



GCS

*A theological education pathway for
Churches of Christ around the world.*

GCS News - April 2021

*Updating our sponsors, informing our current students,
and reaching out for others to partner with us.*

Copies available at the [GCS website](#)

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Levels of Christian Education and Global Christian Studies

Churches and schools offer different levels of Christian education. Most Churches of Christ provide Bible class education for all ages once or twice per week, year-round without a break. This kind of core education is absolutely critical in preparing mature Christians. Many congregations offer a summer Vacation Bible School to better equip their own children and to attract children from the area. Since I grew up in a home where we did not go to church, Vacation Bible School was my first taste of Christian education. After attending VBS at the East Pike Church of Christ in Indiana, Pennsylvania, a member of that congregation invited me to come to her Sunday morning class. She was teaching from the book of Genesis. I had no idea who Adam or Abraham were, but I soon found out. I learned to value Christian education at this fundamental level.

In that same congregation there was a home builder named Ralph who took me aside one Sunday after church. Ralph urged me to go to a Christian college. Since we were a poor family, it seemed impossible for my family to send me to college, but Ralph created a dream that I pursued. The jump from the Sunday school level to being an undergraduate Bible major surprised me. I learned about Greek and Hebrew and in the process became well-acquainted with the Bible. Raymond Kelcy, Hugo McCord, Lynn McMillon and others led me into a higher level of biblical study. Many have the same experience at preacher training schools, often under the umbrella of the Sunset Institute for Biblical Studies, or at online schools such as Truth for Today's World Missions School. Each school provides deeper training in the Bible.

After undergraduate college, I was determined to immediately seek a ministry position. Bailey McBride, one of my college professors, took me to lunch and affirmed my desire for ministry, but told me he saw more potential in me than I did in myself. He told me I was a good candidate for graduate study. I followed his recommendation. Graduate school opened to me a whole new level of biblical understanding. I learned the difference between Introduction to the Old Testament with its focus on mastering the material in the Old Testament, and Advanced Introduction to the Old Testament which investigated questions of canon, authorship, purpose. Graduate education allowed me to interact with men and women who had given their whole lives to the study of one biblical book. Just as people who travel internationally discover a whole new world, so graduate studies take one on a similar journey. In graduate school, I learned about another level of Christian education.

Global Christian Studies attempts to be a Ralph and a Bailey McBride for leaders in Churches of Christ around the world. We affirm the Sunday school in the local church. We encourage VBS. We believe in preacher training and undergraduate education. Our focus, however, is on helping qualified students obtain graduate training. We believe the church benefits from training at all levels. Our area of concentration is graduate studies in Bible and Christian ministry for church leaders outside the US. That's GCS.

--Harold Shank

An Update on GCS

GCS has experienced slow but steady growth. We sponsored the first two students in the spring semester of 2019 and one continued in the fall of 2019. One year ago, in the spring semester of 2020, we had four students; last fall we worked with six students. This semester, spring of 2021, nine students are enrolled at Harding School of Theology under the GCS umbrella. We have accepted another student who will begin in fall 2021. Currently, ten students from around the world are being helped by GCS.

This semester we serve Nancy and Nathan from Australia, Vitaly and Valeriy from Ukraine, Justin from Switzerland, Jasper and Ubong from Nigeria, Winfred from Ghana, and Edmundo from Bolivia. George from Ghana will begin courses in the fall.

The GCS students are enrolled in these classes: Biblical Preaching, Managing Conflict in Ministry, Hebrew Poetry, Spiritual and Theological Formation, Advanced Introduction to the Old Testament, and Global Evangelism.

Most students take one or two classes. All classes are live and online. The time zone difference makes some classes a challenge for our students, but they work hard to overcome the difficulties and HST does what they can to make studies easier.

New Sponsors!

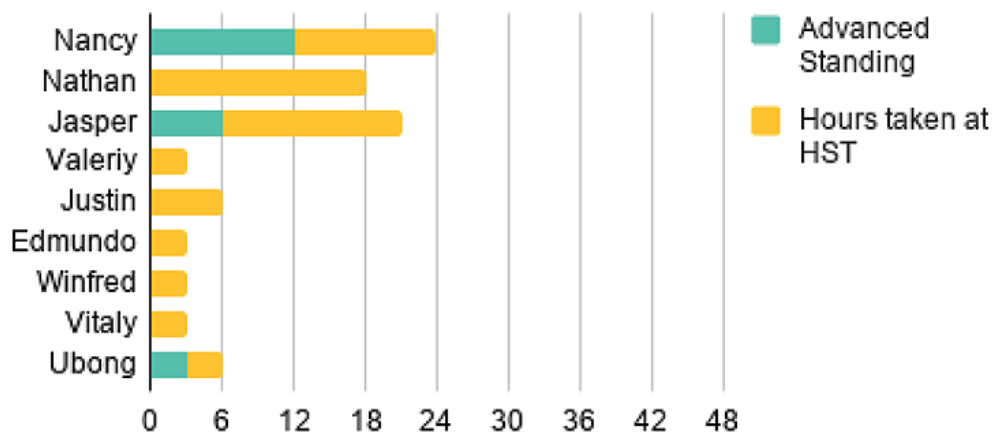
Since the last newsletter several new donors and sponsors have joined GCS. Individuals include a family from Virginia and another three from Tennessee. New congregational sponsors include a church in Missouri and one in Memphis. Several others have been asked to join the GCS ministry. If you have suggestions on sponsors, please contact John Coffey or Harold Shank.

Advisory Council

A world-wide advisory council has been part of the plan for Global Christian Studies from the very beginning. The elders of the two overseeing churches provide overall guidance for GCS. The advisory council meets once or twice a year to offer advice about global issues, potential students, and references on new donors.

The effort to begin the Advisory Council started in January and is in process at the current time. We hope to have a complete report in the August edition of the GCS newsletter.

Student Progress



GCS Spotlight--New Students



Edmundo Lopez

Edmundo is a church leader from Santa Cruz, Bolivia. He studied in Geneva, Switzerland, where he earned a Bachelor, Master and PhD (all in Computer Science). He met his wife, Jasmin, during that time and then married her. She is also from Bolivia. He is now a leader at the Church of Christ “5to anillo” and earns his living as a computer consultant.



Winfred Sackey

Winfred is from Amasaman, Ghana, is married to Ruby, and they have three children. He maintains an interest in gardening, history and traditional culture. Since 2007, he has been an instructor at Heritage Christian College, in Accra-Ghana.



Vitaly Samodin

Vitaly lives in Kyiv, Ukraine. Since 2006, he has been the Director of the Ukrainian Education Center. He also preaches for the Nivky Church of Christ. He is a graduate of International Christian University.



Ubong Okorie

Ubong grew up in a Christian home in Nigeria where his father, Bassey Okorie, was an elder at the Ukpom town, Akwa Ibom State, Church of Christ. He is a graduate of Nigerian Christian Bible College and the University of Calabar. He is an evangelist and has been involved in church planting in Lagos, Bayelsa, Calabar, Jos and other places in Nigeria.



Justin Smith

Justin preaches for Churches of Christ in Lausanne and Geneva, Switzerland. He is a Swiss native, and has a degree from Harding University in Searcy. He and his wife, Martina, have three children: a daughter and two sons.



Valeriy Kachuk

Valeriy works with a church in the southeast part of Kharkiv, Ukraine, and teaches English with the bible at Inspire Language School. He has been a minister since 2001.

Word from HST

This past year has required a lot of adjustments, but Harding School of Theology has been in a good position to manage them. They have been using Zoom for several years, so their classes have continued uninterrupted during this time of social distancing. The impact on GCS students has been minimal.

The major difficulty the pandemic has posed for GCS students is the inability to travel to Memphis for Advanced Theological Research. This class is foundational for studies at HST, but can only be taken in person. GCS students will be unable to take it until Spring 2022. Throughout all of these difficulties, HST has worked with GCS students, ensuring their studies are not disrupted by circumstances outside of their control. They have provided resources and spent time and effort reaching out to students, ensuring they have what they need to succeed academically. The school values GCS students, and works hard to accommodate the unique issues associated with having a global student body.

Dr. Matt Carter writes, "Having students in class from various cultures enriches our classes, giving them a multicultural experiential base. It is a blessing to also have GCS students participate in chapel as we get to know fellow ministers around the world (see Dr. Black's article about Zoom chapel on p. 6 of the most recent issue of The Bridge). In fact, Val spoke in chapel during fall semester."

HST has always trained missionaries who moved to other countries. One leader at HST said, "We really value the partnership in training local leaders in their home country."

GCS is pleased to be partners with HST.

Financial Report for 2020

GCS had a total of six different students during 2020. Revenue for those students totaled \$31,185.92. Expenses for students during the year was \$16,080.92. GCS asks donors to contribute the entire cost of a student's education during a five-year period, even though the students may take six to eight years to complete the degrees. This allows GCS a steady cash flow and assures students of funding for their degrees.

Administrative costs were just over sixteen thousand dollars for two part time staff, fund raising, and web site costs. GCS expects the administrative portion of the total expenditures to remain fixed while student expenses will rise. The two GCS overseeing congregations provide all the administrative costs, so all money donated to students goes directly to their education. There were two other large donations at the end of 2020 which will be applied to future student expenses.

GCS has nine students enrolled in the winter 2021 semester. Six of those students have sponsors who not only contribute to the student expenses but also pray for the student's success. GCS is currently seeking additional sponsors.

GCS Overseeing Congregations

Eastside Church of Christ, 916 South Douglas Blvd, Midwest City, OK 73130
(www.eastsidechurchofchrist.info).

Their elders include Sam Brandon, Ricky Bugher, Ron Cannefax, and David Walton.

Belmore Road Church of Christ, 100 Rostrevor Parade, Mont Albert North, Victoria 3129, Australia (www.belmoreroadchurch.org.au).

Their elders are Charles Hooi, Benny Tabalujan, and David Tabe.

GCS is actively seeking additional students and sponsors. Students are urged to consult the GCS website: www.gcspathway.org for how to engage with GCS. They can also email John Coffey (jcoffey@harding.edu) or Harold Shank (drharoldshank@gmail.com).

Message to Potential Students

GCS seeks students from around the globe who live outside the US, who have an accredited bachelor's degree, and have the full recommendation of their local congregation. The process of being accepted by GCS and enrolling in a US school takes about four months. Students who attend HST can do all their work online (high speed internet is required), but must take the course Advanced Theological Research on site in Memphis. GCS pays the student's expenses for this Memphis trip.

The total cost of an accredited graduate degree in Bible or ministry is about \$50,000. HST provides a generous scholarship, GCS donors give \$5,000 per year for five years, and the student is required to contribute \$2,600 toward their degree.

For more information: visit www.gcspathway.org or email us at gcspathwayinfo@gmail.com

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