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Institute for Islamic Studies Celebrates 25 Years

By R. Michael Langford

April 2022 marks the 25th year for an intensive training program that began in Asia and has equipped over 1,000 students and impacted more than 50 nations. The Institute for Islamic Studies (IIS) was the first of a growing number of intensive training programs that reach around the world. This article will highlight its strategic beginnings and global impact.

A Work of the Holy Spirit

Led by the Spirit, an Indonesian pastor serving on the advisory committee challenged the leaders of the regional seminary to incorporate training for ministry to Muslims into the curriculum. He then presented a large check to underwrite the startup cost of such a program.

This is noteworthy since Indonesia is the most populous Muslim majority country in the world. Additionally, the majority of the world's 1.9 billion Muslims live in Asia. The next three Asian nations with the largest Muslim populations are Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh.

Through the years, we've noted workers from these four nations prefer to study in Asia. The chairman of the Pakistan Assemblies of God told me that Pakistani workers benefit greatly from studying at the IIS. Truly, the Holy Spirit was strategic in positioning intensive training in Asia.

Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS) in Baguio City, Philippines, serves all of Asia, the Pacific Islands, and China. APTS has hosted the IIS program for 25 years, offers academic credit for students in degree programs up to the master's level, and provides a Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies with an Islamic Studies concentration.

The following stories illustrate the strategic work of the Holy Spirit to multiply workers through the IIS.

Training the Trainers

A student came to the inaugural Institute from a nation in Southeast Asia where ministry to Muslims is intensely restricted. The next year, he was instrumental in launching an IIS in a bordering country because of the extreme sensitivity.

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Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14

Mark Brink

International Director
Global Initiative:
Reaching Muslim Peoples



A Lasting Legacy

This edition of the *Intercede* honors the ministry of Michael and Sharyl Langford for their faithful service for 25 years as directors of the Institute for Islamic Studies (IIS) at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in the Philippines. The annual IIS program has equipped over 1,000 students, and has impacted more than 50 nations. Many graduates of the program currently serve as missionaries in some of the most gospel-resistant Muslim countries in the world. Similar programs have opened in strategic locations around the world, using the IIS template as their model. Michael Langford, the director of the IIS program at APTS, wrote the lead article of this edition of *Intercede*. Langford highlights the strategic beginning and global impact of the “original” Institute of Islamic Studies.

I affirm their ministry exemplifies the primacy and urgency of the mission of reaching the nations with the gospel of

Jesus Christ. It has been a great honor for Global Initiative to partner for 25 years with that program, and we look forward to continuing this partnership for many years to come.

Only eternity will reveal the number of Muslim people who have been brought into the Kingdom of God through the Langford’s legacy of training. A previous director of Global Initiative states: “I have observed their careful leadership over the IIS program at APTS for the last 25 years. What they have done is one of the finest pieces of missionary work in the modern era of Assemblies of God missions.”

Congratulations, Michael and Sharyl, on the 25th anniversary celebration of the IIS program. On behalf of the ministry team at Global Initiative, I take this opportunity to thank you for your commitment in faithfully sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ!





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A pastor from Eastern Europe traveled to Asia to participate in IIS since no such program existed in his region. Since courses are taught in English, which was not his first language, he would take class notes in his mother tongue and then translate them into English each night in order to prepare for exams. In essence, he did double the work. This level of commitment deeply impressed us.

Within four years of returning to his home country, God used this brother to launch a training program patterned after the IIS at APTS. Today, this training is part of a school that prepares missionaries for ministry to Muslims in restricted access nations where Westerners have difficulty entering.

The pastor of the leading Assemblies of God (AG) church in an Islamic republic came to APTS to prepare for opening a Bible School in his homeland. He enrolled in the IIS as part of his degree program. At the end of the IIS, he shared that he was praying about resigning his church and going to the most resistant Muslim unreached people group in his nation. Four years later, God used him to open a Bible School focused on raising up workers for this unreached group.

As I reflect over the past 25 years, I am humbled and deeply moved that the Holy Spirit has repeatedly orchestrated this kind of replication. We may think we've figured out how to do God's work only to discover that what God had in mind is more than we imagined.

Paul instructed Timothy: "Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others" (2 Timothy 2:1-2, NLT).

A pastor told me, "We must train 'two deep' after the pattern Paul introduced. Applied to training workers, we are not finished until those we train have trained others. Training the trainers is the heart of the multiplication process."

IIS has crossed denominational and organizational lines. I tell my students, "First, I am KoG. Then, AoG." In Asia, AoG is an acronym for Assemblies of God. Then, KoG is

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short for Kingdom of God. This declaration is based on the conviction that the work of the Holy Spirit on behalf of unreached Muslims demands all of us! For many, the “us” that readily comes to mind is the local church, denomination, or organization. As much as we need these structures, the work of the Spirit on behalf of the unreached overarches the lines that often divide us.

God has honored the intention of the IIS to seek Kingdom level engagement by granting His favor, as indicated by the range of Evangelical mission agencies that have sent workers for training. We stopped counting at 22 different organizations or agencies. Further, the desire for Kingdom level engagement is evident in leading Evangelical missionary scholars who have taught in the program over the years, often more than half of the faculty in a given year.

Preparation and Refreshing

The following story illustrates the extent to which the Spirit will go to bring “us” together in the larger work of reaching Muslims. I had been communicating with a British missionary woman serving in a former Soviet republic with a majority Muslim population. Unknown to me, my fax of the program brochure had garbled to obscure several lines. After arrival, she picked up a printed copy of the program brochure and exclaimed, “I would not have come if I’d read this line before coming, ‘Training Pentecostal missionaries’! That line was missing in your fax!” Interestingly, she has returned five times, referring to the IIS as her time of refreshing. She continues to labor faithfully among a dominant Sufi Muslim sect that gives allegiance to the most powerful shamans of Eastern Europe.

After I received an application for program enrollment from a Catholic Charismatic missionary, I called the leadership team to discuss the ramifications of accepting him into the program. We sensed this was ordered of the Spirit, trusting that he was a Christ-follower, as evidenced by the baptism in the Holy Spirit. God honored our decision. The participation of this brother “rocked our world” as the Holy Spirit powerfully anointed him during times of intercession and worship.

We hear of the special bond between soldiers who fought in a battle or sheltered in the foxhole together. Likewise, there is a kindred spirit between workers among the Muslim unreached. Studying, interceding, worshiping, and fellowshipping among the likeminded is transformational.

Confirmation and Calling

The Holy Spirit is in the business of connecting and direct-

ing. Each morning, class begins with a devotional. It was a Monday morning when a missionary-in-training shared her testimony and calling to a Muslim unreached people group, one of the oldest people groups in Southeast Asia.

Two days before, unknown to her or the class, I had been given a copy of a newly dedicated contextualized Bible in the trade language of this people group. A colleague had returned that day from teaching in the nation where they live and had brought me the copy. At the end of her testimony, I presented the Bible to her. She was speechless and moved to tears! We closed with a prayer of dedication for her and the work God had called her to. She later told me that this was a clear confirmation of God’s leading.

Changed and Convinced

Many students have testified that they harbored hatred for Muslims. It seems counterintuitive that someone would desire training in ministry to those who abuse them, kill their loved ones, or make their lives so difficult. We have witnessed the miracle of transformation countless times as the Holy Spirit cleanses the heart of hatred and fear and fills it with love and compassion. This supernatural work of grace continues as we create a venue for the Holy Spirit.

A couple enrolled in IIS courses at the exact time when they were grappling with the place to which God was calling them. Both are medical doctors and veteran missionaries. At the beginning of the course, the wife sat back in her chair, arms crossed, seemingly unhappy to be in the class. By the end of the class, she sat on the edge of her seat, leaning forward, as if hanging on every word shared by the professor, herself a former Muslim. She later testified that God had changed her heart. Now, she looked forward to serving in this difficult part of the Muslim world.

An Evangelical leader from a majority Muslim nation told me, “When I came, I was afraid. My fear has been broken after being with those who are continuing in ministry to Muslims after all these years.” He continues to minister in a sensitive nation among high-ranking Muslims, and began a training program similar to IIS.

During an IIS, a Filipino Marine shared that Muslims killed his father. He and his brothers planned a grudge killing of the perpetrators, but God changed his heart. He told his brothers that they must forgive. They chose to follow him.

During morning devotions at an IIS, a Filipina shared how her brother had been killed by Muslims. “God has changed my heart,” she declared with tears streaming down her face. After returning to Mindanao, she served with another single woman in a fruitful ministry to Muslim women.

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An Evangelical leader came to an IIS from an Islamic Republic, stating, “When I came, I was afraid. This is broken in my life because I see those who continue in ministry after all these years.” He began a training program similar to the IIS.

As you read this article, are you reminded of something in your heart toward Muslim people? I urge you to ask the Holy Spirit for a baptism of love for Muslim people who are doubly bound by an evil system and demonic powers invasive in their world.

Prioritizing Prayer and Spiritual Formation

Prayer is the foundation of transformational training. From its inception, the IIS has intentionally focused on prayer. Each Friday, faculty and students fast the noon meal and gather for Jumaa Prayer Fellowship. Student led intercessory prayer for nations and Muslim Unreached People Groups are part of the afternoon sessions. Join me in prayer for the anointing of the Spirit upon the 2022 program.

In addition, there is an intentional emphasis on spiritual life and formation. The IIS begins with a week of Spiritual Emphasis, which sets the tone for the program. Each day, class opens with devotions and prayer.

Rejoicing Together

In celebrating this milestone, it is my joy to express appreciation to the line of exemplary missionary scholars who contributed to the formation and continuation of the IIS. We are debtors to: Melvin Ho; Bill Menzies; John Carter; Won-suk Ma; Phil Parshall (a Baptist missionary with SIM); Ron Peck; Jim Bennett; Mark Hausfeld; Mark Brink; and to Dale Fagerland, who was especially instrumental in the formation of the program and gave significant time to the IIS over a period of 18 years.

For 25 years, the cost of the IIS has been met in unexpected ways. I marvel at the creativity of the Holy Spirit. The Indonesian church that gave the funding for the startup also underwrote the program budget for the first 7 years.

Leaders and team members from the Center for Ministry to Muslims, Assemblies of God World Missions, USA, now Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples, have contributed time, talent, and funds entrusted to them toward the IIS program over the last 25 years. Their contribution kept the program budget to a minimum. The sum of their investment is indescribably significant.

In addition, financial support came from other AG mis-

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sionaries and ministries, including International Correspondence Institute Philippines and Boys and Girls Missionary Campaign. A number of the non-AG faculty covered their own travel expenses and gave an offering in addition. Many unnamed donors sent designated gifts. We give God the glory and thank each one for their love and generosity.

Joyful Closing Reflections

We were serving in Mindanao, Philippines, when a representative from Global Initiative arrived to collaborate with APTS leadership in the development of an intensive training program that would become the IIS. We were led of the Lord to relocate to Baguio City to be part of the inaugural year. From that first year, it has been my privilege to serve in the IIS. God was at work in marvelous ways, and I did not want to mess it up! I am deeply grateful for the trust given to me and to the Holy Spirit who is graciously and powerfully at work in the lives of those fortunate enough to participate in the IIS. To God be the glory, both now and forever.

In closing, I am honored to highlight the behind the scenes contribution of my wife, Sharyl. She graciously managed

many of the details that are part of a resident training program, such as set-up, copying of materials, welcome packets, etc. Day or night, she was available with loving care and encouragement. Some students had suffered greatly for their faith. Other former Muslims came with unresolved background issues. Many needed a third party to listen, to love unconditionally, or to offer counsel. Though unheralded, Sharyl has been a vital part of the impact of the IIS. (In October 2020, she was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. Her love for the IIS and the many students she served has not waned, nor her passion for unreached Muslims.)

Finally, I invite you to join me in thanking God for favor and supply throughout the 25 years that the IIS has served on behalf of unreached Muslims. Pray with me that God will continue to use the IIS as an instrument of grace that brings transformation, inculcates vision, and renews strength. Pray that every financial need will be met and every student will be able to receive the training they abundantly deserve.

** Some names and locations were excluded or changed due to sensitivity*



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*Jumaa Prayer is now on
Facebook. Please join today:
[Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer](https://www.facebook.com/JumaaPrayer)*

Friday, March 4, 2022. Please pray for

...the family of Pastor Musana in Uganda. After openly asserting that Jesus was the Son of God, two Muslim men attacked and killed Pastor Musana. His wife and three children have been left in destitute circumstances.

...Hassan, a Somali convert from Islam who fled Somalia and now lives in Kenya. His converted mother says, “Our family shall not turn back from following savior Jesus.”

...Behnam, Babek, and Sahab who are imprisoned Iranian converts from Islam. Each of these men conducted “Jesus meetings” in his home. All are serving five-year sentences for “acting against national security.”

Friday, March 11, 2022. Please pray for

...Omar, a former Islamic sheik, now a “Jesus evangelist” in East Africa. Twice he has had acid thrown toward his eyes. He says, “Never mind the attempts to blind me. We must be strong and reach the Muslims with the hope of the gospel.”

...roughly 500 million children living in Islamic nations. Many of these children face violence, mutilation, and abuse at the hands of radical parents and family members.

...new Christians from a Muslim background in Kelantan state, Malaysia who are under intense pressure to return to Islam. Of Kelantan state’s population of 2 million, 95% are Muslim.

Friday, March 18, 2022. Please pray for

...women in Afghanistan. Asma says, “Under the Taliban we feel the heavy weight of death. The country is in despair, but we feel the holy presence of God. The beauty of Christ is that there is always hope.”

...the 10,000 member Akvakh people group of Dagestan in the Caucasus region of Russia. The Akvakh are 100% Muslim. An Akvakh mother and her daughter have recently come to Jesus; the first known believers among the Akvakh.

...home fellowships of new Christians in Arabian Gulf countries, where almost 100% of the people are Muslim.

Friday, March 25, 2022. Please pray for

...Sabah, a former Muslim who lives in Greece. Sabah came to Greece as a refugee from Syria. Christian workers shared the gospel with her and she says, “I am a new person in Christ.”

...Indonesian and Malay Muslims living in Taiwan. Taiwanese Christians state, “God brought these Muslims here and we want to reach them with the gospel of Christ.”

...for Christian workers reaching Muslims in Spain via Zoom, Bible studies for seekers via WhatsApp, and visual content via Facebook. The response is so great that more workers are being recruited.

*I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and
thanksgiving be made for everyone. – 1 Timothy 2:1, NIV*



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*Jumaa Prayer is now on
Facebook. Please join today:
[Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer](https://www.facebook.com/JumaaPrayer)*

Friday, April 1, 2022. Please pray for

...*Holy Spirit anointing* on evangelism teams sharing the gospel and humanitarian aid with Muslim migrants in Europe.
...*the 25,000 Yaghnobis*, an Iranian ethnic minority people group living in Tajikistan. They are 100% Muslim.
...*Ahmad, a refugee from ISIS*, who lives in North Africa. Asked if he wanted to accept Jesus, he said, "Yes, I accept God's great work arranged through His Son Jesus the Christ."

Friday, April 8, 2022. Please pray for

...*the convicting power of the Holy Spirit* to come upon Akram, a Saudi Muslim man who regularly visits European countries on business-related trips. He recently said, "I am noticing something different about real Christians."
...*the 700,000 strong Rangis people group* of Tanzania. Churches exist among them, but 70% of Rangis are Muslim.
...*Mejdi, a new believer from a Muslim background in Morocco*. Mejdi lives in an isolated area with no known believers.

Friday, April 15, 2022. Please pray for

...*God to use the almost 4,000 copies of the new Africa Bible Commentary in Hausa* distributed to date in Nigeria.
...*Muneer, a new believer from a Muslim background in Tunisia*. Responding to a radio program, he says, "Your words are like gold. Thanks to His people who are willing to tell others about Jesus."
...*God's Spirit to touch Afghan viewers of the Destiny drama series* produced in Dari, an Afghan language.

Friday, April 22, 2022. Please pray for

...*the House of Hope ministry in a 97% Muslim country in North Africa*. Leaders report: "Many hundreds of Muslims have come to know Jesus as Savior; others have encountered the Lord through healings, dreams, and deliverances."
...*the unprecedented numbers of Saudis who are coming to faith in Jesus*.
...*the safety of workers at the Mosaic Middle East ministry in Iraq*. They are feeding some of the poorest of Iraq's internally displaced people and funding the medical clinic where they treat people of all faiths.

Friday, April 29, 2022. Please pray for

...*new Kurdish believers from Muslim backgrounds* in the Kurdistan area of northern Iraq.
...*the "booming" church in Kazakhstan*. The Christian Church has grown to over 16,000; many are converts from Islam.
...*the growing number of "Christ followers" among the Muslim Hazaras in Afghanistan*. The largest number of converts in Afghanistan come from the Hazaras. Even under renewed Taliban rule, they continue to increase.

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