

FRIENDS OF CHRISTIAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE GAMBIA
(FOCSATUG)

An Enterprise of Global Scholars Canada (www.globalscholarscanada.ca)

Update from Prof. Glen Taylor, June, 2021

“I believe we are writing the history of the Gambian Church together, so we should be encouraged by this. I keep hearing that there are still a lot of public schools that teach only Islamic subject, but not Christian ones, only because there are not enough teachers who can teach the Bible. We are producing teachers to fill the gap—as well as pastors.”

(Dr Manhee Yoon, Professor of Old Testament and former student of Glen, pictured at left below.)



Glen with Dr Manhee Yoon, OT Professor

Dear Friends:

I am excited to bring you an update on what has been happening with the programme in Christian Religious Studies at the University of the Gambia.

What Happened During the Past School Year (October 2020 to June 2021)?

The fall semester saw all university classes being held online. Some professors went the extra mile to meet with students unable to afford expensive internet data plans.

The present semester included resumption of in-class learning due to a drop in COVID cases last fall. The semester is still underway, ending late June/early July.

Prof Turner, an old seminary acq-

-uaintance of Glen, and Head of Department, writes:

I am teaching three classes as usual, New Testament II (everything except for the Gospels), Communicating the Bible, and Theology II: The Work of God (mostly. . .through Jesus Christ)...

Things are fairly normal here, which is surprising. . . since the tourist industry is like a ghost town. Traffic is worse than ever. Grocery stores are having a hard time getting things from outside the country . . . Food prices are going up. Most places (except our church where several doctors attend) only a few people wear masks. The traffic is worse than ever . . . with a lot of construction going on

Please continue to pray for the faculty—Drs Lane Turner, Manhee Yoon, and Tanimu Saminaka; and Bannie Manga and Shaka Ashcroft. Pray also for our liaison Pastor Benjamin Michael, whose work at recruitment and PR is crucial and whose wife will soon lose her good job to a Gambian national (originally Nigerian, her naturalization process has been prolonged for years!). Kindly pray also for our many students.



Pastor Benjamin, Church liaison officer, with Daniel Jatta

CURRENT STUDENTS

First year: Sannoh Probyn, Pomri Ellis, Vincent Mendy, Kaddy Jassey, Joshua Mendy, Felice Lawrence, Emmanuel Plakar.

Second year: Amboy Mendy, Gladys Jariou, John Asoh, Sunday Olorunto, Augustine Sina, Sannet Gomez, Adriano Mbackeh, Jacob Cole, Weimie Mhenduah, Hassan Kamara.

Third year: Emmah Gomez, Francis Osuji, Blessing Ndupu, James Bass, Ousman Saine, Delphine Mbinky, Margaret Demba.

Fourth year: John Mendy, Ajammeh Mendy, Matthew Daboyan, Theresa Manneh, Precious Osuoha, Marie Mendy, Joseph J. Gomez, Joseph Gomez, Joseph Conteh, Innocent Okoye, Godson Achebe, Atuma Kenneth.

The Second Graduation for Students in Christian Studies

Earlier this year— February 27th—seven students of Christian Religious Studies celebrated the completion of their four years of study. This is now *the second class of graduates with a Bachelor's degree in Christian Studies*. It brought back fond memories of my visit at the same time 15 months ago, just prior to the outbreak of COVID-19.

Graduation ceremonies were held outdoors, but family members were not allowed to attend. Some family members joined the graduates at a restaurant where students shared their experience, which included **a consistent theme of appreciation for the Canadian sponsors**. *Your prayers and financial support are not going unnoticed!*



Class of 2021 (with Prof Yoon at left, Turner at right)



Student Expresses Gratitude

Drs Wendy and Adrian Helleman (retired Canadian missionaries who have also been working on this project) recently wrote:

It is now increasingly clear that the programme is making a significant impact on the country. By this year, some twenty students have graduated—capable men and

women well equipped for Christian ministry in a country where less than 5% of the population is Christian. Of the seven graduates this year, three are teachers, three are pastors and one is involved in youth ministry.

The Gambia and Covid-19

Although the country saw a big spike between July and September of last year, numbers were low enough in the fall to allow for a re-opening of the school for the 2021 new year. A modest second wave between February and April saw daily cases rise to between 25 and 70, but since then they have gone down to the point where now daily *recorded* cases 2–5 people. Vaccines (Astra Zeneca) first became available in March, but many are hesitant to take it.

Thank God, the impact of Covid has been modest. It could have been devastating!

How Are We Doing Financially?

The University recently billed us for the present school year which ends in June. We offered 32 full scholarships (i.e., tuition payment for both semesters) and 4 half scholarships (because of second-term admissions and a scholarship that was taken away from one underperformer). And: good news!! ***Thanks to your continued commitment, we can pay the bill of just over \$34,000.*** As I like to admit, that's a lot of money; but it was well spent on **34 years of university-level Christian training for a country in great need of Christianity.** Thank you!!

Are Students Earning Their Keep?

If you're like me, you'll be concerned that no student takes these scholarships for granted. Please be assured that *we promptly remove scholarship support for any student who performs unsatisfactorily.* Excepting extreme situations that are understandable, our policy is to take a scholarship away from any student whose average grade drops below the faculty standard. If during the following semester (which they must pay for themselves) their grades return above the threshold, scholarships are reinstated.

Fortunately, we've had to do this only a few times in the past six years, as most students are keen. In fact, two of this year's grads won awards for their high grades—unlike others of us who might have graduated *lordy how cum?* 😊

Have You Lapsed in Your Sponsorship or Want to Help Get Us on a Strong Footing for Next Year?

A few of you have meant to contribute financially but haven't gotten around to it. No worries! Others might welcome a reminder as to how to invest again for the coming academic year. In any case, *below is the information on how to contribute financially.* It comes with **many thanks!!**



Glen with the daughter of a staff worker

Yes, I want to support the strategic ministry of the Christian Studies Program at the University of the Gambia!

I. For online donations (channeled through CanadaHelps), please check the Global Scholars Canada website www.globalscholarscanada.ca. For a one-time (or monthly) donation, click on the **Give** option, and choose the third Fund: Scholarship Program University of the Gambia.

OR

II. For tried-and-true snail mail

Title: _____ First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Email Address: _____

Preferred Phone: _____

Complete the information below and mail to: **Global Scholars Canada, P.O. Box 72052
1630 Danforth Avenue Toronto ON M4C 0A1 CANADA**

----- I/we commit to prayer for this program, its students, the faculty and the university context in which it operates.

----- I/we would appreciate receiving regular prayer updates on the work of Global Scholars Canada, including updates on this program (please fill in your email address below).

----- I/we would like to support this program financially, and enclose a one-time gift of (please circle) \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000 Other \$

— I/we are open to considering the option of permanently funding a scholarship through a capital donation.

— I/we enclose postdated cheques of \$ _____ monthly quarterly

— I/we authorize an automatic/electronic fund transfer of \$ ____ monthly, starting _____
(This process requires including a cheque marked “Void.” Funds are debited the 1st or 15th of each month; payments can be stopped or revised anytime with 10 days’ notice)

III. Donors in the USA support the program by mailing donations to *Global Scholars*, P.O. Box 12147, Overland Park, KS 66282-2147 USA; or the *Global Scholars* website: www.global-scholars.org.

Donor fatigue is real, especially these days; yet, despite my bias, this one is a priority for me because it is extremely cost effective and equips local Christian leaders for ministry in their own (predominantly Muslim) country.
(Glen)

And many, many thanks!!