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION (ICETE)

icete.academy

PURPOSE

Global peak body, sponsored by eight regional associations of theological schools. ICETE enables international interaction and collaboration for the enhancement of evangelical theological education worldwide.

KEY MINISTRIES

ICETE ACADEMY – a global educational partnership providing certified professional training for theological educators.
ICETE ONLINE – to be developed as a repository for content that theological educators can use for their online courses.

KEY STAFF

International Director – Dr Michael Ortiz
ICETE Academy Director – Dr Marvin Oxenham

OVERSEAS COUNCIL USA, A MINISTRY OF UNITED WORLD MISSION uwm.org/overseas

PURPOSE

Equips Christian leaders by partnering with vital seminaries worldwide to advance God's kingdom.

KEY STAFF

Scott Cunningham – Interim President and CEO, Dr Paul Clark – Educational Consultant (see page 15)
Nine Regional Directors, including Dr Joanna Feliciano-Soberano (see page 13),
Dr Mardochee Nadoumngar (see Pauline's article on page 23), Ps Josue Fernandez (see page 21).

THEOLOGICAL BOOK NETWORK theologicalbooknetwork.org

PURPOSE

The Theological Book Network strengthens the Majority World church by supporting Christian educational institutions with theological resources.

KEY MINISTRIES

eTBN provides seminary libraries in the Majority World with access to over 250 valuable e-books for 10 years through the JSTOR platform. etbn.global

KEY STAFF

Justin Holford - Executive Director and Wayne Bornholdt - Director of Acquisitions

OVERSEAS COUNCIL AUSTRALIA overseascouncil.com.au

PURPOSE

Overseas Council Australia seeks to support emerging leaders for the church in the Majority World.

KEY STAFF

Executive Director – Rev Dr Stuart Brooking
International Program Director for Local Online: A Global Strategy – Dr David Turnbull
Project Manager of Local Online: A Global Strategy – Linda Peterson
Educational Consultant – Diane Hockridge
OCA Consultants:
Nancy Njagi – based in Kenya for the Africa Mile Deep Strategy (see page 19)
Pauline Golder – responsible for Francophone Africa (see page 23)
Drs Dick and Caroline Seed – based in South Africa. Directors of Theological Education Development Services (TEDS) Africa.

HORIZON EDUCATION NETWORK horizoneducationnetwork.org

PURPOSE

Horizon Education Network strives to develop sustainable and culturally appropriate global centres for theological education that create contagious learning environments where students, faculty, and administrators are continually challenged to grow in their faith through the transforming power of the gospel.

KEY STAFF

Allan Cuthbert – President

THE RELAY TRUST relaytrust.org

PURPOSE

A Christian training ministry equipping pastors for the church using transformative and practically applicable learning, which will empower the pastors to serve nobly, wisely, and skilfully in their calling.

KEY MINISTRIES

The WELL – a set of technologies for the delivery, distribution, and customisation of training of grassroots Christian leaders whose access to quality training is limited by remoteness, low-literacy, or poverty.

KEY STAFF

Alex Bjergbaek Klausen – Director of Administration
Mette Bjergbaek Klausen – Director of Content

DR DAVID TURNBULL



Program Director for 'Local Online: A Global Strategy', Overseas Council Australia

What a joy it has been to connect with significant theological education institutions and key global leaders during the first four months of my new role with Overseas Council Australia (OCA).

Our goal is to partner with Bible colleges in the developing world as they strive for best practice in online learning appropriate for their context. This is critical for training new pastors and church planters, especially as they seek to reach their communities with the gospel in the post-pandemic era.

The focus of my role involves liaising with leaders and teams, resourcing them financially and administratively, ensuring key quality and quantity performance indicators are achieved and facilitating healthy communication. Linda Peterson provides vital administrative support as OCA's Program Manager for Local Online.

As you read the articles in this edition, you'll gain a sense of the diversity of responses to differing needs in differing regions, whilst also noticing the similar experiences that leaders have faced over the last 18 months. Their stories provide a vision of the global church united in Christ through innovative, sustainable, and creative responses to the demands and challenges of online education.

Doing the groundwork to launch this global strategy has allowed me to collaborate with some truly inspiring leaders. The people I have met are authentic, relational servants of God with a deep passion for contextual theological education in their region. They strive to equip leaders for the church and Christian mission using all available mediums, including digital options. Their advocacy will produce

valuable outcomes and allow the regional flavour to emerge within the global church.

These leaders are prepared to address the changes they face in theological education where traditions associated with face-to-face education are under threat. Their spirit of grace and humility leads them to seize opportunities through collaboration, adaptability, flexibility, and partnership. I am confident that they will succeed in developing local, contextual and relevant online education programs which will benefit students and partner churches.

From principals of colleges to Regional Directors in the OC Network, each leader has been responsive to intercultural engagement with those of us from a Western context as we seek to facilitate a listening, accepting environment for different voices to flourish.

My global colleagues in this project are strategic thinkers drawing on God's wisdom to make significant decisions when resources are limited and where the demands outweigh them. It is humbling to partner with them and to see where God will lead us.

I praise God that in this role I can utilise my passion for the global church, online education, and intercultural engagement. The funding we have received is an amazing provision by God to increase the accessibility of theological education in new arenas, including at grassroots level.



Bishop Dr Samy Shehata recording a lecture at Alexandria School of Theology, Egypt.

PLEASE PRAY

Gracious God, thank you for 'Local Online: A Global Strategy' and for developing the vision to provide quality online education. We ask you to guide the OCA team as they co-ordinate the project with partners and respond to the needs of the various regions. We ask you to maintain the healthy relationships and the co-operative spirit, so that the quantity and quality related goals for the project will be met. Amen.

DR JOANNA FELICIANO-SOBERANO



Regional Director for Southeast Asia, Overseas Council USA, based in the Philippines

In mid-2019, I became Overseas Council's Regional Director for Southeast Asia, expecting to spend my time visiting seminaries to connect with the leadership and orient myself to the school's mission and needs.

As we know, the pandemic of 2020 was a game-changer! This was not only for my ministry (most of my conversations with seminary leaders quickly went online) but even more so for the way theological education is done.

It has been a privilege to be journeying with some theological institutions in the region in such a time as this.

I have seen their sudden pivots to online education, and the scramble to come up with some form of ICT*-assisted learning. The leadership shared with me some of their common challenges:

"We are not prepared to do online teaching."

"We use emails, Zoom, Facebook and other means."

"Students do not have appropriate gadgets to study online."

"Wi-Fi connectivity has been a problem."

"Our courses are obviously not designed for online delivery."

"Our teachers need more training to develop competencies needed."

"We have limited online resources for students."

"We have financial challenges with lesser enrolment and lower contributions."

"The pandemic has made online education more difficult."

And of course, there are many more stories, which include the students' experiences and the ravages of the pandemic.

More than a year into closures, the college leaders understand that their mission to equip ministers for the church remains. However, the traditional way of training now requires a more innovative approach. They need assistance to strategically plan for the "new normal."

OCA's 'Local Online: A Global Strategy' will provide support for seminaries in the Majority World so that online education is enhanced and maximised. Seminary participation in this new project will ensure that the needs for technical infrastructure, the development of competencies for teaching online, and the training necessary to design online courses will be adequately provided for.

These initiatives are vital for theological institutions to remain relevant and to thrive. But the project also requires a firm commitment to learn and to grow with Local Online.

It has been my passion to see seminaries flourish as they fulfill the mandate of training leaders for the church. I am privileged and committed to represent the Local Online project in my region. God is doing a great thing!

**Information Communication Technology*



Students studying at Asia Graduate School of Theology, Philippines.

PLEASE PRAY

Dear Lord, we give thanks for the men and women who make decisions for Bible colleges and higher education institutions providing theological education to so many around the world. We pray for them to do careful, clear thinking around the issues of online and remote education, and to make wise, godly decisions that will enable good practices and clever use of resources to best benefit students and faculty alike. Amen.

DR PAUL CLARK

Education Consultant for the OC Institute, Overseas Council USA



“Where do you want me to serve, now, Lord?”

That was my heart’s cry in 2013, when I found myself at a crossroads in life and ministry. God led me to an open door at Overseas Council, a ministry of United World Mission, USA.

Questions are part of my journey and following God’s lead sets the pace and direction.

In 2014, the team at OC USA asked, “How can colleges use new forms for theological education to open doors to equip more Christian leaders?”

Again, we followed God’s leading to deal with the changes in the world while at the same time keeping our mission on target with those new forms. One of those was the use of technology such as computers, video and the internet.

The predominant response was, “That’s good for you in the USA, but it won’t work here.” But the ten per cent of colleges who were the innovators and early adopters dove in.

In 2017, when we discerned through our research that there was a growing interest in online learning for theological education, we dedicated the next cycle of Institutes to build foundations in this area. We perceived God’s leading, and we followed.

During a period of 18 months, 11 Institutes trained over 400 leaders and faculty from 114 colleges in 50 countries to use the internet for theological education.

The last Institute, in Cuba, was in full gear when the pandemic was declared in March 2020. The world began to close down as COVID-19 raced around the globe.

In the 18 months of the pandemic, the OC Regional Directors provided support by recalling the lessons of those Institutes. They listened and responded to their needs with training, encouragement, guidance, and helping schools to share ideas and resources.

Words of gratitude came later: “Thank you for the Institute on Online Learning. We were more prepared for the pandemic.”

As we look back, we see God’s hand leading us into these emphases in the Institutes. What a sign of God’s providence in light of what was to come!

Now, Overseas Council joins forces with Overseas Council Australia to assist over 100 theological colleges in the Majority World to gain IT capacity, develop faculty competence and prepare shareable content resources.

As a result, theological colleges will bring effective theological formation to more leaders who need it. This will meet a critical need, yes! But more, this is a step in following God’s lead and obeying Him for the sake of His people being trained to do His mission in the world.



Paul at the Institute for Excellence in Latin America in 2018.



Paul at the Institute for Excellence in South Africa in 2019.

PLEASE PRAY

Father, we thank you for the ability to ask questions and to discern your answers. We pray for your leading as we continue on the road of facilitating theological education through the means of technology, giving thanks that so much was able to be established before the global pandemic. We pray for wisdom and foresight for those making decisions in this area into the future. Amen.

DEINER JOSÉ ESPITIA DÍAZ

STUDYING AT FUNDACIÓN UNIVERSITARIA SEMINARIO BÍBLICO DE COLOMBIA
IN MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA

**STUDENT
STORY**

I am currently in the sixth semester of the Pastoral Theology program of the Fundación Seminario Bíblico de Colombia (FUSBC). If God allows it, I will graduate in November 2023.

I am 39 years old, married to Diana Prado and father of three beautiful children. By the grace of God all are baptised and serve the Lord: María Alejandra, Jesús Armando and Alan Espitia.

This semester, like the past ones, has been special and enriching. I am enrolled in six courses, which have helped me to find my faith and affirm my convictions in our beloved Lord Jesus Christ. I can say with all certainty that my personal and ministerial life is every day confronted and at the same time challenged to understand the importance of managing well, and shepherding with wisdom and love, the church of Christ in the present and future times, where the loss of the absolutes is more and more constant.

I recognise that none of this would be possible without your support. That is to say, your prayers and your financial support have been fundamental in this process and much more so now in times of a pandemic where all economies, including ours, have been seriously affected.

Through my study I have not only grown academically but also in ministerial service. I am currently a church elder, Sunday school teacher, and discipleship tutor. Thank God for the tools that the FUSBC has given me. God has awakened in me a passion for training church leaders.

Please continue to pray for me and my family. This semester I have been unwell with burnout, presenting with episodes of panic, anxiety and depression. It has not been easy, but we are praying, depending on the Lord and fighting this together as a family.

**PLEASE PRAY**

Lord, we bring before you Deiner and his family. Please encourage them and provide for them as they serve and study in Colombia. We especially ask for your healing hand to be on Deiner as he deals with the effects of burnout. By your grace, connect him with wise health care professionals and reveal effective strategies for restoration. Amen.

**BLUE SKY OPPORTUNITY –
OCA’S BEQUEST PROGRAM**

“There is no limit to how much good can be done for the kingdom of God by supporting the work of OCA. I invite you to give through your will to this vital ministry.”

DAVID BROWN, OCA CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

The potential to do good through OCA is truly a blue sky opportunity, hence we have named our bequest program after that idea.

In past years we have had numerous people include OCA in their will and the Board of OCA invites you to join in this program. It is as simple as adding the following phrase in your will, or as a codicil to your existing will. It helps to have a lawyer involved and to explain your intentions to your family.

I bequeath [the whole/a percentage/something specific/residue] of my estate to Overseas Council Australia ABN 68 092 388 746 or any successor organisation of Overseas Council Australia (whether by way of merger, amalgamation, transfer of substantially the whole of its assets or however) for purposes that it shall determine, and this bequest will be free from all duties. The receipt of this bequest by any authorised officer of Overseas Council Australia or its successor shall form a valid discharge to my executor.

The Board of OCA will ordinarily direct funds from bequests in accord with the way a donor has given during their lifetime. If you wish to make known your intentions to include OCA in your will, please advise the Executive Director, Stuart Brooking. You can also indicate other parameters that are important to you for the distribution of your bequest to guide the Board’s allocation. (This is a simpler route than trying to include the detail in the will itself.)

Thank you for continuing your support of OCA through your will.

PLEASE PRAY

Thank you Father for all those who support OCA, both financially and prayerfully. We pray you guide all of us to be wise and humble stewards of the resources you give us. May our sowing result in many men and women being equipped to share your good news. Amen.

NANCY NJAGI

Africa Director for Overseas Council Australia



The idea that face-to-face learning could be suspended at any time is now a reality in our world. Colleges simply must begin thinking through online alternatives.

Recently, as a part of a team from the faculty of theology at St. Paul's University (SPU) in Kenya, I visited 11 of their affiliate colleges. The visit had two purposes: to fellowship with the college leaders, and to look at the institutions' capacity to offer programs to equip leaders.

In line with the Local Online strategy objectives, we were on the lookout for the availability of IT equipment, infrastructure, and the competency of faculty members to implement an online learning program.

Two of the colleges had invested in an online learning management system and required their faculty and students to purchase electronic gadgets for learning. Another had successfully appealed to its board to allow the purchase of 15 up to date computers. These computers meet the demand for online learning at the college and within its surrounding community.

Colleges that were less prepared for online and remote learning conducted their teaching by posting notes and recorded lessons on WhatsApp. These schools were more than delighted when schools could once again offer face to face teaching.

In September 2020, all of SPU's affiliate colleges received a laptop donation through OCA's Shoulder-to-Shoulder strategy. SPU also received a server that linked the laptops to the university's learner

management system. This was a great blessing because registrars or academic deans from the affiliate colleges no longer had to travel for days to the main campus to register students or key in marks after exams. (It also allowed faculty to access the university's e-library at their own colleges, however none of the affiliates has yet taken advantage of this opportunity).

The above strides and opportunities are not without challenges. The equipment in some colleges is out of date and cannot serve the college community. One of the colleges is in an area with poor internet connectivity. The leadership are in discussions with regional internet providers to improve connection.

Some students do not have access to electronic devices for online learning. It was interesting to hear the Dean of SPU's Faculty of Theology advising students to change their mindset and consider the purchase of a good smartphone or laptop as an investment in their education.

These visits clearly showed that there is a need for online learning systems in most of the colleges. We also noted insufficient capacity among the faculty to offer online teaching. This can be addressed through

structured competency workshops, an idea that was welcomed at all the colleges.

Critical next steps will be to enhance the competency of the faculty, including the IT and library staff, to take advantage of the lessons that have been learned during the pandemic. Faculty must be prepared for the reality that face-to-face learning can be suspended at any time. The IT department of an institution now needs to be seen as a main

department, as opposed to it merely being a support function. Colleges also need to embrace the fact that online learning can create opportunities for the institution to reach out to students and use resources from the rest of the world.

We continue to pray that some of these next steps will be thought through and implemented by college leadership. Where possible, the Local Online program can fill in some gaps.



Nancy with the team at Bishop Hannington College.



Nancy at Berea Christian College.

PLEASE PRAY

Father of all, you command the wealth and resources of the world you have created, and you provide what your people need. We ask in your mercy for the infrastructure and equipment required to provide online and remote learning for many, in parts of the world where facilities have so far been poor, and the challenges great. We pray this in the name of Christ, Amen.

PRESBYTER JOSUÉ FERNÁNDEZ



Regional Director for Latin America and Caribbean, Overseas Council USA

Church growth numbers are rocketing in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. The three countries of Dominican Republic, Honduras and Brazil alone are home to 70,000 churches. In Cuba and Brazil, a new church is planted every day.

The church is expanding exponentially. And with that growth comes tremendous training demands.

One out of 10 churches in the Majority World have leaders who have received no training for the ministry. This is a stunning challenge! Thousands and thousands of leaders without training may be exposed to false teaching, prosperity gospel teaching and, at worst, a ministry that is neither relevant to the challenges of the community nor faithful to the true teaching of the Scriptures.

One effect of the pandemic has been to push seminaries to use new modalities. Remote or virtual education has become a mainstay, used by all the schools in the continent. Many colleges had to start using these means whether they were prepared or not, and whether they had the technological infrastructure and training or not. There simply was no option!

While one could see remote or virtual education as an emergency resource, it has proved to be a wonderful way to reach more people and to secure the kind of training that would normally be found only in college buildings. This kind of training, however, will go where the students are.

Of course, online education is not without its challenges. The critique it has faced for many years

is how to develop training processes that will not only convey content but also use the bandwidth to produce character and spiritual change in the lives of the students.

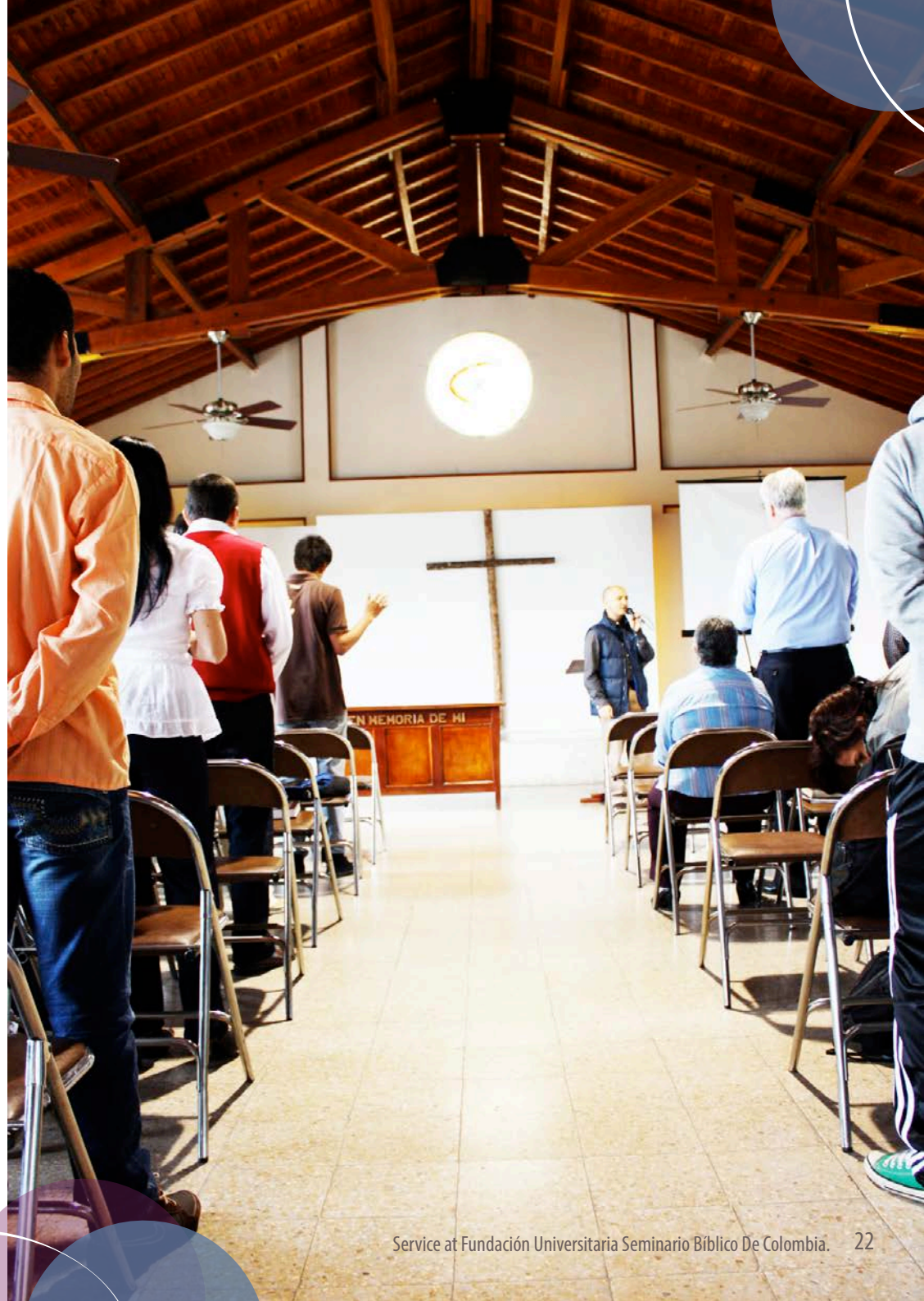
We have a great challenge!

We need to help faculty members to be trained to produce the kind of learning that will not only reach the many, but also will be transformational. We need to help them to create virtual communities of learning that take advantage of all the resources available on the web, but also encourages pastoral formation in the lives of the students.

'Local Online: A Global Strategy' is the answer to the huge need of a growing church with thousands of leaders who require training in our region. It will provide faculty members with the resources needed for transformation in the students' lives and subsequently in the communities throughout the LAC region.

PLEASE PRAY

Dear God, your heart for your people is to be transformed by your Holy Spirit, not simply to be educated in knowledge and skills. We pray that those responsible for providing online education will have insight and clarity into how best to structure programs to facilitate an environment for transformation. Most of all, we pray for people's lives to be changed by Jesus, the gospel message he brings, and the Holy Spirit working in people's hearts. Amen.



DR PAULINE GOLDER

Francophone Africa Director for Overseas Council Australia
(on secondment from SIM)



Like so many people, I've been 'working from home' during the pandemic, except that the distance between my home office and 'work' may be a longer distance than many . . . all the way from Australia to West Africa.

After spending 26 years in Francophone (French-speaking) West Africa, mostly in theological and missiological education, COVID-19 struck when I was at home between roles. As I couldn't travel, I took the opportunity to get up to date with online teaching. This is seen as a growing need by African educators due to the pandemic, and a growing opportunity to reach students who are in remote areas, overseas, or working fulltime. I started studying online myself, and then started teaching online in 2021.

As part of an educational design course, in February this year I made several proposals to ICETE Academy that coincided with OCA's vision. These included making the Academy's courses available in more languages and an increasing implication in Francophone Africa to train theological educators.

My mission organisation, SIM, then assigned me to work with ICETE Academy and OCA to develop training for Francophone theological educators within SIM. I have been very appreciative to be able to work with the OCA team on common goals and see some of those dreams come to life with 'Local Online: A Global Strategy'.

When I started part-time doctoral study early in my ministry, I chose electives in curriculum and education. These were invaluable in planning programs and teaching at several institutions in French or local languages. As Academic Director of an institution training mission leaders and trainers, my

favourite subject to teach was educational planning and teaching strategies, and I led workshops on similar subjects in several countries.

I have had the privilege of participating in regional conferences where I met wonderful African leaders in theological education. Many face common challenges: the lack of staff with appropriate degrees, funding issues, not enough books in French, and staff who are competent in their field but rarely aware of alternative teaching strategies or assessments.

In the pandemic period, I've spent time on Zoom and had frequent emails with Dr Mardochee Nadoumngar who is 'on the ground' as a colleague in the Local Online project. This has been like coming home to Francophone Africa. We talk about familiar people, familiar places, and familiar needs.

Dr Nadoumngar has found that while most institutions are convinced of the benefits of developing online courses, they generally face major challenges including:

- The lack of reliable internet and electricity.
- Teachers without access to a computer to work on regularly.
- Students with only smartphones to work with.
- Most of the resources being in another language (English).
- Not knowing where to start or how to teach in this new milieu.

They are hoping Local Online will help them reach more students through effectively equipping them to teach online.



PLEASE PRAY

Dear Lord, we thank you for the multitude of languages and cultures in this world, and for the diversity amongst your people. We pray for the Francophone world and theological educators working hard to provide education and training for many in the French language when much of the available resourcing and expertise exists in English. Please give the leaders your persistence and endurance as they work to provide transformational education in French speaking Africa. In Christ's name, Amen.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE WORK OF OCA

By giving through OCA you can be confident that your funds will go towards growing God's church and impacting communities as competent leaders are trained for ministry in their own country.

When you give to OCA you can specify the partner college that interests you and the student or project you want to support. We do not operate a 'general pool' from which we give, but rather invite our supporters to nominate what God has put on their heart.

SOME PRACTICAL OPTIONS FOR YOU TO CONSIDER:

SPONSOR A STUDENT

There can be few greater causes than training leaders for the church; equipping and teaching individuals who will emerge as resourceful, indigenous Christian leaders in their context. OCA supports men and women who preach and teach the redeeming love of Jesus. You can commit to finance a student's study needs for \$2,200 per year or find a few friends who will join with you to fund the scholarship. Sponsorship funds can be paid monthly, quarterly, six monthly or yearly.

For more information, email kathy@overseascouncil.com.au

SPONSOR A FACULTY MEMBER

OCA has identified that a key way to lift the learning experience of students is to lift the competence of the faculty. We support faculty members doing masters and doctoral studies in their region or by distance education, so they can stay at their college. This greatly reduces the cost compared to training in the West. Furthermore, their studies are more relevant and suitable for the context of ministry in the developing world.

For more information, email pauline@overseascouncil.com.au

SUPPORT A PROJECT

Our partner colleges are constantly evaluating what resources are needed to make their institutions run at optimum efficiency. Sometimes a college will need funding to develop an outreach strategy, or to provide IT infrastructure to their campuses. Sometimes they simply need to purchase new, good quality library books. You can donate towards a project that will make a significant difference to our partner colleges. Current projects, including Local Online, are listed on the 'Giving To Growth' page of our website.

www.overseascouncil.com.au/your-story/giving-to-growth

SUPPORT A GRASSROOTS PASTOR FOR \$1 A DAY

Many pastors and church planters in the developing world struggle to access the training they need. They have the passion, but they need to learn how to minister effectively in Christ's name. Your provision of \$365 will allow a pastor or church planter to complete a Biblical training course created and run by a local Bible college.

For more information, email kathy@overseascouncil.com.au

CONSIDER A BEQUEST

We are thankful that in past years numerous people have included OCA in their will. The Board of OCA invites you to join in this program. Please see page 18 for more details.

Or for more information, email stuart@overseascouncil.com.au



LOCAL CAPACITY
LOCAL COMPETENCE
LOCAL CONTENT

LOCAL ONLINE: **A GLOBAL STRATEGY**

To read about our current
Local Online projects
go to our website



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