



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

GCS News - January 2023

*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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How To Go Into "All The World"

According to the World Atlas web site there are 194 universally recognized nations in the contemporary world. The World Population Review website has a world map of the nations where less than ten percent of the population is in

any sense Christian. A large band of over thirty nations from northern Africa, through the Middle East and southeast Asia, ending in Japan all fit within less than ten percent figure.

How do we go into “all the world?”

Gilles Gravelle, Director of Research and Innovation at Seed Company, reported that nearly three fourths of the \$13 billion Americans spent on missions in 2010 went to support missionaries ministering in places where there were already many churches.

How do we go into “all the world?”

One viable option is to train people in nations around the world who can raise up a strong Christian presence in their home nation and then send missionaries to the largely non-Christian nations nearby. Missionaries from southern Africa which has a substantial Christian population are geographically closer to this large band of non-Christian nations than those in north America.

Global Christian Studies (GCS) may be part of the answer. GCS is a ministry which equips Christian leaders outside of the U.S. with the same training of the typical American missionary. With a master’s degree in Bible and Christian ministry, these graduates are well-equipped to provide leadership, training, and sending of missionaries from their own nations. GCS students study on line at universities associated with Churches of Christ in the U.S., while they stay at home and use their new skills to better equip their local churches.

The command to go into all the world will not go away. We need to explore every means to carry out this commission.

- Harold Shank

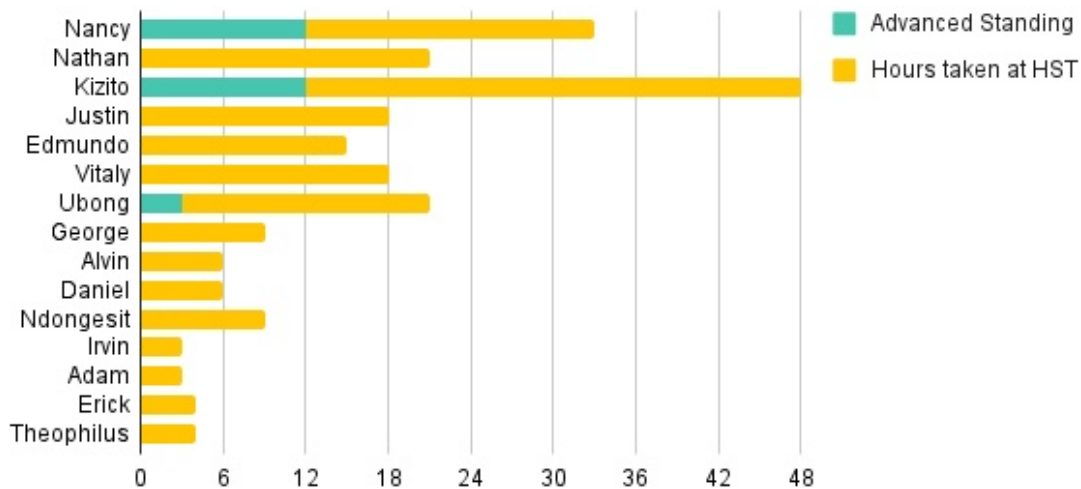
1 <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/how-many-countries-are-in-the-world.html>. Accessed 1-5-22.

2 <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/most-christian-countries>. Accessed 1-4-22.

3 <https://returnmandate.org/library/stewardship-in-missions/stewardship-the-other-side-of-generosity#footnote>. Accessed 1-3-22.

Student Updates

Student Progress



This graph shows each GCS student progressing toward completion of the 48 hour MACM degree.

- **Nancy Wu Won** of Australia studied Systematic Theology. She shared, "I enjoyed learning about the doctrine of the Trinity/Godhead/Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and how the community within the Godhead overflows to us in the church and is the inspiration for what we do and who we are."
- **Kizito Jasper** of Nigeria completed Systematic Theology, Stone-Campbell Movement and completed his Guided Research on "An Exploration of the Garden Metaphor in the Poetry of Song of Songs." He shares about his research, "my exploration was against the framework of the relationship between the man and the woman in the Song as an allegorical representation of the relationship of either Israel and YHWH or Christ and his bride, the church. I explored the poetry of the garden metaphor which is a well-nuanced description of the woman in the world of the ancient Near East."
- **Justin Smith** of Switzerland completed Advanced Introduction to the New Testament. He says, "Class discussions were interesting and Dr. Black challenged us to think through some of the more difficult issues surrounding the study of the New Testament."
- **Edmundo Lopez** of Bolivia took Multicultural Ministry. He shared how he took this class during a tumultuous time in his country and city and declared, "My takeaway was that social conflict does not have to stop one from doing ministry work."
- **Vitaly Samodin** of Ukraine took Sermon Development and Delivery. He said, "I was able to try new preaching methods. It was a great learning experience. I also got a chance to practice writing book reviews, which I

learned to do in the summer semester with Ms. Holland at Advanced Theological Research class."

- **Ubong Okorie** of Nigeria took Isaiah and Sermon Development. He describes Isaiah as, "an up to date prophet that needs to be preached for our contemporary World of politics, lack of Justice in our society and an outright call to faithfulness."
- **George Danquah** of Nigeria was registered in Stone-Campbell Movement. He shares, "Going through the course, I learnt about the need to be historically conscious of the church's history so to be able to narrate, describe and analyze it from many perspectives as well as integrating it for the good of ministry and learning."
- **Alvin Tjipto** of Australia took Stone-Campbell Movement in Fall 2022. He says, "it really equips me not only with knowledge but a little bit of wisdom to know how to understand and address some contemporary issues like social justice, knowing how we've dealt with it from the past."
- **Daniel Rodriguez** of Honduras completed Greek 1. He expressed, "by learning greek, I have better tools in order to read and apply the New Testament Scriptures."
- **Ndongesit Effeh** of Nigeria completed Advanced Introduction to New Testament and Greek I. He states, "These courses were really insightful and refreshing."
- **Erick Rodriguez** of Mexico enrolled this fall in Theological Foundations of Ministry and Congregational Ministry. He expressed, "Both courses gave me a solid theological foundation for ministry, the tools to serve the church more effectively, and a broad vision of scripture regarding ministry."
- **Adam Appiah** of Ghana took Congregational Ministry in the fall of 2022. He stated, "I gained more insight on pastoral care of the minister...and I have become more conscious about spiritual disciplines."
- **Theophilus Gyau** of Ghana completed Theological Foundation For Ministry and Multicultural Ministry. He says, "I am very glad I enrolled in the multicultural class as it very much helped in my integration with the Australian culture as this is my first time away from home, Ghana."
- **Irvin Wan** of Singapore studied Acts. He shared, "In this class, we explored the key themes of this book that captures many core experiences of the early church."

We wish all of our students a prosperous and successful semester. We are glad to be part of how they are honing their Bible study and ministry skills!

Student Spotlight - *Edmundo Lopez*



Edmundo Lopez currently lives in Santa Cruz, Bolivia with his wife, his 5 year old daughter, and has another child on the way, expected to arrive in June. He works remotely as a software developer for a company in Austin, TX. Edmundo has now been enrolled at HST for 3 years. He is very involved with his local congregation and is interested in taking on the role of the youth minister after he finishes his degree. He sees a need to invest in younger generations to help them grow and develop their own faith. While his studies require time, planning, consistency, and sacrifices, he strives to share what he is learning with his congregation and to model openness and flexibility in meeting the needs of the church and community. He uses the knowledge and skills he's gained from his studies at HST to develop new material for sermon lessons he gives at his church. Edmundo has also noticed others commenting on his improved social skills, confidence, and demeanor since he started his time at HST. He also expressed having aspirations to help his local congregation continue to grow in the faith, be ever more welcoming, and serve their community with love. He dreams of people in Bolivia not just being "Christians" culturally, but being Christians who have a fire, passion, and conviction in their faith for God.

Recognizing the various ways God has worked in his life to this point, Edmundo told multiple stories of God's providence. One example he shared was how welcoming the local church was toward him shortly after his move to Switzerland to study computer science at the University of Geneva. One of the members had apparently just read about him and his family in the Christian Chronicle. He found it incredible how the congregation there embraced him as their own even though he spoke a different language and came from a different culture. He stated "I changed countries, but somehow I found a community that welcomed me in as one of their own." It was at that church that he first encountered Harding students and learned about Harding University. Then shortly after completing his degree in Switzerland and moving back to Bolivia, a member of this church in Switzerland heard about Global Christian Studies (GCS) and told Edmundo. Already familiar with Harding University and realizing this new possibility, he quickly became interested in and pursued enrollment at Harding School of Theology (HST). To Edmundo this was his opportunity to learn under great teachers in a program that would help him minister to his church and community, while experiencing transformation in his faith.

It is evident when speaking with Edmundo that he has a heart to serve and to grow in his service to others. He enrolled in HST to refine his skills, gain more knowledge, and receive guidance and direction in areas where he did not know how to improve. Edmundo described himself as an introvert and expressed that his course work has challenged him to further develop his interpersonal skills, communication, and conflict management skills. He feels it has helped him grow significantly in each of these areas. He also talked about his Church Conflict class with Carlos Gupton, which helped provide a framework to think about relationships and how he can engage others more effectively. He also recounted a story when he was in Multicultural Ministry where he was working on a project in the midst of local city wide protests. He experienced unusual constraints and decided to meet with his professor and GCS staff to brainstorm how to complete his project. He recalled his conversation with his professor who told him that "ministry continues always, even through conflicts." This has stuck with Edmundo and has been a continual reminder of the resolve he hopes to emulate in his ministry, regardless of the obstacles ahead.

Edmundo voiced that HST has been a great experience and how he has received invaluable support from his HST professors and GCS staff. He wanted to say, "thank you for your support! You are really making an impact in my community through HST and through the things they are teaching...thank you for that impact that you are creating, and maybe not seeing, but I can tell you that it is happening." He encourages potential and new students to enroll as they will each find value in the teaching and classes that will take them intellectually and spiritually to the next level. He describes the professors as committed Christians who are also mentors for their students. He stated, "there is a lot of potential that you have inside, that HST can help you to unlock. It will not be easy, but it is worth it."



Invitation to be a Sponsor

GCS has a deep concern that each sponsored national leader complete their graduate program. Central to our support is having a sponsoring church or donor for each student. We want people in the GCS orbit to be praying for the students and for their concerns. Matching a student with a donor or congregation is important.

Currently we have more students than sponsors. Would you consider helping us identify sponsors? If you could help in any of the following areas, please contact Harold Shank.

- I know of a congregation which might be interested and am willing to provide you with an introduction.
- A friend of mine loves to pray and I could connect the two of you together.
- The congregation where I attend might well be interested. Let me contact one of the leaders and get back to you.

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

Find out more

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Find out more at: www.gcspathway.org
or go to the GCS landing page on the HST website: <https://hst.edu/gcspathway/>
Email us at: gcspathwayinfo@gmail.com

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