



## Chinese Evangelical Free Church: A Missional Partnership

“We want to be an outward facing church. We strive to be missional minded. That is why our outreach programs and ministry partnerships are important to us. We are passionate about assisting our local community and communities overseas.” Those are the words of Rev. David Park, the English Pastor of Chinese Evangelical Free Church (CEFC) and a prominent advocate of missional focused ministries at the church.

CEFC is currently located in Monterey Park and offers a wide array of ministries to bring the Gospel of Christ to their community. This is best seen in the opportunities CEFC provides for its congregation to engage locally and globally as ambassadors of Christ. The church offers prayer meetings, visitation ministries, knitting workshops, short to mid-term missions trips, and a Perspectives course for their congregation. Along with short term missions trips, another specific way CEFC chooses to engage globally is through external partnerships with organizations such as ReachGlobal, Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC), Worldwide Christian Churches Ministries (WCCM), and International Theological Seminary (ITS).

Rev. Park has been a driving force behind recent partnerships. He attributes the growth and success of these ministries to a team effort. Rev. Park explains that while he has a strong vision and mission for outreach, there are many in the church who are passionate about bringing this vision to life. “Without those individuals who have been burdened and gifted to see these things come to pass, CEFC would not have been able to forge these partnerships.”

This was not an overnight process. These plans were often accomplished one step at a time and God has been faithful in providing direction and guidance at every turn. Since CEFC has its roots in Chinese heritage, many mission efforts were initially focused on China. When Rev. Park joined CEFC, he encouraged the church to explore opportunities outside of that country. He states, “I have a heart for China as well but I wanted to stretch the church to think beyond its natural ethnic comfort zone.”

Most of the current CEFC partnerships are global in mission and arose out of God-ordained personal connections to those organizations and their alignment to CEFC’s mission. For example, ITS is personally connected to CEFC through ITS Professor and President Emeritus, Dr. Joseph Tong and their late Pastor, Rev. Fred Cheung, who served as the first ITS Vice President of Administration. Rev. Fred’s wife, Dr. Freda Cheung, currently serves on the ITS Consulting Board. Additionally, ITS embodies CEFC’s missional values— to see global leaders graduate with a solid theological education so that they can return and transform their own communities for the kingdom of God.

In recent years, CEFC has made significant efforts to strengthen its ties with ITS, not only financially but relationally as well. **In 2018, ITS students were invited to attend CEFC’s International Missions evening event, where they shared their personal testimonies and were warmly received by the congregation.**

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

Rev. Park is grateful for God’s providence over CEFC as they were not negatively impacted during the pandemic. CEFC currently remains in a posture of service as they minister locally to hospital workers and the elderly. “We want to continue to be sensitive to how the Lord is leading us while maintaining our missional focus and servant heart.” CEFC is in the process of sending teams out internationally this summer and asks for prayer “that God will continue to use [CEFC] to be His agent of the Gospel.”

It is a privilege and honor to partner with missional-minded, Christ-centered churches such as Chinese Evangelical Free Church to bring about God’s Kingdom work through the lives of ITS students.



Rev. David Park and his family

**Dear Friends,**

Greetings from the office of Academic Affairs. I pray you and your family are faring well this spring season.

This year, International Theological Seminary (ITS) celebrates 40 years of training teachers, community leaders and pastors who are faithful in transforming their local communities into vibrant places of worship, mission and justice. I have been given the opportunity to fill in for President Dr. James Lee while he is on sabbatical. Over the last three months, this opportunity has given me great insight and appreciation into the rigorous work that takes place to uphold ITS and its mission. It is my joy to witness the Lord work through Godly men and women of caliber who contribute at various levels to the running of the school. I have had the privilege of being an integral part of this institution for the past six years during which time I have mostly dealt with the faculty and students as VP Academic Affairs. In Dr. Lee’s absence I have come to develop a more holistic picture of the interconnectedness of the ITS governing body and the rest of our community. The Lord has appointed and placed such faithful and committed men and women at all levels, to which I say, “Glory be to His name!”

Added to this are the friends and partners of ITS without whom the school would not be able to accomplish much of what the seminary has done.

In this season, we are grateful to the Lord for honoring us with a grant from the Lilly Foundation that enabled us to hire consultants who have guided us through a comprehensive strategic plan. One focus of the strategic plan is to embark on a marketing plan that will allow us to make our presence more visible to those who would benefit from the training we offer at ITS. Video shooting of various activities on campus was done for this purpose. These will be used to enhance awareness of ITS.

As I have thought about the future of ITS and wondered how to effectively manage the proposed Lilly grant project and put into use this generous gift from the Foundation, the Lord has constantly reminded me of His promise in His Word from Isaiah 42:16, “I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths. I will guide them: I will make the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do. I will not forsake them.”

These are indeed uncharted grounds for ITS. But we have His promise and so we keep moving with confidence, knowing that He has already gone ahead of us.



In Faith,  
Priscilla Adoyo, PhD  
VP, Academic Affairs



Sanath Pulta assists the production team with slating a take for Jim Conner. Pulta currently serves as an ITS Communications Intern. Conner is on the ITS Board of Trustees.

# Transforming Tanzania: Dr. Ezekiel Mbwilo's Story

Recently, my wife, Joan, and I returned from Tanzania where we had the joy of ministering alongside three ITS alumni. One of the alumni was Dr. Ezekiel Mbwilo, whom we met in 2002 when he was a Master of Divinity (MDiv) student at ITS. We were introduced to him by Dr. Mel Loucks, long-term professor at ITS.

Dr. Mbwilo is a quiet leader with a big heart to serve people. During his time at ITS he served as the Student Body President and Student Chaplain. Even though he carried a heavy load, he prioritized serving his fellow students. Dr. Mbwilo writes, "ITS has sharpened my leadership skills and given me an ability to stand as a leader who is there to help others." ITS has had a powerful impact on his ministry, giving him a solid biblical foundation in serving the Lord.

Twenty years later, Dr. Mbwilo can be found assisting the National Director as the National Deputy Director of the Tanzania Assemblies of God Men's Ministry. In addition, he is responsible for three successful church plants and pastoring a large church in Dar es Salaam. Just as Paul the Apostle did with the churches he planted, Dr. Mbwilo continues to be involved as they build on the foundation of God's Word. In John 17:17, Jesus is praying to the Father for the Apostles and future believers, and says, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."

However, Dr. Mbwilo's ministry does not stop with his church. His lovely wife, Honolata, actively ministers alongside him, positively impacting the lives of many individuals in their local community. Together, they minister to those who have been marginalized by society, including but not limited to the deaf, blind, those who are mentally and physically impaired, and individuals with albinism. Take for example the personal testimonies of Sarah and Daniel, former Muslims-turned-Christians now under Dr. Mbwilo's care. Dr. Mbwilo provided for their temporal and eternal needs through the preaching of the gospel, financial provision, physical protection, and investment towards their continual education and personal growth. As a result of Dr. Mbwilo's investment, Sarah has grown tremendously as a Christian. She has recently completed her studies in social services and actively engages other Muslims with the gospel. Dr. Mbwilo is currently assisting Daniel as he rebuilds his life since his conversion to Christianity stripped him of his properties and exiled him from family.

While Dr. Mbwilo continues to invest in the lives of people, the most significant investment ITS can make is to provide a solid biblical education to these dear pastors who come to us. They take their education and biblical wisdom back to their home countries and spread it contagiously, teaching others who are desperate to be fed the Word of God. We praise God for this legacy of ITS as we approach our 40th anniversary.

Your financial support to ITS has a global impact in fulfilling the Great Commission through men and women like Dr. Mbwilo. Our goal is to raise \$500,000 by May 31, 2022. As we close this fiscal year, we pray that you will consider a financial gift as we continue to invest in the lives of these students to prepare them for ministry. We praise the Lord for your past prayer and financial support as we look forward to another prosperous 40 years of impacting the world.

We continue to pray for all the ITS alumni as they serve the Lord in their own countries and the daily battles they face to serve Him faithfully in circumstances that most of us will never fully understand. Dr. Ezekiel Mbwilo's story is one of many examples of men and women who graduate from ITS and return to their countries in obedience to fulfill the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."



*Pastor Hosea Ngailo of Banjub (right) and Pastor Mbwilo (left) standing in front of a mobile platform. The Pastor pushes it around town, stands on top of it and preaches the Gospel.*



*Women and children from Pastor Mbwilo's church choir that greeted us.*

# ITS Prepares to Launch New Certificate Program

Last fall, ITS was awarded a Phase II multi-year planning grant as part of the Lilly Endowment's Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. This funding is being used to strengthen ITS' capacity to prepare pastors for immigrant and ethnic churches in the United States. As a part of this endeavor, ITS is designing and preparing to launch a new certificate program. Gwen Fleming was recently hired as the Director of the Lilly Project Phase II and is working closely with other ITS staff and Board members to explore and develop this new certificate program, in addition to other new strategic initiatives.

With mainstream church membership declining and a reduction in ordained pastors, elders and volunteer lay leaders are increasingly stepping into pastoral roles. However, they often have not attended seminary and lack formalized training. Additionally, smaller churches, especially in ethnic communities, can't afford to hire full time pastors, and often rely on bi-vocational ministers, with limited time and resources available for seminary training.

Enter ITS! ITS is working to develop a certificate program to equip local pastors with practical ministry skills and to support the congregational lay ministers they rely on to run their ministries. ITS is working to create a fresh educational model that meets the leadership needs of congregations that rely heavily on bi-vocational and/or volunteer ministers. Gwen said, "It is very exciting to be able to come alongside our dear brothers and sisters in the trenches and develop resources to equip them with new skills and insights."

ITS is currently partnering with both the San Diego and San Gabriel Presbyteries to develop a certificate program that meets their individualized needs, designed with the purpose of providing candidates for the Commission of Ruling Elders (CRE) an opportunity to deepen their expertise both in the subject matters required by the Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order and those determined by their presbyteries of origin. The emphasis of the program is innovative missional ministries and pastoral leadership for any congregation that would discern the opportunity to provide additional training for their elders.

ITS hopes to expand these types of partnerships throughout Southern California. Staff are exploring and developing a certificate program that will be flexible, condensed, relevant and attractive to an immigrant pastor who works part-time at their church, in addition to holding an outside job to make ends meet. Training in Reformed Theology, Worship/Sacraments, Bible Interpretation, Pastoral Counseling, Youth Ministry, and Financial and Administrative Stewardship are topics under discussion. The certificate program would also provide these pastors with the opportunity to fellowship and partner with others in similar roles. Equipping these leaders will continue to carry out ITS' vital mission of bringing the hope and light of the Gospel to the Majority world as well as to U.S. immigrant churches locally.

ITS CONNECTIONS is a publication of International Theological Seminary, whose mission is to equip and train in the Reformed tradition teachers, community leaders, and pastors who transform local communities into vibrant places of worship, mission, and justice.

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