

MEET PTS



# WORLD MISSION INITIATIVE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR BALA KHYLLEP DEVELOPS MISSION VISION IN STUDENTS AND CHURCHES

For everyone, 2020 has been a year of change, adjustment, and adaptation. Despite the many challenges, the Rev. Balajiedlang (Bala) Khylllep, Pittsburgh Seminary's associate director of the **World Mission Initiative**, has found some unexpected blessings.

WMI hosts a conference every two years to help develop mission vision, nurture missionary vocations, and cultivate missional congregations. In past years, the conference has been held on the PTS campus and has usually engaged 100 to 150 participants from the Pittsburgh area. This year, Bala and the 10-person planning team—made up of students, staff, faculty, and local church partners—faced many questions about how to creatively shift the conference to an online format. Each planner had a unique role to play, and Bala's was to spearhead the event's publicity and promotion.

The final result was a dynamic conference on race and mission: **four main sessions and six workshops** with some of the most engaging thinkers and practitioners of racial justice.

Each main session included more than 500 participants, joining online from 37 states and seven countries! Many of these participants were grappling with the issue of racism for the first time. They were introduced to the history of racism in the American and global church, some biblical teachings on the subject, and practical ideas for entering respectful dialogue with those who downplay racism.

The conference was an extraordinary gift to the hundreds of participants and their churches around the world!

Other parts of Bala's job have been put on hold during the pandemic. For instance, normally he would be gearing up to lead teams of students on **intercultural learning trips** to new contexts near and far. (Instead, this year's intercultural experiential learning course includes virtual encounters with Palestinian Christians who will reflect on their context and the mission of the Church as they see it.) He would be coming alongside students to help them participate in **Valentour Fellowships**, customized learning experiences that take place in countries across the world. Bala is excited to resume these activities when it's safe to travel.

In the meantime, he is focusing on other important work. He is co-authoring a work alongside the Rev. Dr. Hunter Farrell, director of the World Mission Initiative, about congregational mission. The book will critique the history of mission work and explore best practices for Christians today. Bala specifically created the "toolkit" section of the book, a collection of hands-on resources to help readers take missional steps in their own congregational contexts. For instance, there is a template for how someone might plan a training session prior to a mission trip.

Thank you, Bala, for your work in Pittsburgh that stretches to the ends of the earth.

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