



Campus Connexion

West Africa Advanced School of Theology ❖ www.waast.org
December 2023

Events on Campus

Upcoming

January 2024

School Offices Closed

February 23 & 25

Student Registration

February 26–April 26

BTh/Diploma Sessions

May 3 & 5

Registration, MA Sessions

May 6–August 2

MA Sessions

TBA

Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors

Please Pray

- for the 2023 graduates, that their “torches” would burn brightly to show many the way to Jesus.
- for a smooth transition of leadership at the central campus in the coming months.
- for the rapid progress of the building projects and safety for the workers.
- for extension centers starting sessions in January, for provision and safe travels for students and professors.

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109 “Torchbearers” Receive Their Diplomas

The Class of 2023, the “Torchbearers for Completing the *Missio Dei*,” graduated from their various programs on November 18. Five received the Post-secondary Diploma in Theology, 73 the Bachelor of Theology degree, and 31 the Master of Arts in Theological Studies. Students came from 11 nations and have returned to continue to advance God’s kingdom in their own nations and beyond.

The PATHS doctoral program graduated one student this year: WAAS alumna Faith Ojo (BTh 2009, MA 2013). PATHS now counts 53 graduates; 27 are WAAS alumni. (Photos: Ceremony: <https://tinyurl.com/20grad23>, Banquet: <https://tinyurl.com/23banq>)



Passing the Torch: Personnel Changes



Board of Governors Chairman Dr. Marcel Bomboko thanks President Mark Turney and introduces incoming president Patrick Hurst during the graduation ceremony.

At the end of this year, President Mark Turney and his wife, Victoria, will be leaving WAAS. Missionary Patrick Hurst has been appointed to fill this position and will assume his duties in July 2024. Rev. Turney states, “It has been an honor to lead this great school and to serve the African church in training leaders for God’s mission.”

Welcome to the Hursts! Like his predecessor, Rev. Hurst is a WAAS alumnus; both received their MA degree in 2003. He and his wife, Dr. Suzanne Hurst, have been career missionaries since 1992. After several years in eastern DR Congo, they and their three children lived on the WAAS campus from 1998–2006, where Rev. Hurst taught courses and served as dean of students. When they returned to Congo, he taught at IBTAD (Bible school) and the WAAS extension center in Kinshasa. From 2010–2023 he served as area director for the US Assemblies of God missionaries in Central Africa. He is currently completing his doctoral studies in the US.



Dr. Suzanne Hurst holds a Doctorate in Public Health and is the director of Africa Oasis, Assemblies of God World Missions’ continent-wide compassion ministry. She and the AO team work with AG national churches to address needs in the areas of agriculture, women’s empowerment, water solutions, and trafficking. She will continue to lead this ministry from the WAAS campus and teach occasionally for PATHS and WAAS.

In the Interim...

Between the time of the Turneys' departure at the end of December 2023 and the Hursts' arrival in July 2024, WAAST will operate under the capable leadership of Dr. Steve Pennington. Dr. Pennington and his wife, Trina, moved in 2021 to the campus, where he serves as vice-chancellor for PATHS. Beginning in 1994, the Penningtons worked in several nations in the Horn of Africa and East Africa and in various Bible schools. Dr. Pennington was the area director for AGWM missionaries in East Africa and the Indian Ocean basin from 2014–2019. Rev. Trina Pennington currently serves as AGWM representative to the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance's Women's Ministry Commission Executive Leadership Team. We thank God for Dr. Pennington's willingness to lead WAAST as interim president and pray He will grant him and Trina strength and wisdom.



A New Assignment: Bernie and Brenda Smith arrived in Togo in 1994 under assignment to WAAST. They have also been involved in various projects with the Togo Assemblies of God. They are now assigned to the Togo AG and will work particularly with Togo's two Bible schools and with tabernacle projects (steel shelters for churches), and will continue to travel to WAAST extension centers from time to time. As a WAAST professor, Bernie taught more than 25 different courses over the years, at both the central campus and extension centers. He helped establish and maintain the campus' Wi-Fi network and served in the Chapel, among many other duties. Brenda worked most recently as communications coordinator, managing WAAST's Facebook pages, Web site, and publications. She continues to produce the weekly Jumaa Prayer bulletin

—and will no doubt be photographing their new activities.

Construction Projects: PATHS Building and WAAST Chapel



With graduation activities over and the campus vacated, two major construction projects have begun. The dorm just north of the cafeteria is being removed and land will be cleared for a three-story building for the PATHS doctoral program. This ◀ building will include a

cafeteria and dining hall to serve 160, classrooms and meeting rooms, a small library, offices, and some housing units. When it is completed (hopefully by the time of graduation 2026), WAAST will take possession of the current PATHS rooms on the second floor of the multipurpose building.



The WAAST International Chapel broke ground in a brief ceremony on Tuesday, ▲ December 5, and lines have been marked out and fences erected for construction to begin. Already water lines have been moved and a storehouse built. The new walls will be built around the existing chapel, allowing it to be used during much of the construction period. The expanded walls and a U-shaped balcony will more than double the seating capacity, and the church will have space to accommodate the hundreds of children who now meet in school facilities.



Francophone Teachers Training

On November 21–22, 45 professors for the francophone programs on the central campus and in the seven French-language extension centers met for special training. Dr. Jonathan Bersot introduced the new PATHS/WAAST style guide in French, which outlines the standards and rules to be applied to all written work done in these programs. Those who attended this seminar will in turn train the professors in their centers, in preparation for implementing the guide in 2025.

Thank you, Rev. Mark & Victoria Turney!

For the past five years, Rev. Mark and Mrs. Victoria Turney have led WAAST with grace, energy, and vision. They strove to build up the international missionary team and local staff that make up the “*Famille de la FATAD*” (WAAST Family). Professors and students, pastors and missionaries, staff, board members, and guests have enjoyed their warm hospitality, meals, and receptions. They have held or hosted several training seminars to improve the quality of theological teaching at WAAST and in the region. Both taught courses as needed.

The Turneys guided the school through some challenging times. In March 2020, when COVID-19 slammed shut Togo’s borders, students and visiting professors and missionaries quickly left the country. The three-story dormitory building project, just started, was stalled, and eight students were unable to leave. But over the months of lockdown, no staff member was laid off, and the students also were put to work on projects to improve the campus. Despite the restrictions, they were able to hold a small ceremony for 35 graduates! Since that time the dormitory (and a myriad of renovations) has been completed, and in 2021, as students returned, WAAST graduated its largest class ever: 151. During their tenure, more than 525 students in the undergraduate and graduate programs received their diplomas.

When introducing WAAST staff members, professors, and missionaries, Rev. Turney would often add, “They are a gift to WAAST.” Indeed, he and Victoria themselves have been a gift! The pictures below illustrate perhaps better than words their commitment to and enjoyment of serving this influential school. But the complete, clear picture of their impact will only be revealed to us in heaven! We pray the Lord will go with them and bless them as they continue to pour themselves into His kingdom work wherever He leads.

