Brief History of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia

75th Anniversary Celebration
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
September 29, 2012
Our story begins in Nanjing in 1911 when steps were taken to merge schools sponsored by the Disciples of Christ, Methodist, and Presbyterian mission boards into an interdenominational seminary originally called the Nanking Bible Training School.
First faculty members of the Nanking Bible Training School:

Rev. J. C. Garritt, D.D., President and Professor of Biblical Interpretation, Apologetics, and Comparative Religion. (Presbyterian USA)

Rev. P. Frank Price, D.D., Professor-elect, Theology and Homiletics. (Presbyterian US)

Rev. Frank Garrett, Professor of Old Testament Literature. (Disciples)

Rev. Harry F. Rowe, Professor of Church History. (Methodist)

Rev. Chen Chin-yung, Professor of New Testament Language and Literature. (Presbyterian)

Rev. J. Leighton Stuart, Professor of New Testament Language and Literature. (Presbyterian US)

Mr. Chen Li-seng, Professor of Homiletics.

Mr. Li Djao, Professor of Sacred and General History.

Mr. Shih Yun-ting and Mr. Dsiang Tiao-chin, Tutors.
The first of many disruptions suffered by the new school occurred in the fall of 1911 with the fall of the Manchu government. During a siege of Nanjing, the school was forced to close and the students left.

On January 1, 1912 Sun Yat-sen took the oath as President of the new republic of China and the Nanking Bible Training School reopened on March 5th - the students returning without their queues.

By 1913, enrollment had risen to 93 students, from 9 provinces.
In 1917, the school was officially renamed as Nanking Theological Seminary. By 1919, the student body had grown to 146 students, representing 16 denominations, 11 provinces, and Korea. The new “Department of College Graduates”, or B.D. course, had 4 students.

Harry F. Rowe was elected President of the Seminary in 1921.
Theological controversy within the Nanking Seminary Board of Managers came to a head in 1922 when the North Kiangsu Mission of the Southern Presbyterian Church asked that certain “heretical” books not be used in the Seminary curriculum. This mission eventually withdrew its support of the school.
After a period of steady growth, Seminary life was again disrupted in 1927 when leftist troops entered Nanking, burned a dormitory, and stripped most of the buildings of furnishings and equipment. The Seminary closed and did not re-open until the autumn of 1929.

Damage to the East Dormitory, July 1927
As life returned to normal in the early 1930s, the Seminary’s first Chinese President was elected in 1931. Rev. Handel Lee served as President until 1949.
The Seminary’s situation was destined to change significantly in 1931 when the last survivor of the Wendel family of New York City died and it was discovered that Rebecca Wendel Swope and her sister Ella Wendel had left a large amount of money to be used for the maintenance of the “Nankin (sic) Theological Seminary.”
The Swope-Wendel bequest greatly multiplied the financial resources of the Seminary and also inspired a fresh study of the whole question of theological education in China. In 1934 Luther Weigle, Dean of the Yale Divinity School, was asked to direct a survey of the training of ministers and lay-people in China, assisted by C. Stanley Smith, Chester S. Miao, and others, resulting in a report titled *Education for Service in the Christian Church in China*. 
The years 1931 to 1937 brought steady growth for the Seminary, including the establishment of an active program related to rural church work, led by Frank W. Price. Shenhuachen, a rural community fifteen miles southeast of Nanjing was selected as an experimental and training laboratory for the Rural Church Department.
The Nanking Board of Founders, predecessor of the FTESEA, was established in New York to disburse funds from the Swope-Wendel bequest and it held its initial meeting in June, 1937. The Seminary was primed to make strides in developing its faculty and campus when the chaos of war again intervened.
From the end of 1937 until the re-opening of the Nanjing campus in March 1946, the Seminary was split between Chengdu and Shanghai.

While transfers of funds and communications with the New York office were possible for the Chengdu campus in Free China, the Seminary faculty and administrators at the Shanghai campus had limited contact with New York throughout the war.
In Chengdu, Nanking Seminary faculty taught classes at West China Union Theological College and post-graduate classes, as well as establishing a new rural training center.

Graduating class of union seminary
Classes were also held in Shanghai and the *Nanking Theological Seminary Bulletin* was published there.
In May 1946, the **Third Conference on Translation of Christian Classics into Chinese**, sponsored by Nanking Theological Seminary, was held in New York, continuing a project that had persisted throughout the war years.

---

**THIRD CONFERENCE ON TRANSLATION OF CHRISTIAN CLASSICS INTO CHINESE**

Nanking Theological Seminary

May 18, 1946

Those present at the Conference were:

H. P. Van Dusen, Chairman
R. H. Bainton
E. S. Brightman
M. M. Deems
G. P. Fedotov
E. R. Hardy, Jr.
W. S. Hudson
E. J. Johanson
F. P. Jones
Umphrey Lee

P. Lehmann
F. H. Littell
C. W. Lowry
J. T. McNeill
W. Miehler
J. H. Nichols
R. C. Petry
D. E. Roberts
M. Spinks
G. Thomas
C. R. Thompson

The Conference was convened at 9:30 A.M. at 150 Fifth Avenue, New York.
The period between the reopening of the Nanjing campus in March 1946 and the next wave of disruption was brief. The Seminary remained open after the Communists took control of Nanjing in April 1949 and initially carried on in a fairly normal way, though required to alter its curriculum. Shown here is the May 5, 1950 meeting of the Board of Managers of the Seminary.

Andrew Cheng, President 1950-1952
In April 1951 the last Western representative at the Seminary, Hubert Sone, left China. He wrote to explain that contact with the Seminary was no longer advisable:

"There is much terrorism now abroad. Executions in mass are being made regularly and in many places. Campaigns of hate and opposition to America and all 'imperialistic' countries are being vigorously pressed, and while the older and more substantial people understand the falsity of it all, the children and young people are being heavily swayed by it, and there is nothing that can be done..."
Unable to send funds or personnel to Nanjing, in May 1951 the Board of Founders decided to seek cooperation with existing institutions in South East Asia serving Chinese students. In order to decide how this should be implemented, a survey was commissioned, to be carried out by C. Stanley Smith and Sidney B. Anderson.
At the May 1952 meeting of the Board of Founders, the first grants were awarded to theological seminaries in South East Asia:

- Baptist English Divinity School, Insein, **Burma**
- McGilvary Theological Seminary, Chiang Mai, **Thailand**
- Higher Theological College, Jakarta, **Indonesia**
- Jogjakarta Theological School, **Indonesia**
- Union Theological Seminary, Manila, **Philippines**
- College of Theology, Silliman University, **Philippines**
- Lutheran Theological Seminary, **Hong Kong**
- Theological College, Taipei, **Taiwan**
- Tainan Theological College, Tainan, **Taiwan**
- Trinity College, **Singapore**

Amendment to charter in November, 1952
Meanwhile, in China, the Nanking Theological Seminary was reorganized as Nanking Union Theological Seminary in 1952. Bishop K.H. Ting was named principal of the united seminary, which brought together 12 schools from around the country.
C. Stanley Smith served as a field representative for the Nanking Board of Founders in South East Asia, developing relationships with seminaries throughout the area.

Assistance to theological libraries in SE Asia developed as a focus for the Board, leading to an important publication by Raymond Morris of Yale Divinity School in 1958.

A Preliminary and Tentative Listing of Books for the Libraries of Christian Theological Institutions in South-East Asia

Compiled for
The Nanking Board of Founders
by
Raymond-P. Morris
Professor of Religious Literature and Librarian
The Yale University Divinity School
Two consultations on theological education, in Williams Bay, Wisconsin in 1954, and Bangkok in 1956, led to the formation of the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia (ATSSEA), which held its first full meeting in 1959.

ATSSEA was later renamed the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA). Its first director was John Fleming (1959-1967), followed by Kosuke Koyama (1968-1974).
A series of important study institutes sponsored by the FTESEA and ATSSEA were held beginning in 1957

• 1957: “Urbanization in Asia”
• 1959: “The People of God in the World”
• 1960: “Christ and Culture – The Encounter in East Asia”
• 1962: “Christian Ethics and Decision in the Rapidly Changing Society Situation of South East Asia”
• 1963: “Church History, Teaching, and Writing”
• And so on....
Other activities in this period included the creation of a theological journal for South East Asia, the continuation of the Chinese Theological Literature Project, and the formation of the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST) in 1966.

First journal issue, 1959

SEAGST gathering, 2008
During the 1970s, under the leadership of its then Chair, Charles Forman, the FTESEA invited ATSSEA to join it in setting up procedures for Asians to make the decisions regarding FTESEA's grants to the member schools of ATSSEA and ATSSEA itself. First, ATSSEA and the FTESEA set up a Joint Regional Planning Commission. Since this joint Commission was successful, ATSSEA decided to establish its own Resource Commission. The FTESEA gave it the responsibility of developing recommendations to the FTESEA regarding the grant requests from the ATSSEA member schools and ATSSEA itself.
After several years of close alignment as the FTESEA Executive Director and ATSSEA Executive Director worked from the same office in Singapore, in 1972 Ivy Chou was appointed as FTESEA Executive Director and had her office in England.

In 1976 Marvin D. Hoff was appointed Executive Director of FTESEA, serving part-time until 1994 and full-time from 1994 until his retirement in 2006.
Closed since 1966, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary was able to resume operations in 1981, with Bishop K. H. Ting as president and Rev. Chen Zemin as dean. After Marvin Hoff and other FTESEA representatives visited Nanjing in October 1981, efforts were begun to reinstate financial support of the Seminary.
The China Library Project was established by FTESEA in 1980 to provide books for the Seminary library. Funds were provided for a new library building at NJUTS during the 1990s.

The FTESEA also has sponsored the *Nanjing Theological Review* and *Chinese Theological Review*, journals published since 1985 by NJUTS.
Marvin Hoff traveled to China frequently to visit NJUTS and other seminaries associated with the China Christian Council.

Shandong Theological Seminary

East China Seminary
Ongoing partnerships of the FTESEA:

Nanjing Union Theological Seminary

Three-Self Patriotic Movement / China Christian Council

Association for Theological Education in South East Asia

World Council of Churches
Ecumenical Theological Education programme

Ecumenical Institute, Bossey
Denominations affiliated with the FTESEA:

• American Baptist Churches in the USA
• Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
• Episcopal Church
• Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
• Presbyterian Church in Canada
• Presbyterian Church (USA)
• Reformed Church in America
• United Church of Canada
• United Church of Christ
• United Methodist Church
FTESEA PRIORITIES

• Working through ecumenical networks for theological education;
• Encouraging contextual theologies to serve Christian churches in China and South East Asia;
• Enhancing the development of library resources, including electronic information systems;
• Networking of theological schools and theologians;
• Promoting the participation of women in theological education;
• Advocating holistic/ecumenical theological education which addresses issues such as: evangelism, ecology, poverty, globalization, justice along with the traditional theological disciplines;
• Facilitating ecumenical support for advanced study by theological scholars and regional consultations, institutes, etc.; and
These priorities are supported through financial support and the participation of FTESEA Executive Director, H.S. Wilson, and other Board members in meetings and consultations.
Association of Asian North American Theological Educators

Forum of Asian Theological Librarians

Asia Forum on Theological Education (AFTE)

Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry
FTESEA has provided support to Nanjing Union Theological Seminary as it has developed its new campus, and to other theological education activities in China.

As well as venturing into areas such as Myanmar where theological education is less well established.
From the earliest days of the FTESEA’s involvement in theological education in South East Asia, the number of schools supported on a yearly basis has increased dramatically:

**Myanmar:**
- Myanmar Inst of Theology
- Myanmar Theological College
- Myanmar Inst Christ Theol
- Kachin Theological College
- Karen Baptist Theol
- Holy Cross, Rangoon
- Tahan Theol/Burma
- Zomi Theol/Burma
- Bethel Theol Seminary
- Chin Christian College
- Tedim Theol College
- Union Theol College
- Lisu Theol
- Ko Tha Byu Theol. Seminary
- Pwo Kayin Theol. Seminary

**Indonesia:**
- Akademi Theol/Banjarmasin GKE
- STT/HKBPSumatera Utar
- Satya Wacana Univ
- STT GMIH-Tobelo
- STT INTIM Makassar
- STT GKI, Jayapura
- STT Jakarta
- STT Duta Wacana
- STT Ambon UKIM
- Fakul Theol. UKIT / Tomohon
- STT Kupang
- STT GMI
- STT Cipanas
- Abdi Sabda Theological School
- STT GMIH-Tobelo
- STT Reformed Injili Indonesia
- South East Asia Bible Seminary

**Malaysia:**
- STM Malaysia
- Sabah Theol Seminary
- Methodist Sarawak

**Philippines:**
- Central Philippine Univ
- Alliance graduate school
- Silliman Univ Divinity
- Phil Baptist, Baguio
- Union Theological Seminary
- Harris Memorial
- College of Theology AUP
- St Andrews Theol Seminary
- Lutheran Theol/Baguio
- Gowing Mem Research (under Dansalan)
- Southern Christian
- Asian Inst. of Liturgy & Music
- Asian Theol Seminary
- International School of Leadership
- Asia Pacific Theological Seminary
- IEMELIF Bible College
- Aglipay Seminary
- Ecumenical Seminary
- Adventist Int'l. Inst. of Advance Studies
- Asia Pacific Nazarene Theol. Sem.
- Asian Seminary of Christian Ministries
The Global Digital Library on Theology and Ecumenism, a project of Globethics.net and the World Council of Churches is a new initiative supported by FTESEA.

**GlobeTheoLib** aims to:

- use new digital models of information exchange to create greater visibility for theological knowledge and insights from churches of the global South;
- make use of information and communication technologies to counter imbalances in global theological education systems;
- respond to the needs of theological colleges, faculties and institutes for quality resources for theological education and research;
- overcome barriers to accessing existing digital content;
- support and enable well-equipped participation in the teaching of Christian theology, the generation of ecumenical and intercultural perspectives, and the formation of a new generation of ecumenical leaders.
This work has been carried on under the direction of the FTESEA Board of Trustees, past and present ......
http://www.ftesea.org