

Voices of the World Church

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025

Advent Greetings from the Nagel Institute

Dear friends, colleagues, partners, and members of our global community,

Warm Advent greetings to you. As we enter this sacred season, we pause with gratitude, hope, and quiet joy to celebrate the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us. Advent invites us into attentiveness and reflection, reminding us that even in a world marked by uncertainty and change, God continues to draw near with faithfulness and light.

This year at the Nagel Institute, we have witnessed that nearness in deeply humbling ways. New collaborations have emerged, partnerships have been strengthened, and resources have arrived, often unexpectedly, that have opened doors we could not have imagined on our own. We receive these gifts with gratitude and a deep sense of responsibility, trusting they are entrusted to us for the flourishing of the global church and the wider scholarly community.

Advent also calls us back to hospitality, hospitality to ideas, to peoples and cultures, and to the many ways faith is lived and expressed around the world. It is our hope that Nagel continues to be a space where scholars, students, and church leaders from across the globe feel welcomed, valued, and encouraged, and where mutual learning takes root across difference.

As we look ahead, we do so with renewed energy and openness to God's leading. Christ's coming assures us that God still enters our histories with tenderness, courage, and transforming love. This has been a year marked by fresh vision, new direction, and unexpected grace, and for that, we are profoundly thankful.

Thank you for walking with us, praying for us, and supporting this work. May this Advent season bring you peace, gentle joy, and renewed hope in the One who comes to make all things new.

With gratitude and blessing,



Damaris S. Parsitau
Director, Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware."

— Hebrews 13:2 (ESV)

Celebrating 20 Years of Global Impact

As the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity approaches its 20th anniversary, we pause to reflect on two decades of inspiring scholarship, faithful collaboration, and global dialogue. Since its founding, the Institute has served as a bridge connecting scholars, artists, and leaders from every continent, advancing research and relationships that strengthen the worldwide church.

This milestone year invites us to celebrate God's faithfulness and the countless voices that have shaped our journey. Together, we look forward to the next chapter of fostering understanding, creativity, and unity within the vibrant story of World Christianity.

John Templeton Foundation Grants the Nagel Institute \$2.2 Million to Study Religious Change



The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity has received a \$2.2 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation to support De-Centering Europe in the Study of Religious Change, a major international research initiative that seeks to reframe how scholars understand religious change across the world. For generations, the academic study of religion has often relied on European historical experiences, categories, and trajectories as the primary lens for interpreting global religious patterns. This project challenges that assumption by asking what new insights emerge when Europe is no longer treated as the normative center, but rather as one context among many within a complex and interconnected global religious landscape.

Bringing together an international and interdisciplinary team of scholars, the project examines how religious ideas, institutions, and practices develop within diverse cultural, political, and social settings across the globe. By foregrounding data, methods, and perspectives drawn from regions that have often been treated as peripheral to European narratives, the research opens space for more accurate and nuanced accounts of religious change. This approach not only enriches historical and social-scientific understanding, but also addresses long-standing imbalances in how religious vitality, decline, innovation, and influence have been interpreted in academic scholarship.

For the Nagel Institute, De-Centering Europe in the Study of Religious Change represents a natural extension of its mission to advance rigorous, globally grounded scholarship in World Christianity. The initiative strengthens international scholarly collaboration, elevates voices and contexts too often overlooked, and contributes research that more faithfully reflects the lived realities of religious communities worldwide. In doing so, the project aims to reshape academic conversations toward a more inclusive, historically attentive, and globally responsible understanding of religion and its role in shaping societies.

Templeton World Charity Foundation Awards \$500,000 Grant for Global Spiritual Formation Project



The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity is delighted to announce that the Templeton World Charity Foundation (TWCF) has approved funding in the amount of \$500,000 USD for a major new initiative titled: "The Global Spiritual Formation Project: Mobilizing a Global, Ecumenical, Multicultural Vision of Spiritual Maturity, Character, Virtue, and Flourishing."

This significant award affirms the Nagel Institute's growing role as a global hub for interdisciplinary research at the intersection of faith, formation, and human flourishing. It also reflects TWCF's commitment to advancing scholarly inquiry that addresses some of the most pressing questions facing Christian communities and societies worldwide.

This visionary initiative is led by Dr. David Wang, Senior Research Fellow at the Nagel Institute and Director of the Global Spiritual Formation Project. The project seeks to advance a global understanding of spiritual maturity by engaging diverse Christian traditions, cultures, and social contexts. Rather than assuming a single model of formation, the project intentionally brings together scholars, theologians, and practitioners from across the world to examine how spiritual maturity, virtue, character, and well-being are cultivated within distinct Christian communities.

Through collaborative research, convenings, and publications, the project will explore how spiritual formation is lived, taught, and practiced in varied cultural settings, attending carefully to both shared commitments and contextual differences. In doing so, it aims to generate insights that are academically rigorous, theologically grounded, and practically relevant for churches, institutions, and leaders seeking to nurture holistic Christian formation in a rapidly changing world.

The Global Spiritual Formation Project will foster sustained international collaboration, strengthening scholarly networks across continents and encouraging dialogue between theology, social science, and lived religious practice. By centering voices from the Global South alongside scholars from the Global North, the project reflects the Nagel Institute's commitment to World Christianity as a truly global and relational field of study.

The formal grant agreement is finalized between the Templeton World Charity Foundation and Calvin University, marking an exciting new chapter in the Nagel Institute's global research leadership and public engagement. This award not only enables innovative scholarship but also reinforces the Institute's mission to foster Christian scholarship and partnership across cultures in service of deeper understanding, faithful practice, and human flourishing worldwide.

Templeton Religion Trust Funds the Prophet's Chamber Visiting Scholars Program



The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity is pleased to announce that the Templeton Religion Trust (TRT) has awarded funding to support the Prophet's Chamber Visiting Scholars Program, strengthening one of the Institute's most distinctive and formative initiatives. This investment affirms the importance of creating sustained space for global Christian scholarship and signals a shared commitment to fostering research that is both academically rigorous and deeply attentive to lived faith across cultures.

Over the next 18 months, this support will create opportunities for seven visiting scholars to participate in the Prophet's Chamber, each receiving dedicated time, space, and resources for focused research, writing, and reflection. Scholars welcomed to Calvin University will engage deeply with theological libraries, faculty, and peer networks, contributing original research while also benefiting from meaningful intellectual and spiritual exchange. By providing this rare gift of unhurried scholarly time, the program enables participants to advance projects that might otherwise remain unrealized amid the demands of teaching, ministry, and leadership in their home contexts.

This expanded cohort of scholars will significantly deepen cross-cultural academic dialogue and strengthen a growing global network committed to the study of World Christianity. Through sustained residency, shared learning, and ongoing collaboration, the Prophet's Chamber amplifies voices particularly from the Global South, and supports scholarship that serves both the academy and the global church. We are deeply grateful for TRT's support and partnership, and we celebrate this award as an important milestone in the continued growth of the Prophet's Chamber and the Nagel Institute's mission of global engagement, formation, and collaboration.

Recent Prophet's Chamber Visiting Scholars

The Prophet's Chamber Visiting Scholar Program has recently welcomed scholars from Ukraine, Rwanda, Ethiopia, El Salvador, and Ghana, reflecting the global breadth of contemporary Christian scholarship. These residencies underscore the program's commitment to supporting scholars whose work is deeply rooted in local contexts while contributing meaningfully to broader conversations in World Christianity.

During their time in residence, visiting scholars pursued research on theological education, Christian formation, publishing, and the transmission of Christian thought within diverse cultural and ecclesial settings. Their work strengthened scholarly exchange between institutions in the Global South, Eastern Europe, and global academic partners, fostering a richer understanding of how Christian theology is developed, taught, and practiced across regions.

Together, these recent residencies have enriched the intellectual life of the Nagel Institute and reinforced the Prophet's Chamber Program as a space of hospitality, reflection, and rigorous scholarship. Building on this foundation, we are pleased to highlight our current Visiting Scholar, whose ongoing residency continues this tradition of globally engaged research and cross-cultural dialogue.

Amelia Dodoo (Ghana) is the current Prophet's Chamber Visiting Scholar, having begun her residency in September 2024. Based at the University of Ghana, she is conducting doctoral research and represents the program's continued commitment to rigorous, contextually grounded scholarship in World Christianity. Her residency emphasizes academic collaboration, research development, and cross-cultural theological dialogue. Her visit marks the first time the Prophet's Chamber Program has hosted an entire family, as her husband and two children joined her during the residency, reflecting the program's deep commitment to hospitality, holistic support, and shared life within the Nagel Institute community.

Together, these scholars exemplify the Prophet's Chamber's mission to create space for sustained research, reflection, and global scholarly partnership within the study of Christianity worldwide.



Amelia Dodoo



Senior Research Fellowships



Robert Woodberry

The Nagel Institute is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Robert D. Woodberry as Senior Research Scholar. A renowned social scientist whose pioneering research on the global impact of missionary movements has shaped contemporary understandings of religion, democracy, and societal development, Dr. Woodberry brings exceptional expertise in quantitative and historical analysis to the Institute. His influential work, including the groundbreaking “religious roots of democracy” thesis, has garnered international recognition and continues to inform scholarship across disciplines. Dr. Woodberry’s appointment strengthens the Institute’s commitment to rigorous, globally engaged research and affirms his vital role in advancing the study of World Christianity in its social, political, and cultural dimensions.



Anne Kubai

The Nagel Institute is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Anne Kubai as Senior Research Scholar. An accomplished scholar of religion, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconciliation, Dr. Kubai’s work has illuminated the lived realities of communities navigating violence, memory, and restorative justice across East Africa and beyond. Her interdisciplinary research spanning theology, human rights, and transitional justice has made significant contributions to understanding how faith communities cultivate resilience and healing in the aftermath of conflict. Dr. Kubai’s appointment underscores the Institute’s commitment to scholarship that engages global Christian communities with depth, compassion, and intellectual rigor, and it affirms her vital role in advancing research at the intersection of faith, justice, and social transformation.



Marilyn Naidoo

The Nagel Institute is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Marilyn Naidoo as Senior Research Fellow. A leading scholar in theological education and formation at the University of South Africa (UNISA), Dr. Naidoo’s work focuses on developing contextually grounded, transformative approaches to ministerial training across the African continent. Her research, spanning spiritual formation, leadership development, and institutional transformation, has significantly influenced how theological institutions prepare Christian leaders for service in diverse and rapidly changing environments. Dr. Naidoo’s appointment affirms the Institute’s commitment to supporting innovative, globally engaged scholarship and recognizes her vital contribution to strengthening theological education worldwide.



Senior Research Fellowships

Joel Carpenter



The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity is pleased to announce the reappointment of Dr. Joel Carpenter as Senior Research Scholar for another term. Dr. Carpenter, the Institute's founding director, has played a pivotal role in shaping its mission since 2006 through his vision for global Christian scholarship and his commitment to fostering research partnerships that bridge continents. His continued service ensures the preservation of the Institute's founding spirit while supporting its growth under the leadership of Director Dr. Damaris Seleina Parsitau. This renewed appointment affirms the Institute's deep appreciation for Dr. Carpenter's enduring influence, mentorship, and steadfast dedication to strengthening the global Church.



David Wang



Dr. David C. Wang is a leading scholar at the intersection of psychology, theology, and spiritual formation, serving as the Cliff and Joyce Penner Chair for the Formation of Emotionally Healthy Leaders and Professor of Psychology and Spiritual Formation at Fuller Theological Seminary. Trained at UC Berkeley, Regent College, and the University of Houston, Dr. Wang's work integrates rigorous psychological science with deep theological reflection, with a particular focus on trauma, emotional health, and the holistic formation of Christian leaders across global contexts.

Dr. Wang's research centers on the spiritual, emotional, and human formation of Christian leaders, especially those serving in complex, high-stress, and trauma-affected environments. A licensed psychologist and pastor, he has played a formative role in shaping theological education by helping draft accreditation standards for spiritual formation within the Association of Theological Schools. His scholarship and leadership reflect a conviction that Christian mental health must exist "for others," grounded in listening, service, and engagement with the real struggles of human life.



Internationally, Dr. Wang leads and co-leads several major, externally funded initiatives. He oversees the Global Formation Project, supported by the John Templeton Foundation and the Templeton Religion Trust, which examines spiritual and human formation among Christian leaders across Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal traditions worldwide. He also serves as co-principal investigator of the Trauma-Resilient Church Collective, a multi-year initiative funded by the Lilly Endowment that equips congregations to address trauma at both individual and systemic levels. His research has been widely published in leading academic journals and has influenced both scholarly and pastoral practice globally.

In close collaboration with the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, Dr. Wang serves as Senior Research Fellow, contributing essential expertise to Templeton-funded research on character, virtue, spiritual formation, and human flourishing across cultures. His work significantly enriches Nagel's interdisciplinary mission by bridging psychology, theology, and global Christianity, and by bringing empirical depth to questions of formation, resilience, and faith in diverse cultural settings. His reappointment as Senior Research Fellow reflects the Institute's deep appreciation for his scholarship, leadership, and ongoing partnership in advancing globally engaged Christian research.

Unveiling The Kwame Bediako Lecture Series in World Christianity

The Kwame Bediako Lecture Series brings to the Nagel Institute a distinguished and diverse community of scholars whose work reflects the global depth, intellectual rigor, and lived realities of World Christianity. Honoring the legacy of Kwame Bediako, the series features leading theologians, historians, social scientists, and interdisciplinary scholars from institutions around the world. Our guest lecturers engage pressing questions at the intersection of faith, culture, gender, politics, history, and social change, drawing from contexts across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Together, these lectures model scholarship that is globally attentive, intellectually serious, and deeply engaged with the church's witness and public life in a changing world.

We are honored to name this lecture series the Kwame Bediako Lecture Series, in recognition of the extraordinary legacy of Dr. Kwame Bediako and his enduring contributions to the study of World Christianity. A pioneering theologian and historian, Dr. Bediako transformed global understanding of African Christianity and affirmed its central place within the wider Christian story. Dedicating this series in his name reflects the Nagel Institute's commitment to the values he embodied: rigorous scholarship, cross-cultural theological engagement, and a deep concern for the flourishing of Christian thought across diverse contexts. Through this series, we seek to carry forward Dr. Bediako's vision and to honor a body of work that continues to shape and inspire generations of scholars and church leaders worldwide.

Gina Zurlo

This year, Dr. Gina Zurlo of Harvard Divinity School opened the lecture series with a compelling guest lecture titled "Gender Gaps in Christianity." Drawing on her leading research in global religion and religious demographics, Dr. Zurlo examined how gender dynamics shape patterns of Christian participation, leadership, and growth across different world regions.

Her lecture offered valuable insight into the changing landscape of global Christianity, highlighting the often-overlooked contributions and experiences of women. By bringing demographic analysis into conversation with theological and historical perspectives, Dr. Zurlo's presentation deepened understanding of both the challenges and opportunities facing the global church today and underscored the critical role women continue to play in its past, present, and future.



HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

Robert Woodberry Roundtable

On November 12, 2025, Dr. Robert Woodberry of Baylor University delivered a thought-provoking guest lecture titled "The Religious Roots of Communication Revolutions." Drawing on his influential research in global history and social change, Dr. Woodberry examined how religious movements have shaped major shifts in communication—from printing and literacy to modern media ecosystems. His lecture offered compelling insight into the ways faith communities have catalyzed transformative cultural and technological developments throughout history.




Baylor University

**In memory of Kwame Bediako
(July 7, 1945 – June 10, 2008)**

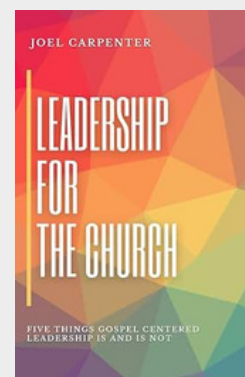
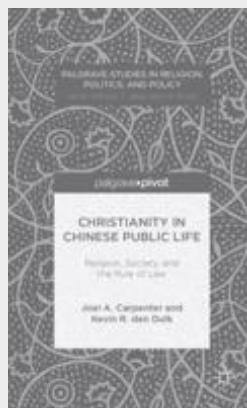
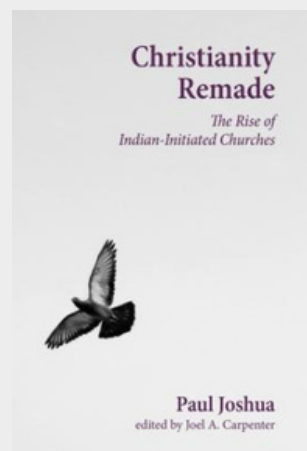
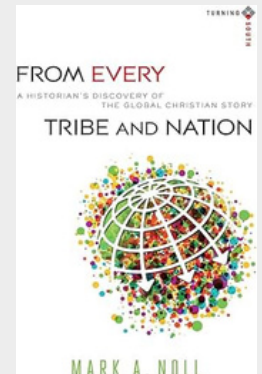
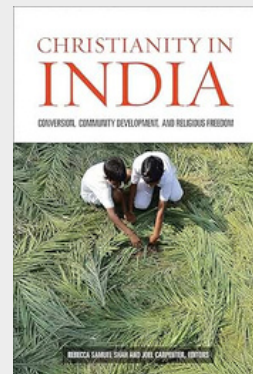
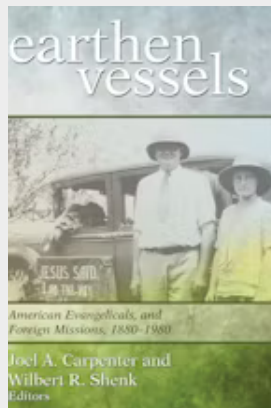
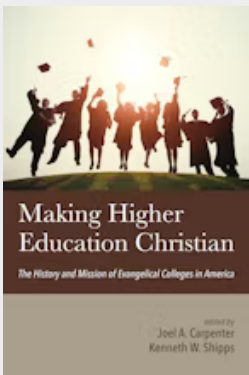


Joel Carpenter Library at the Nagel Institute

Dr. Joel Carpenter, the founding director of the Nagel Institute, has left an indelible mark on the life and mission of the Institute. From its earliest days, his vision, intellectual leadership, and deep commitment to the global church shaped Nagel into a space where rigorous scholarship, theological depth, and global engagement could flourish together. His careful stewardship laid a strong foundation for an institute devoted to understanding Christianity as a truly worldwide faith, attentive to voices, histories, and traditions beyond the West.

Even in retirement, Dr. Carpenter continues to serve the scholarly community with remarkable generosity and diligence. He remains actively engaged in editing, mentoring, and encouraging scholars, offering wisdom shaped by decades of experience and a genuine love for learning. His ongoing work behind the scenes, carefully reading manuscripts, sharpening arguments, and supporting emerging scholars reflects a lifelong vocation to scholarship and service. We are deeply grateful for the way he continues to invest his time, intellect, and care in others.

In recognition of Dr. Carpenter's enduring impact, we are pleased to announce the establishment of the Joel Carpenter Library at the Nagel Institute. This growing collection will focus on World Christianity and related fields, reflecting his passion for global scholarship and his commitment to nurturing thoughtful, well-resourced research. By naming the library in his honor, we celebrate not only his foundational leadership but also his lasting influence on generations of scholars. The Joel Carpenter Library stands as a tangible expression of our gratitude and a testament to the strong foundation he built, one that will continue to support learning, discovery, and faithful scholarship for years to come.



Generous Book Donations Supporting the Joel Carpenter Library



Moody Bible Institute



Moody Publishing



Steps to Life Ministries



Harvest Ministries



Your Move Collective



First Love Publishers



Harvest House Publishers



Gospel for Asia



Church of God International

We are deeply grateful for the generous support of our publishing partners, who together have contributed more than 86 books to the newly established Joel Carpenter Library at the Nagel Institute. We offer special appreciation to Moody Bible Institute and Moody Publishers for their remarkable gift of 25 books, which has significantly strengthened our growing collection in World Christianity and related fields. We are also thankful for the contributions of Harvest Ministries, Steps to Life Ministries, Your Move Collective, First Love Publishers, Harvest House Publishers, Gospel for Asia, and the Church of God International, whose donations continue to enrich the resources available to our visiting scholars and research community.

As the Joel Carpenter Library grows, we warmly invite others to join in this shared act of generosity. Scholars, pastors, alumni, and friends of the Nagel Institute are encouraged to consider donating books from their personal libraries—new or gently used that reflect a global, historical, theological, or interdisciplinary engagement with Christianity. Such gifts are more than volumes on a shelf; they become tools for study, reflection, and dialogue for scholars from around the world who come to Calvin University seeking depth, perspective, and renewal.

Books may be mailed directly to Calvin University, c/o The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, 3201 Burton St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4388, located in the Spoelhof Center. By contributing to the Joel Carpenter Library, donors participate in a living legacy of scholarship—one that honors Dr. Carpenter's vision while equipping future generations to study, teach, and serve the global church with wisdom and faithfulness.

Senior Faculty Fellowship Appointments

The Nagel Institute is pleased to appoint Calvin University faculty to Senior Faculty Fellowships, supported by small research grants, in recognition of their ongoing work in the study of World Christianity. These appointments provide faculty members with dedicated support to advance research, develop new projects, and deepen global scholarly engagement, while offering space for interdisciplinary collaboration and focused inquiry. For the Nagel Institute, these fellowships strengthen its intellectual community by integrating faculty expertise across disciplines and expanding its capacity to steward globally engaged scholarship. Beyond Calvin, the Senior Faculty Fellowships contribute to the wider World Christianity community by fostering research that amplifies diverse perspectives, encourages cross-cultural dialogue, and advances thoughtful, collaborative scholarship that serves both the academy and the global church.



Tracy Kuperus

As a Faculty Fellow, Dr. Tracy Kuperus leads a research project examining the role of religion and gender in youth-led political protests in Kenya, with particular attention to the 2024 Finance Bill protests. Using a qualitative methodology that combines media content analysis and in-depth interviews with male and female youth leaders, the project explores how religious narratives and gender norms shape leadership, issue framing, and public perception. By centering the voices of Kenyan youth activists and situating their experiences within broader African political and religious contexts, this fellowship advances Nagel's commitment to rigorous, globally grounded scholarship on World Christianity, gender, and social transformation.



Esther Afolabi

Esther's Faculty Fellow project, Pastoral Voices and Women's Choices: Christianity and Cervical Cancer Screening in Nigeria, examines how Christian faith, pastoral leadership, and congregational culture shape women's decisions about cervical cancer screening in Lagos State. Through focus group discussions with women from Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches, alongside interviews with pastors and denominational leaders, the project explores how theological teachings, pastoral counseling, and church norms influence health-seeking behavior. By centering Christian communities as key social actors, the study aims to inform faith-sensitive health education and training while advancing the Nagel Institute's commitment to World Christianity scholarship that addresses lived faith, public health, and human flourishing in the global South.



John Sampson

Dr. John Sampson serves as Assistant Professor of Religion at Calvin University, where he teaches systematic and historical theology and specializes in Asian Christianity, particularly twentieth-century Chinese Christian theology. As a Faculty Fellow, he brings to the Nagel Institute deep expertise in the cross-cultural transmission of Christianity, with current research focused on the theology of T. C. Chao (趙紫宸) and its significance for global conversations in World Christianity.



Eric Araújo

As a Faculty Fellow, Prof. Eric Araújo (Computer Science) brings computational expertise to the study of human behavior and social dynamics, contributing rigorously grounded insights that serve the common good through ethical technology development. His research uses multiagent modeling and simulation to examine how opinions, sentiments, and behaviors spread within complex systems, generating valuable perspectives across diverse domains including politics, cooperation, health, criminology, and religion. Through his fellowship, Prof. Araújo's work enriches interdisciplinary dialogue and advances Nagel's commitment to understanding social and religious dynamics with both analytical precision and moral responsibility.

New Advisory Council Appointments

The Advisory Council plays a vital role in shaping the vision, priorities, and long-term impact of the Nagel Institute. Meeting once per semester provides a meaningful rhythm for collective discernment, allowing Council members to reflect together on the Institute's work, offer strategic guidance, and ensure that our initiatives remain faithful to Nagel's mission and responsive to the global realities of World Christianity.

These regular gatherings also foster strong relationships among Council members and between the Council and Institute leadership. By coming together each semester, the Council creates space for thoughtful conversation, shared learning, and wise counsel, strengthening accountability, deepening collaboration, and helping the Nagel Institute move forward with clarity, integrity, and purpose.



John Sampson

We are pleased to welcome Dr. John Sampson as a new member of the Nagel Institute's Advisory Council. Dr. Sampson is Assistant Professor of Religion at Calvin University, where he teaches in systematic and historical theology and conducts research on the cross-cultural transmission of Christianity, with particular attention to twentieth-century China. His current work focuses on the theology of T. C. Chao (趙紫宸), one of the most influential Chinese theologians of the modern era. We are grateful for Dr. Sampson's scholarly expertise and global perspective, and we look forward to the insight and wisdom he brings to the work and vision of the Nagel Institute.



Albert Strydhorst

We are pleased to welcome Albert Strydhorst as a new member of the Nagel Institute's Advisory Council. Albert serves as Ministry Partner Professor and Missionary-in-Residence at Calvin Theological Seminary, bringing nearly two decades of missionary experience in Nigeria with Christian Reformed World Missions. In his work, he teaches and mentors students in missions, global Christianity, and cross-cultural ministry, while advancing a vision of Christian mission as "from everywhere to everywhere." Through teaching, hosting international partners, speaking in churches, and convening mission-focused gatherings, Albert invites students and congregations to engage God's global work with humility, partnership, and faithful commitment. We are grateful for the depth of experience and missional insight he brings to the Council and to the ongoing work of the Nagel Institute.



Nagel Team Members

Damaris Parsitau



Dr. Damaris Seleina Parsitau serves as Director of the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, where she provides visionary leadership at the intersection of scholarship, global engagement, and institutional stewardship. A respected scholar of religion and public life, her research focuses on gender, Christianity, and social transformation in Africa, with broader implications for understanding the role of faith in shaping societies across the global church. Her work brings careful attention to lived religious experience, public theology, and the ways Christian communities navigate social, cultural, and political change.

Dr. Parsitau brings extensive experience in research leadership, international collaboration, and partnership development, guiding complex, multi-year initiatives that engage scholars, institutions, and communities across continents. Under her leadership, the Nagel Institute continues to strengthen its role as a global hub for interdisciplinary research in World Christianity, fostering spaces for rigorous scholarship, thoughtful dialogue, and cross-cultural learning. Her commitment to faithful stewardship, relational leadership, and scholarly excellence ensures that the Institute's work remains attentive to diverse voices and responsive to the flourishing of Christian communities worldwide.

Robert Woodberry



In conjunction with his role as a Senior Research Fellow, Dr. Robert Woodberry remains based at Baylor University and is not a member of the Nagel Institute's internal staff team. His fellowship reflects a collaborative scholarly relationship rather than an institutional appointment, allowing the Nagel Institute to engage his expertise while honoring his primary academic home and ongoing research commitments. Dr. Woodberry is widely known for his groundbreaking work in global history, religion, and social change, particularly his research on the long-term social effects of religious movements. His current projects continue to explore how religious communities have shaped education, communication, political development, and civic life across cultures and historical periods—lines of inquiry that closely align with Nagel's interest in Christianity as a global, historically embedded, and socially consequential tradition.

Dr. Woodberry's engagement with the Nagel Institute exemplifies the kind of scholarly partnership the Institute seeks to cultivate: one rooted in mutual respect, intellectual rigor, and shared curiosity rather than formal affiliation. Through his ongoing research and periodic collaboration, he enriches Nagel's global conversations and contributes meaningfully to its mission of advancing thoughtful, interdisciplinary scholarship on World Christianity and its impact on societies worldwide.

John Hendershot



At the end of September, the Nagel Institute was pleased to welcome John Hendershot as our new Program Coordinator. John brings more than three decades of experience spanning banking and financial services, business leadership, and nonprofit work, along with a strong background in organizational operations and strategic coordination. He holds two master's degrees, an MS in Management and an MBA, which inform his practical, systems-oriented approach to supporting complex initiatives.

In his role, John supports the Institute's research programs, visiting scholar initiatives, and operational systems, helping to strengthen Nagel's capacity to serve global Christian scholars, partners, and funders with clarity and care. We are delighted to have him join our team and look forward to the insight, discipline, and dedication he brings to advancing the mission and work of the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity.

Nagel Projects and Funding

The Nagel Institute's current grant portfolio reflects a focused and coherent commitment to advancing globally engaged scholarship in World Christianity through long-term, interdisciplinary research initiatives. These projects collectively address questions of religious change, spiritual formation, theological education, and leadership development across diverse cultural, geographic, and ecclesial contexts. Together, they demonstrate the Institute's capacity to steward complex, multi-year collaborations that bring scholars, practitioners, and institutions into sustained conversation.

Several active projects concentrate on re-centering global perspectives in the study of Christianity by challenging inherited Eurocentric assumptions and expanding scholarly frameworks to better reflect the realities of the global church. This work supports comparative research on religious change, amplifies voices from the Global South, and advances new methodological approaches that more accurately represent Christianity's worldwide diversity and historical development.

Other initiatives within the portfolio focus on large-scale international research examining spiritual formation, character, and human flourishing across Christian traditions. These projects foster cross-cultural learning and collaboration in dozens of countries, creating shared platforms for scholars and practitioners to explore how faith communities cultivate virtue, resilience, and well-being in varied social and cultural settings.

The Institute also administers grants dedicated to strengthening religious education and leadership formation through institutional partnerships and subgrant programs. These efforts support theological educators and leaders as they engage local contexts with depth, integrity, and faithfulness. In addition, continued investment in the Prophet's Chamber Visiting Scholars Program enables scholars from around the world to engage in focused research, writing, and intellectual exchange at Calvin University, further reinforcing Nagel's role as a global hub for scholarly collaboration.

Alongside these active projects, the Nagel Institute continues to pursue new funding opportunities that align with its mission and strategic vision. Emerging proposals explore the intersection of faith, mental health, and social transformation, particularly within African contexts. Together with the Institute's endowment support, these initiatives position Nagel as a trusted center for rigorous scholarship, faithful stewardship, and collaborative research that advances the study and practice of World Christianity worldwide.

Advancing Global Scholarship Through Generous Grant Support

The work of the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity is made possible through the generous support of several major research grants that advance globally engaged scholarship, leadership development, and cross-cultural theological inquiry. These projects strengthen theological education, support scholars from the Global South, and deepen understanding of Christianity as a lived, global faith.

De-Centering Europe in the Study of Religious Change is supported by the John Templeton Foundation (Grant #63790).

This project was made possible through the support of Grant 63790 from the John Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.

The Global Spiritual Formation Project is supported by the Templeton World Charity Foundation, Inc. (Grant TWCF-2025-34856).

This project was made possible through the support of Grant TWCF-2025-34856 from the Templeton World Charity Foundation, Inc. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Templeton World Charity Foundation, Inc.

The Prophet's Chamber Visiting Scholar Program is supported by Templeton Religion Trust (Grant TRT-2024-34185).

This project was made possible through the support of Grant TRT-2024-34185 from Templeton Religion Trust. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Templeton Religion Trust.

Together, these grants enable the Nagel Institute to steward long-term research initiatives, foster cross-cultural scholarly collaboration, and provide spaces for thoughtful inquiry that serve both the academy and the global church. We are deeply grateful for this support and for the shared commitment to rigorous, globally attentive scholarship.





CALVIN INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Calvin University has launched an international search for the next Executive Director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW).

As part of this process, the search committee has spent the past several months engaging in a thoughtful listening phase with CICW staff and key partners to discern the qualities, experience, and vision most essential for the Institute's next leader.

We now invite you to participate in this important work. The committee asks that you:

- Review the Executive Director Opportunity Profile available on the CICW website.
- Pray with us for discernment and wisdom throughout the search.
- Share the profile widely within your networks.
- Confidentially recommend potential candidates who may fit this role.

Your insight and partnership are invaluable as Calvin seeks a leader who will guide CICW faithfully and creatively into its next chapter.

The search committee is deeply grateful for your support and assistance.

Global Partnerships and Shared Vision

The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity actively welcomes opportunities to form strategic partnerships with institutions that share our commitment to global Christian scholarship, peacebuilding, and cross-cultural understanding. We believe that collaboration across disciplines, traditions, and regions is essential to advancing meaningful research and practice in World Christianity.

We invite organizations engaged in research, education, leadership development, and interfaith dialogue to explore possibilities for partnership with us. Whether through joint research projects, scholarly exchanges, convenings, or programmatic collaboration, the Nagel Institute values partnerships rooted in mutual respect, shared purpose, and a commitment to excellence. Those interested in beginning a conversation are encouraged to contact our Director, Dr. Damaris Seleina Parsitau, at damaris.parsitau@calvin.edu.

These partnerships are emerging at a time when the Nagel Institute continues to strengthen its global reputation as a trusted and dynamic research hub. Increasingly, scholars from around the world are choosing to bring their grants, research initiatives, and collaborative projects to the Institute. This growing momentum reflects confidence in Nagel's proven record of transparency, faithful stewardship, and impactful scholarship.

New partnerships also affirm the Institute's capacity to nurture innovative research, support scholars across career stages, and advance the study of World Christianity on a global scale. By creating environments where ideas can be tested, refined, and shared across contexts, the Nagel Institute serves as a catalyst for scholarship that is both intellectually rigorous and globally attentive.

Guided by this work, the Nagel Institute envisions a world in which scholars and practitioners are meaningfully connected across continents and cultures—linked through shared learning, dialogue, and discovery. Often described as the “linking of hearts,” this vision captures our enduring commitment to collaboration, relationship-building, and the illumination of the richness and diversity of global Christianity.



Welcoming Deborah Haarsma as New Director of INCHE

The International Network for Christian Higher Education (INCHE) expresses its deep gratitude to Dr. Shirley Roels for her faithful and visionary leadership as Executive Director, serving through November 15, 2025. A longtime member of INCHE, Dr. Roels has significantly strengthened the global network through her decades of scholarship, administrative expertise, and commitment to equipping Christian colleges and universities around the world. Her tenure has expanded INCHE's reach, deepened its resources, and advanced its mission of informing, connecting, and equipping Christian higher education since 1975. The Network honors her enduring contributions and the legacy she leaves for future generations of Christian educators.

INCHE is also pleased to welcome Dr. Deborah Haarsma as its incoming Executive Director. An accomplished astrophysicist, author, and respected leader in the dialogue between science and Christian faith, Dr. Haarsma brings extensive experience from her service as President of BioLogos and as professor and chair of Physics and Astronomy at Calvin University. Her scholarship, global engagement, and commitment to Christ-centered education position her to lead INCHE into its next chapter with creativity, rigor, and grace.

Together, the INCHE community celebrates Dr. Roels' remarkable service and warmly welcomes Dr. Haarsma as she steps into this new role of guiding and expanding INCHE's global mission.



Shirley Roels



Deborah Haarsma

Educating for Integrity, Justice, and Hope

Prof. Damaris Parsitau, Director of the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, delivered the Day Two keynote address at the INCHE Africa Conference—offering a bold and timely challenge to Christian universities across the continent. Speaking to leaders from more than 100 Christian institutions in a region home to 734 million Christians, she urged universities to “do more than expand,” calling them to form ethical, spiritually grounded, and socially engaged leaders for Africa’s future.

Prof. Parsitau emphasized three urgent priorities for Christian higher education in Africa:

- Rethinking curricula through the lens of faith, ethics, and social responsibility
- Addressing the growing mental health crisis among students and communities
- Recognizing African Christianity as a vital source of social capital and civic imagination

“Christian higher education,” she asserted, “must become the soul of the continent and the conscience of society.” Her keynote resonated deeply across the conference, underscoring the transformative potential of Christian universities to shape leaders who serve with integrity, justice, and hope.



Strengthening the Nagel Institute's Brand and Global Visibility

The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity is undertaking a focused and intentional effort to strengthen its branding and marketing presence in order to elevate awareness of its mission, programs, and global impact. As the Institute's work continues to expand across continents and disciplines, this initiative reflects a commitment to presenting that work with greater clarity, coherence, and reach. At its core, the effort seeks to articulate a unified visual and narrative identity that faithfully reflects Nagel's leadership in advancing the study of World Christianity.

Consistent branding across digital platforms, publications, events, and communications is central to this work. By aligning design, language, and storytelling, the Institute aims to ensure that its scholarship, partnerships, and programs are immediately recognizable to audiences both within Calvin University and across global academic and faith-based networks. A cohesive brand helps highlight Nagel's signature initiatives such as major research projects, visiting scholar programs, and public lectures, while making its contributions more accessible to scholars, practitioners, donors, and partners worldwide.

A significant milestone in this effort has been the revitalization of the Nagel Institute's website, developed with the support of the Templeton Religion Trust-funded Engaging African Realities Project and produced in collaboration with the Grand Rapids-based marketing firm Grey Matter Group. The redesigned site provides a clearer window into Nagel's research, amplifies global voices, and showcases the Institute's interdisciplinary approach to understanding Christianity as a lived, global faith. The Engaging African Realities project, now featured prominently on the site, illustrates how thoughtful storytelling and strong visual presentation can bring complex research to life and connect it meaningfully to a wider audience.

One of the most compelling expressions of this project is *The Source of the Spring*, a beautifully shot, immersive film emerging from the Engaging African Realities initiative. Filmed across South Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana, and spanning more than 30 locations and five languages, the project brings together indigenous fishers, African kings and queens, Yoruba and Akan chief priests, Christian pastors and prophets, Muslim imams, theologians, social scientists, and global scholars. Supported by Templeton Religion Trust funding and led by Dr. David C. Wang, the project demonstrates how religion shapes life-and-death realities, addressing themes such as hunger in coastal fishing villages, religious violence, colonial legacies, and enduring questions of meaning, identity, and hope.

Through these branding and storytelling efforts, the Nagel Institute is not simply refining its public image—it is strengthening its ability to reach the world by faithfully showcasing the depth, beauty, and significance of its research. By presenting its work with greater intentionality and coherence, the Institute seeks to deepen engagement, invite new collaborators, and reinforce its role as a trusted global hub for rigorous, collaborative scholarship in World Christianity. This renewed focus on visibility and narrative clarity ensures that Nagel's research continues to inform, challenge, and inspire the global church and scholarly community alike.

<https://nagelinstitute.org/project/engaging-african-realities/>

A Season of Hope, Reflection, and New Beginnings

The coming weeks mark one of the most meaningful and hope-filled seasons of the year. As a Christian community, we gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, and to reflect on the profound significance of His coming for our faith, our lives, and the world. This sacred season invites us to slow down, to remember the promise of light entering darkness, and to renew our confidence in God's enduring presence and faithfulness.

At the same time, this moment allows us to bring one year to a thoughtful close while preparing to step into a new one. With gratitude, we look back on the work entrusted to us, the relationships formed, and the ways God has guided and sustained us. With hope and anticipation, we look ahead open to new possibilities, renewed vision, and the continued call to serve faithfully in the year to come.



Partnering with the Nagel Institute in World Christianity

The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity invites friends, alumni, churches, and institutions to partner with us in strengthening global Christian scholarship. At the heart of this work is a shared commitment to understanding Christianity as a worldwide, historically rooted, and culturally diverse tradition shaped by voices, contexts, and experiences from every region of the world.

Through its research initiatives, scholarly networks, and hospitality programs, the Nagel Institute creates spaces where scholars from across the Global South and Global North can engage one another with depth, humility, and intellectual rigor. These partnerships foster mutual learning, encourage long-term collaboration, and help ensure that global Christian perspectives are studied, preserved, and shared with integrity.

There are many ways to support and participate in this mission. Partners can help by advocating for the study of World Christianity within their own institutions and communities, sharing Nagel's work with students and colleagues, and encouraging scholars to engage in global conversations that cross cultural, linguistic, and geographic boundaries. Prayerful support and institutional collaboration remain essential to sustaining this work.

Another meaningful way to contribute is by helping build the Nagel Library, a growing resource for visiting scholars and students. We welcome donations of books and academic materials in theology, mission studies, church history, and global Christianity. Each volume strengthens the scholarly environment and becomes part of a shared legacy of learning, dialogue, and exchange.

Together, through collaboration, shared resources, and a commitment to global engagement, we can continue to advance the study of World Christianity for the benefit of the church and the academy. If you would like to partner with the Nagel Institute or contribute books and academic materials, please contact nagel@calvin.edu or visit nagelinstitute.org to learn more.

