

IAMS Matters: January 2026

Message from the President

Dear IAMS Friends and Colleagues,

Warm greetings to you all as we welcome the New Year 2026.

This year is a very meaningful one for our Association. In July, we will gather in South Africa for the 16th IAMS Assembly — a moment we have been prayerfully preparing for and anticipating together. It is also the year in which I will complete my term as President. Looking back, my journey of leadership began when I was elected Vice-President during the 2016 Assembly in Seoul, followed by six years of service in that role, and since 2022, it has been my honor to serve as President. In many ways, these ten years have been a profound journey of learning, friendship, and shared mission with the IAMS community.

During these years, my own life has also passed through many personal seasons, and yet, IAMS has always remained a community of resonance, encouragement, and theological imagination for me. For this, I am deeply grateful.

Earlier this month, from 21–23 January, the *South-to-South IAMS Conference* took place in the Philippines, bringing together scholars from Asia, Africa, and Latin America for the first time in this way. This gathering was a meaningful space of exchange among Global South scholars and an important contribution toward our global Assembly in July. As a member of the Global South myself, I am deeply proud of this initiative and sincerely thank the three organizers who have led it—Prof. Thinandavha Derrick Mashau (IAMS Africa), Prof. Joaquim Andrade (IAMS Latin America), and Prof. Fides del Castillo (IAMS Asia)—for their vision, dedication, and collaborative spirit.

This South-to-South gathering embodies the very vision I hoped to nurture when I began my presidency in 2022. It reminded me once again of the values that have guided my leadership—values centered on accessibility. For me, this means three things in particular:

First, accessibility for emerging scholars.

I have long hoped that young and emerging voices would be heard more fully within IAMS. This desire is closely linked to financial accessibility. I hope that scholars from the Global South, as well as emerging scholars living in the Global North, will continue to receive support so that participation in IAMS gatherings becomes increasingly possible. With this in mind, I have worked diligently to raise scholarship funds during my term, and I am happy to share that applications for conference scholarships for paper presenters will open in March.

Second, accessibility across languages.

English has become our common academic language, yet for many of us it is not our mother tongue, and sometimes this creates feelings of marginality. Over the past year, the development of new AI translation tools has helped lower some of these barriers; I see this as a surprising and promising development. While I am well aware of the concerns surrounding the rapid advancement of AI, this is also a matter that calls for deeper theological reflection on how technology shapes our communication and understanding of mission. I hope that we will continue

NEWSLETTER

to explore ways for multilingual participation so that linguistic difference never becomes a barrier to scholarly contribution.

Third, accessibility through communication.

I dreamed that IAMS would deepen communication both internally and externally. I am therefore delighted that last year we launched a new IAMS website. I also hope that, in time, we will strengthen our communication through social media and other forms of digital engagement, helping our global fellowship stay more closely connected.

Now, as 2026 unfolds, I pray that this year may be one of renewed hope and fresh beginnings for each of you in your research, ministries, communities, and personal lives. May God's gracious presence guide us as we continue walking together in mission.

I am deeply thankful for every colleague, friend, and companion in IAMS. Serving as your President has been a gift and a privilege. I look forward to meeting many of you in South Africa as together we participate in God's mission with humility, courage, and joy.

With gratitude and warm New Year blessings,

Bokyoung Park

President, [International Association for Mission Studies \(IAMS\)](#)

Professor of Missiology, Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary, South Korea

Message from the General Secretary

Update on the IAMS 2026 General Assembly and Conference (Pretoria)

Preparations for the IAMS 2026 General Assembly and Conference in Pretoria, South Africa, continue to move forward steadily. I am pleased to share that we have received more than 200 abstract submissions, a strong indication of the depth, diversity, and global engagement of our missiological community.

The review process is now underway. Study Group Conveners have completed their reviews by 10 January 2026, followed by Executive Committee approval on 15 January. Notifications of acceptance and rejection will be sent by 30 January 2026. Alongside our nine established Study Groups (which may include a one-off group), several thematic groups will be organized on-site, creating additional spaces for dialogue on emerging and cross-cutting themes in mission studies.

As we move into the next phase of preparation, I would like to remind colleagues that IAMS membership is required for all conference participants and presenters, including those contributing to Study Groups and thematic sessions. We warmly encourage non-members to join IAMS and become part of our global scholarly fellowship.

Conference registration fees for both on-site and online participation have now been agreed. Full registration details, including timelines and procedures, will be provided through the official conference registration website, which will be opened shortly by the Local Organizing Committee.

With regard to financial support, conference subsidies will be offered on a reimbursement basis and not paid in advance. Subsidy allocations will take regional contexts and travel distances into account, with particular attention to participants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Subsidies will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to the availability of funds, and clear instructions will be provided on the conference website.

Before closing, I would like to draw attention to a resource that may be of interest to many members. Hugh de Saram, former IAMS data administrator, who laid the foundation for the IAMS database over several decades, has made available *Nile Harvest: The Anglican Church in Egypt and the Sudan*, written by his father Brian de Saram, a CMS missionary who served for many years in South Sudan. This richly documented work is now accessible as a searchable online resource at <https://nileharvest.uk>.

We are deeply grateful for the commitment and cooperation of our members, conveners, and organizing teams, and we look forward to gathering together in Pretoria as we continue to walk, learn, and serve together in mission.

Rev. Bright Myeong Seok Lee, PhD.

General Secretary, [International Association for Mission Studies\(IAMS\)](https://www.iamsmatters.org/)

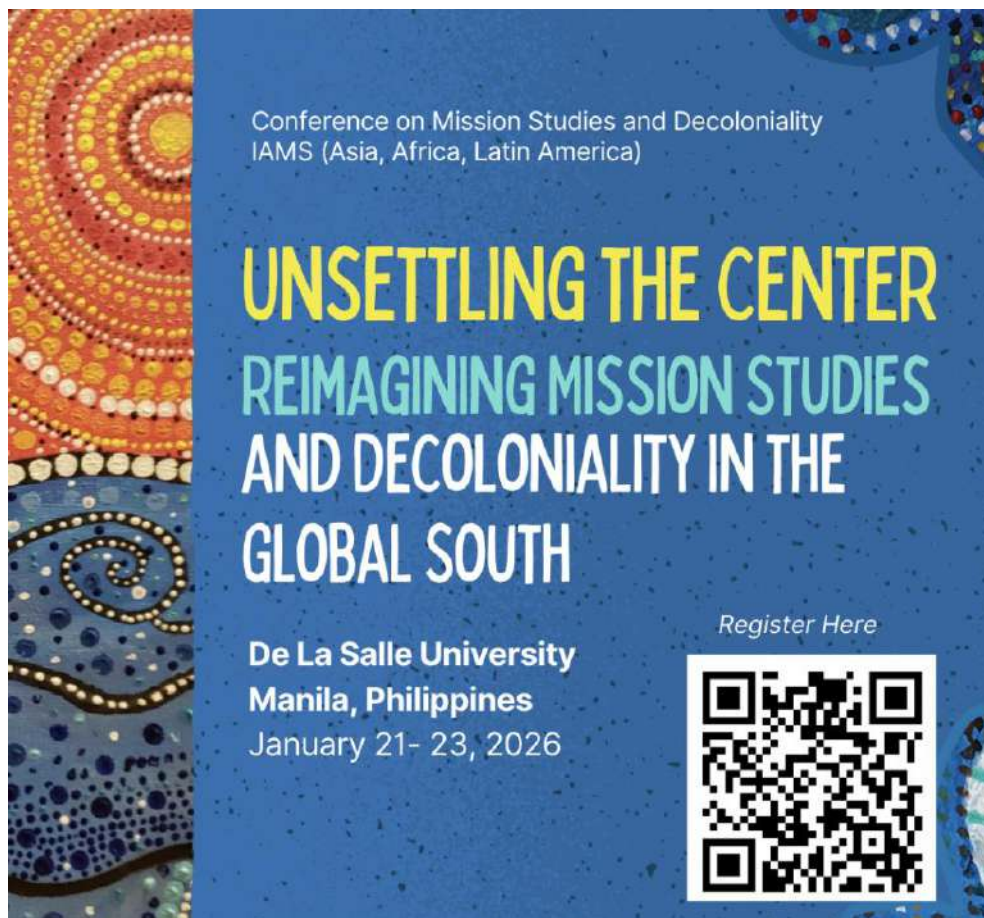
Assistant Professor of Practical Theology & Chaplain of International Graduate School, [ACTS University](https://www.actsuniversity.org/), Korea

Recent Event

Unsettling the Center: Reimagining Mission Studies and Decoloniality in the Global South

De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines

January 21 to 23, 2026



This event served as a critical and creative space for scholars, practitioners, and community leaders to engage in meaningful dialogue and reflection.

Objectives of the Conference:

- **Create a Critical Space:** We aim to foster an environment conducive to decolonial engagement in Mission Studies, encouraging innovative discussions that challenge traditional paradigms.
- **Amplify Emerging Theologies:** The conference will focus on amplifying and connecting theologies that are emerging from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, providing a platform for diverse voices and perspectives.

NEWSLETTER

- **Foster Interregional Solidarity:** We seek to build bridges among scholars and communities within the Global South, promoting solidarity and collaboration across regions.
- **Renew Vision of Mission:** Participants will contribute to a renewed vision of mission that emphasizes justice, reciprocity, and contextual faithfulness, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.
- **Reimagine Teaching Methodologies:** The conference will explore innovative teaching methodologies and practices in Mission Studies, aiming to make education more relevant and responsive to the needs of the Global South.



Publications by IAMS Members

Chinese Christian Witness: Identity, Creativity, Transmission, and Poetics

Volume Editors: [Xiaoli Yang](#) and [Daryl R. Ireland](#)

Language: English

Series: Theology and Mission in World Christianity, Volume: 38

Publication Date: 27 Nov 2025

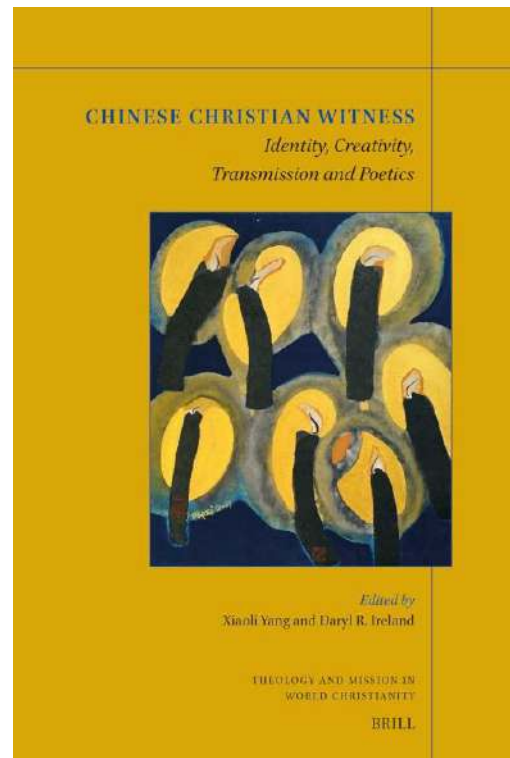
Paperback ISBN: 978-90-04-74160-7 Price: € 69 / US\$ 75

E-Book ISBN: 978-90-04-74161-4

Dr. Xiaoli Yang, our Oceania Region Representative, has shared with us information on her latest publication. Below is an [excerpt](#) from her description.

Together with my co-editor Daryl Ireland, I have had the privilege of working with a global team of scholars to assemble a book on [Chinese Christian Witness: Identity, Creativity, Transmission, and Poetics](#), which will be released on the 4th Dec 2025. It is an attempt to foreground how Chinese Christians have thought about and participated in mission over the last several centuries. The book covers multiple traditions: Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Chinese-initiated movements. It has a broad geographic span, looking at Chinese Christians in Oceania, Africa, Europe, and Asia. For those in China, it gives space for missiological reflection by people in both registered and unregistered churches.

One unique feature is that we have also assembled full-colored art works by various Chinese Christian artists, and had them reflect on the missiological significance of their pieces. Aesthetics, or poetics, as we suggest in the subtitle, has something significant to say about Christian witness.



NEWSLETTER

Nile Harvest: The Anglican Church in Egypt and the Sudan

Author: Brian de Saram

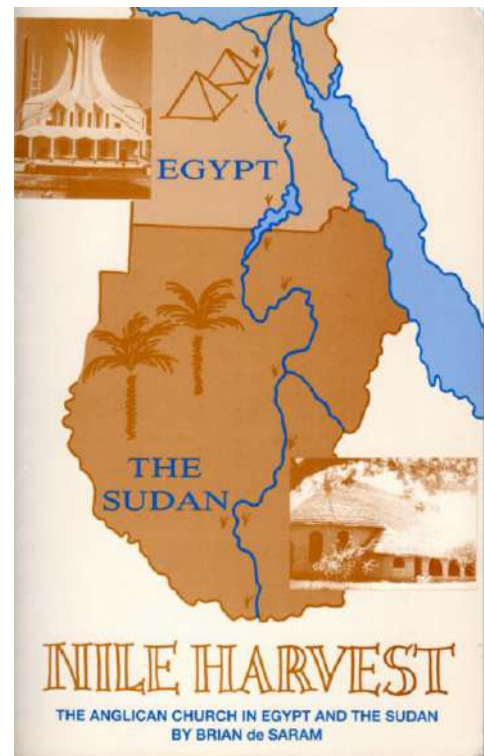
Publication Date: 1992

ISBN: 0951907204, 9780951907207

From Author's Preface

This book is written chiefly for Egyptian and Sudanese members of the Episcopal Church, that they may see the Church to which they belong in the perspectives of history. I hope that it may become a book of reference for the ordinary church member, in which he or she may discover the origins of Christianity in the Nile Valley and the traditions which he or she has inherited. I hope that this will give to the Episcopal Church in Egypt and the Sudan a sense of strength and permanence which will enable them to withstand, with the other Christian Churches in the Middle East, the pressures of the modern world and to make a positive contribution to the life of the communities in which they exist.

Link to full text: <https://nileharvest.uk/>



For an Authentic Korean Ecotheology

Author: Bright Myeong Seok Lee

Publisher: Regnum Books

Publication Date: 26 Jan 2026

ISBN: 978-1-917059-73-2

[*For an Authentic Korean Ecotheology*](#) invites readers into a rich exploration of how Korea's primal and Christian worldviews together shape a living theology of creation. Drawing on history, culture, and faith, Bright Lee shows how Korea's indigenous understandings of nature have long informed theological reflection and continue to speak powerfully amid today's ecological crises. By tracing the enduring influence of primal worldviews alongside Western missionary and colonial legacies, the book offers an indigenized and contextually grounded approach to ecotheology. Bridging Korea's story with broader global and African experiences, this groundbreaking study calls for a faith that is locally rooted, globally engaged, and passionately committed to restoring harmony between humanity and the natural world.

