

IAMS Matters

IAMS Matters September-December 2012

Dear colleagues in mission studies,

First of all, I want to thank all of you who were present in our Toronto assembly and especially all those who worked for its success. Meeting with so many colleagues at a time, and getting to know many new ones is a special treat! It gives us a lot of energy for the future.

The assembly's ' backbone is the study groups and paper sessions. In Toronto alone, we presented, listened to and discussed more than a hundred papers. Quite a gluttony of mission scholarly ideas and debates! Beyond doubt, we will have the opportunity to read quite a number of these papers as articles or parts of dissertations or other books in the future as well as in our own journal. In the assembly, a new study group was being formed, namely Religious Freedom and Persecution having Christof Sauer as the convener. To see more about the group, see below. The next executive committee meeting will decide about the adoption of the group as an IAMS study group. BISAM met actively in the assembly, more about BISAM below in this letter. Other permanent study groups have not submitted their reports so far.

The assembly generated plenty of feedback, not least through the questionnaire in the program book. The feedback was predominantly positive. For a preliminary report on the feedback, see the [IAMS Toronto Assembly Report – click here](#).

There were also aspects not asked in the questionnaire because they were raised ad hoc. I discuss them here at some length.

Several participants of the assembly commented on the spiritual aspect of the opening and closing ceremonies. They included prayers and benedictions in the Canadian First Nations' traditions performed/led mostly by Anglican clergy but also laypersons. Some of this was in English, some in local languages. Most of the people who commented this considered the contents of the prayers and benedictions as syncretistic inasmuch as they could understand them, namely the English ones. They often pointed out that it is fine to have interreligious encounters in the assemblies but interfaith spirituality is quite another matter, especially if it comes as a surprise. However, there were also those who spontaneously came to thank us for the very same dimension of the ceremonies, having experienced it as deeply moving. Again, here IAMS richness in views and traditions becomes visible – what is valuable to one, is to be rejected by another. As a result, there is not nor will not be a specific IAMS theology of religions but each member has her own views of these issues. There was not and will not be a purposeful placing of our members in situations that they consider violating their convictions. In the future, this could be avoided through more precise information on the contents of each program point. Some participants also pointed out that they would rather see a clearer demarcation between the spiritual and the academic dimensions of the assembly. This is probably one way in which some of this kind of collision could be avoided – there were also voices pointing out

that the (generally very much appreciated) assembly worship was far too Evangelical Protestant. At any rate, the local organizing partner will strongly label the assembly worship life even in the future.

Another question that was raised up by even more participants, mostly orally but partly also in writing, was the question about the academic quality and identity of IAMS. The time spent in academic work and its quality were put to the fore. Yet another question was that the plenary keynote speeches were placed in the evenings, which was considered as an unfortunate decision because of the tiredness of the participants affected the discussions. The rationale behind the placing was that it was thought that evening time might attract Toronto residents to participate in those sessions. This assembly was shorter than the previous ones, to a large extent because of the economic reasons. Some felt that the assembly fee was high even at the present length. The greater the conference budget gets, the greater are the financial risks to the organizer, too. These were some of the reasons for the somewhat shorter assembly. However, when the assembly form followed more or less the pattern of the longer assemblies including exposure, worship, Bible studies and official IAMS meetings, the space left for the academic program decreased even if a other program points were also kept to the minimum. Additionally, when the participants were delightfully active in coming with their papers, there often was a feeling of rush in order to squeeze many papers into the time slots available – be they keynote or study group papers. More time for presenting and rumination was hoped for, as well as reporting sessions from study groups. This feedback will be considered when planning the next assembly.

The question whether the representatives of the institutional members are eligible as candidates for the executive committee raised few but ferocious voices during and after the assembly. It was felt as unfair, even illegal, that in some of the regional meetings representatives of the institutional members were not accepted as candidates. In the general meeting it was agreed that in the coming assembly they will be counted as eligible. Because the constitution is a legal document and the question was raised whether a breach of law had taken place in the case of rejecting the candidacy of institutional members' representatives, I decided to turn to a lawyer specialized in international agreements. He agreed to consult pro bono – free of charge. His comments were as follows: The way the constitution has been formulated implies that the institutional members' representatives are not eligible as candidates. However, one may argue that this was not the intention of IAMS when the constitution was written because this could be seen as counterproductive to the society itself. Thus, the implied letter and the implied spirit of the constitution are in tension between each other. The way IAMS constitution has been interpreted in the past does not form a binding pattern for the future general meetings. As a result, there are two ways of resolving the tension – either to take the matter to a British court to see which interpretation is more viable or to modify the constitution so that the wording is in line with the intention (in case IAMS members' majority considers it preferable to have institutional members' representatives eligible as candidates). The executive committee will discuss the issue in its first full meeting in the beginning of February.

The next executive committee meeting will take place 1st-3rd February in Oxford. Among the issues discussed in addition to the ones referred to above, will be e.g. Mission Studies future in the transition period from Kima Pachuau (thank you, Kima, for your hard work!) to Kirsteen Kim, the possible need to go through the constitution and the byelaws to find out other possible passages that may create problems in the future and planning of the 2016 assembly.

Meanwhile, the executive committee has held an e-mail meeting to deal with membership applications. The decisions will soon be informed to the applicants.

I am looking forward to cooperation with you during the coming four years!

Mika Vähäkangas, President

Message from Dr Hunt

Dr Robert Hunt sends a message of thanks for all the visits and prayers while he was hospitalized in Toronto. He was released on August 23rd and returned to Dallas on the 24th. Since then he has been recovering well and has returned to lecturing, although not yet full time office work.

Biblical Studies and Mission (BISAM)

If you haven't noticed, I am the new coordinator/convener of BISAM. My name is vanThanh Nguyen, SVD. I am a missionary of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois.

At the beginning of my term, I would like to take this opportunity to express deep gratitude to John Prior for his exemplary leadership as BISAM coordinator/convener for the last eight years (2004-2012). Eight years is a long time, and it involved a lot of commitment and hard work. He had shepherded BISAM through challenging times, and thanks to his dedication, BISAM has grown and thrived in many ways, for example, in membership. Currently, there are 65 contacts on the BISAM mailing list of whom 18 are living in Europe, 16 in Africa, 11 in Asia, another 9 in North America, 8 in Latin America, and 3 in Oceania. There are 13 women and 52 men. As you can see, BISAM is quite international! On behalf of all the members of BISAM, I sincerely thank John for his fine work and wish him all the best in his teaching and mentoring present and future scholars.

Next, I would like to give a brief report about the Conference on Migration in Toronto. BISAM presenters were divided into two parallel groups, one chaired by Gerard Goldman and the other by John Prior. Seventeen papers on Bible, Migration, and Mission were read and discussed. Presenters came from different gender, countries and ethnic backgrounds: USA; India; Indonesia; South Africa; China; Nigeria; and New Zealand. The presenters at the Toronto Conference in 2012 were: Felix Enegho; P. G. George; Robert Gallagher; Sarita Gallagher; Colin Godwin; Craig Hendrickson; Paul Hertig; Johannes Kritzinger; vanThanh Nguyen; Gladys Ogedegbe; John Prior; Kelhoukhrieno Savi; Batara Sihombing; Amy West; George Wieland; Nelus Niemandt; and Wen xi Zhang.

The BISAM Business Meeting at the Toronto Conference generated a lot of enthusiasm and interests. Two notable items are worth mentioning. First, those present gave strong support for an Inter-Conference Project over the next two years. Topics taken up should continue with, and deepen aspects of, the Toronto theme of migration, human dislocation and the Good News. This theme was proposed: "Margins as the Center in Christian Mission." The second item is about the publication of papers. Presenters need to be assured that their papers might be published in a peer reviewed journal or a book format. With a greater avenue to publish their papers, BISAM will attract more

interest and provide a greater incentive for presenters to strive for even more excellence in the quality of their papers.

As noted by the two conveners, namely, John Prior and Gerald Goldman, many papers presented at the last BISAM session were stellar in quality. Consequently, several papers are under review for publication in *Mission Studies*. John Prior and I are also exploring different avenues to publish the other papers in a book format. There is more to come about this in the future.

With gratitude and best regards,

vanThanh Nguyen, SVD email: tnguyen@ctu.edu

Healing/Pneumatology study-group IAMS Toronto Conference report

Eight to ten people attended on average the four sessions of this study-group, an optimal size for intensive discussions and exchanges. The two periods on August 16 provided opportunity for sharing projects, papers, and research concerned with topics related to 'Healing' while the two sessions on August 18 offered a forum for presentations investigating missiological aspects of 'Pneumatology.' The eleven presentations by colleagues from Nigeria (2), Finland (3), the US (4), Canada (1), and Romania (1) featured—among others—topics as diverse as 'Missiological responses to HIV/AIDS in a time of anti-retroviral drugs', 'Margin as Center: Human dislocation and Scripture-based trauma healing', 'Spiritual Healing in Madagascar', 'The Flow of African Spirituality into Contemporary Christianity', 'Missiological Reflections in the Context of New Spiritualities', and 'Pneumatological Challenges to Postcolonial Lutheran Mission in the Tswana Context.'

The oftentimes very lively discussions and exchanges that followed the fifteen minutes presentations showed a vivid interest in these topics as did the fact that several scholars and PhD candidates present were not—yet—members of IAMS; issues of healing and pneumatology are obviously attracting colleagues from other disciplines, too.

However, due to the broad and stimulating diversity of the papers shared it is not possible to point to programmatic and definitive results of this study-group's deliberations besides establishing new networking and reaffirming existent collaborations. There was, though, a very strong, unanimous consensus among participants and presenters to ask the IAMS Executive to offer such a study-group forum again on occasion of the next conference.

Valparaiso, Oct. 18, 2012

Christoffer Grundmann

New IAMS study group: "Religious freedom and persecution"

Nine IAMS members agreed to form an ongoing IAMS Study Group on the topic of "Religious freedom and persecution" during a lunchtime meeting on Saturday 18 August 2012 at the IAMS Conference in Toronto.

The rationale for the study group is that much of religious persecution occurs in various different relationships to Christian mission, evangelism, witness, conversion, etc. In addition a rather large

proportion of studies pertaining to religious persecution are undertaken within the discipline of missiology.

The participants elected Prof. Dr. Christof Sauer (Director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom, Cape Town Bureau, South Africa) as the convenor and doctoral candidate Wolfgang Haede (Turkey) as co-convenor.

The participants agreed to the following steps:

- The convenors establish an electronic forum for email exchange and document repository and will register the names of the initial participants.
- The participants ask the IAMS-Executive to give their blessing to this new group and to advertise it through IAMS channels.
- The participants will receive a document that will enable them to invite other interested parties.

Four more members joined the group after the initial meeting. IAMS members and any other interested parties are welcome to register.

This IAMS study group will participate in the interdisciplinary International Consultation on Religious Freedom Research, Istanbul, Turkey, 16-18 March 2013, of which a track will serve as the first regular study group meeting. link: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/nlhckm5p9tb9fax/I3IJUYpiDG>

The intention of the consultation is to strengthen the network of religious freedom and persecution scholars/researchers and to thereby create synergy. Everybody may propose to present on relevant research. Organizers will select from these proposals and will frame the programme according to the number of proposals. The intention is not for everybody to listen to a handful of famous researchers but rather for meaningful interaction and mutual interaction on a peer level.

Deadlines for submission of proposals of: 15 November 2012. Selection of papers and preliminary programme: 15 December 2012.

Contact for study group and consultation: C. Sauer, IIRF, POBox 535, Edgemoed 7407, South Africa, email: christof@iirf.eu, Tel. +27-21-558 77 44. // W. Haede (co-convenor): whaede@swissmail.org

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS:

EUROPE

The date and location for IAMS European conference is still open. BIAMS, NIME and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Missionswissenschaft have been contacted to ask whether any of them is prepared to function as the host. AFOM hosted the previous organized European conference. Further proposals for possible hosts can be e-mailed to mika.vahakangas@teol.lu.se

Lund Mission Studies day and doctoral seminar 26th-27th March 2013

"Researching the Enchanted World: Positioning ourselves in anthropology of Christianity and studies in world Christianity".

Time: Conference sessions 26th March 2013 from 1:15 pm until 5:30 pm; doctoral seminar for mission and world Christianity scholars 27th March from 9:15 am until 1 pm.

Speakers include Prof. Joel Robbins (University of California, San Jose), Prof. Jan-Åke Alvarsson (Uppsala University), Dr. Naomi Haynes (Edinburgh University), Dr. Karen Lauterbach (Copenhagen/Lund Universities) and Dr. Carl Sundberg (Lund University), all with considerable experience with researching Charismatic/Pentecostal Christianity in the two-thirds world.

For further information contact mika.vahakangas@teol.lu.se

Other news

Please make sure to keep your contact details up-to-date in order to receive the journal *Mission Studies* and to be kept updated with the IAMS Matters Newsletter.