



Global Christian Studies

Providing a theological education pathway for Churches of Christ around the world

April 2026 Newsletter

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Growth in Ghana: Investing in the Future of Global Christianity

Missiologist Andrew Walls described Christianity not as a religion of steady, linear expansion, but of “serial growth.” Unlike many other world religions, Christianity takes root within diverse cultural contexts, often experiencing rapid growth in particular regions. The church, therefore, is not centered in one place but is inherently polycentric.

Research from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity reflects this shift. Over the past century, the center of Christianity has moved from the Global North, North America and Europe, to the Global South, including regions of Asia, South America, Africa and Oceania. By 2017, an estimated 42% of the world’s Protestants were African, reflecting both significant growth and global movement. By 2050, that number is projected to approach 40% of all Christians worldwide, marking one of the most dramatic shifts in global Christianity and highlighting the rapid expansion of Christian populations.

As Christianity continues to grow in the Global South, a pressing need has emerged: the cultivation of theological depth, training and spiritual maturity among expanding communities of believers. In many regions, the number of Christians far exceeds the available resources to equip leaders and thinkers to address the questions and challenges arising within their cultural contexts.

This need is being addressed, in part, through strategic partnerships with institutions such as Heritage Christian University in Accra, Ghana. Heritage began as a preaching school before developing into a university in 2015 and

becoming a chartered university in 2025. Located in Accra, a leading scholarly center and gateway to West Africa, the institution is well-positioned to serve the region.

Through this partnership, Dr. Nathan Bills has played a key role in advancing theological education at Heritage. His leadership within the theology department has contributed to the development of programs such as the Master of Christian Studies, designed to equip practicing ministers from a range of educational backgrounds. These efforts aim to strengthen theological foundations, deepen engagement with Scripture and support the long-term formation of leaders within their local contexts.

Within churches of Christ, there is no central seat of authority beyond Scripture itself. In this context, theological education plays a vital role in supporting the church's reflection and formation. Institutions serve as guides and partners, helping equip leaders while remaining accountable to the communities they serve.

As the gospel crosses cultures, it continues to expand in unexpected ways. New questions emerge, and the message often takes on new expressions as it is lived out within diverse cultural frameworks. As Walls observed, Christianity is a faith that continually finds new "homes" around the world.

The opportunities for the church in regions such as Ghana and across Africa are substantial. Rapid growth presents the potential for increased influence in addressing complex social realities, including conflict, poverty and community development, while embodying a vision of human flourishing rooted in the kingdom of God. At the same time, this growth presents ongoing challenges. Educational institutions are frequently unable to meet the rising demand for theological training, and the need for well-equipped leaders continues to outpace available resources.

These dynamics underscore the importance of strategic, collaborative partnerships. Effective engagement depends on mutual respect and shared responsibility, recognizing that those closest to specific contexts are best positioned to guide decision-making. Such partnerships aim not to impose external frameworks, but to support locally rooted leadership and sustainable development.

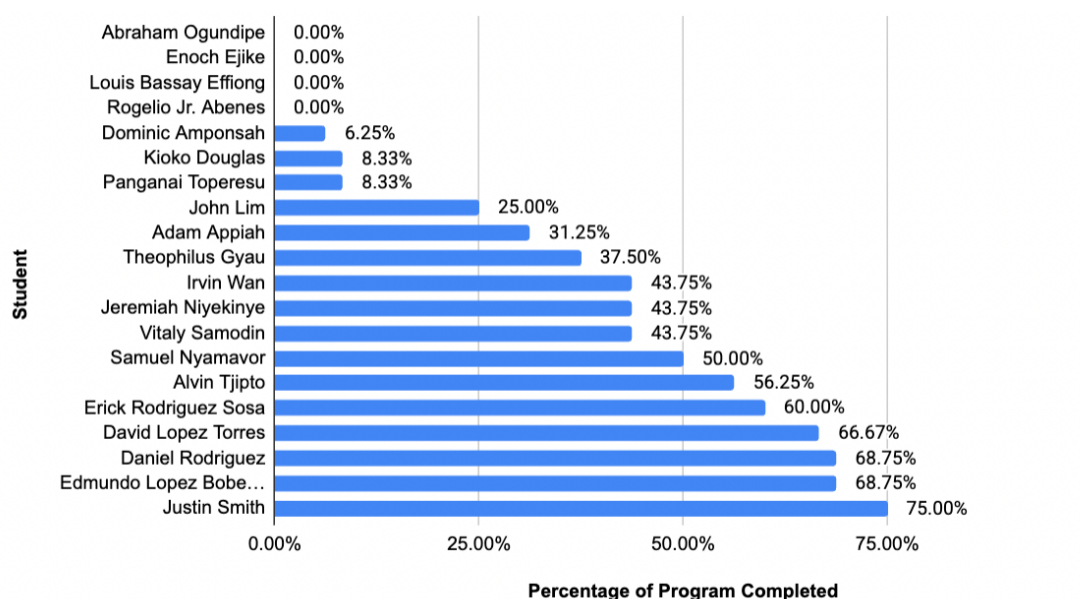
Looking ahead, the global trajectory of Christianity highlights the importance of intentional investment. By 2075, it is projected that half of the world's

Christians will reside in sub-Saharan Africa. As the demographic center of Christianity continues to shift, many theological resources remain concentrated in the West. Bridging this gap, thoughtfully and with cultural sensitivity, will be essential to supporting the continued health and growth of the global church.

A critical component of this investment is the training of leaders within the majority world, particularly through advanced theological education. Supporting students as they pursue terminal degrees is essential for long-term institution building, faculty development and sustainable theological infrastructure. The opportunity is not only to respond to present needs, but to invest in the future of a globally interconnected church.

– Hannah Diles, Director of Marketing

Student Progress Chart



This graph shows each GCS student progressing toward completion of the 48 hour MACM degree as of January 2026, with students at 0% in their first class. 21 students are enrolled at HST or HCU Florence, while 3 are on track for the MACS program at HCU Ghana.

We congratulate all of our students on finishing this academic school year. We are glad to be part of their journey as they are honing their Bible study and ministry skills!

From Our Students



Lee Robert Ekenlebie



Peter Baffoe-Bonnie



Henry Oppong

Greetings from our students at HCU Ghana

GCS is proud to partner with Heritage Christian University in Accra, Ghana, to support three bursary students. These students are on track to complete their degrees in December 2026.

Lee Robert Ekenlebie

"My name is Ekenlebie Lee Robert Kaku, a Ghanaian from Asasetre in the Western Region. I am a professional mathematics teacher with a deep passion for preaching, teaching, and serving the Lord's church both within my community and beyond.

I was baptized in 2010 and have since remained an active member of the Asasetre Church of Christ, where my father, Pr. Cosmos Kaku, currently serves as the preacher.

In pursuit of my calling into ministry, I am currently undergoing training through the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry programme at Heritage Christian University. Through my studies, I have been exposed to a wide range of courses, including preaching and teaching, introduction to and interpretation of Scripture, and the Pauline Epistles, among others, all of which are equipping me for effective service in the Lord's church.

As part of this training, I am actively applying what I am learning by working with the Teleku Bokazo Church of Christ, a congregation that has faced challenges in recent times due to division. Through teaching, leading, and outreach, I am contributing to efforts aimed at reviving and restoring the congregation, with a focus on unity, spiritual growth, and renewed commitment among members.

I am also blessed with a supportive wife, Beatrice Ansah, who is a faithful Christian, and I come from a family of four children. Looking ahead, I remain committed to

growing in ministry and contributing to the spiritual development of the church, particularly in underserved communities, as I continue to serve God faithfully.

I am sincerely grateful to Global Christian Studies for the award and recognition extended to me. This honour serves as a great encouragement and motivates me to remain committed to faithful service in God's vineyard."

Peter Baffoe-Bonnie

"I write with a heart full of gratitude to sincerely thank Global Christian Studies for the George Akpabli Bursary Award. This award is not only a financial blessing to me, but also a powerful testimony of God's faithfulness in my life and calling. I remember a season when I denied myself many personal comforts in order to serve faithfully as a chaplain and remain committed to the call to be a minister of God. I began this course purely by faith, trusting God to make a way where none seemed possible. Through this bursary, God used Global Christian Studies to help me and what I started in faith, God has truly brought to pass.

The academic and spiritual formation has directly influenced my ministry. As a Chaplain at Hope College, a subsidiary of Village of Hope located at Gomoa Fetteh, I minister to and teach approximately 700 students. The knowledge and skills I have acquired through this program have enabled me to design structured courses and approach teaching with greater clarity, confidence, and depth.

I firmly believe this degree has equipped me for higher learning and excellence in ministry. It has strengthened my ability to handle the young souls entrusted to my care with wisdom, compassion, and responsibility. My hope and prayer are that the students I teach will be transformed, grow in their knowledge of Christ, and become more like Him; thereby advancing the work of God through their lives and service.

Thank you once again for your generosity, encouragement, and investment in my education and ministry. I remain deeply grateful and committed to honoring this support through faithful service to God and His Church. May God richly bless the work of Global Christian Studies and all who support this noble mission."

Henry Oppong

"My name is Henry Oppong, a Ghanaian national and a committed member of the Church of Christ, Bantama Congregation, in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. For the past thirteen years, I have been serving as a Grade 7 science teacher in a public school in Ghana.

Beyond the classroom, I am actively involved in church ministry. I teach in the teenage Bible class in my congregation and serve as a dedicated member of the church's Edification Ministry. Teaching is my passion because it gives me the opportunity to mentor and guide young people toward positive life choices and a deeper relationship with God.

Academically, I hold a Bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Management and a Diploma in Education. I am currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Christian Studies (MACS) at Heritage Christian University. I strongly believe that this program will equip me with the theological knowledge and practical skills needed to teach the Scriptures more effectively. My lifelong dream is to become a Bible scholar, and I see the MACS program as a vital step toward achieving that goal."

Student Spotlights



From our partner programs

Heritage Christian University – Florence, Alabama, USA

Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama, is a growing partner institution collaborating with GCS. The university is entering a new chapter following the announcement of its new president, Dr. Michael Jackson, and looks forward to continued growth in its programs and support of HST students.

Rebecca Harrison shared, "As director of admissions, I am pleased to share that Heritage Christian University's Graduate School of Theology is entering an exciting

new chapter with the appointment of Dr. Michael Jackson as president, effective June 1, 2026. As an HCU alumnus and former assistant director with ABHE, he brings both strong higher education insight and a deep commitment to spiritual excellence as he leads us forward.”

Harding School of Theology – Searcy, Arkansas, USA

HST is excited to announce the hiring of two new professors, Josh Markum and Ethan Laster. Markum currently serves as a missionary in Ecuador, and Laster is completing his Ph.D. at Saint Louis University. Both will begin teaching in fall 2026.

HST is also planning a survey trip to Harding’s campus in Greece, with the goal of launching an in-person course in spring 2027. This initiative reflects a continued commitment to uniting students across the globe and sharing the blessings of in-person learning and community.

In a recent update, Dr. Peter Rice, dean of HST, shared, “The reason is simple: we believe in the formative potential of shared presence, something demonstrated with supreme clarity and poignancy by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. It is by being together, united in the Spirit, that we are transformed into Christ-followers, into ministry partners and a community of faithful learners jointly engaged in the ministry of study.”

Heritage Christian University – Accra, Ghana

Dr. Nathan Bills, dean of humanities and social sciences, oversees the theological education of the GCS bursary students. He shared, “The first group of MACS students finished their coursework last month. They are now entering a phase of writing an extended essay. After completion, they will graduate, though the ceremony will not take place until December. We thank GCS for the partnership in training Africans on African soil at an African university with African instructors. There is nothing else like it in the graduate space.”

We are excited for the three bursary students as they move closer to graduation and look forward to selecting and supporting the next group of students.

Partner Programs



Dr. Harold Shank
Executive Director



Caleb Dillinger
Director of Development



Matthew Dunbar
Assoc. Director of Student Affairs
Africa, Europe



Hannah Diles
Director of Marketing



John Campos
Assoc. Director of Student Affairs
Latin America, Asia, South Pacific

The GCS Team is dedicated to supporting qualified students, securing donors and sponsors, working with the two overseeing congregations, and coordinating with our partner programs.

New Partnering Church – Citivision Church of Christ, Singapore

The GCS Team is excited to announce the start of a new partnership with Citivision Church of Christ in Singapore. More information about this partnership will be covered in the next issue of GCS News.

Hannah Diles, Director of Marketing

Hannah will graduate with her Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership in May 2026. She plans to stay on staff at Harding University as an admissions counselor and with GCS as Marketing Director, while beginning a new program at HST.

Executive Committee

GCS is an initiative of the Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne, Australia, and the Eastside Church of Christ in Midwest City, Oklahoma. The staff functions under their oversight in partnership with an executive board. The Executive Committee includes Dr. Benny Tabalujan, David Walton, Charles Hooi, and Ron Cannefax.

Meet the Team

Invitation to be a Sponsor

"I have been involved with GCS since the initial idea was shaped into what it is. I was convinced then and now that GCS can have as much of an impact on the global church as in the last hundred years of our missionary work."

- a sponsoring elder from Virginia

"Our missionary felt a need to increase his Biblical knowledge as well as his ministry skills. We were delighted to partner with GSC to help him become a more effective church leader."

- a sponsoring elder from Tennessee

"Helping train leaders around the world gives us a sense of satisfaction that we are making a difference."

- a donor from Oklahoma

GCS is deeply committed to ensuring that each sponsored student successfully completes their graduate degree. A key part of our support system is securing a sponsoring church or donor for every student. Additionally, we encourage those connected to GCS to pray for the students and their specific concerns.

We are actively seeking sponsors to support our students through prayer, encouragement, financial aid, and meaningful connections. Would you consider assisting us in identifying potential sponsors? If you can help in any way, please contact Harold Shank (drharoldshank@gmail.com) and Caleb Dillinger (calebjdillinger@gmail.com).

GCS Overseeing Congregations

Eastside Church of Christ

916 South Douglas Blvd, Midwest City, OK 73130

(www.eastsidechurchofchrist.org)

The elders are Sam Brandon, Ryan McDonald, David Holt, Ricky Bugher, David Walton, and Michael Graham.

Belmore Road Church of Christ

100 Rostrevor Parade, Mont Albert North, Victoria 3150, Australia

(www.belmoreroadchurch.org.au)

The elders are Charles Hooi and James Chan.

Message to Potential Students

GCS seeks global students who live outside the United States, have access to high-speed Wi-Fi, hold an accredited bachelor's degree, and have the full recommendation of their local congregation. The process of acceptance into GCS and enrollment in one of our partner programs typically takes about four months. We would be honored to welcome you into the GCS community and support you in your educational journey.

If you are interested in applying, please consult the GCS website (gcspathway.org) or email the team (gcspathwayinfo@gmail.com).

Find out more

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