



CETC Newsletter

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A periodic newsletter for TESOL members.

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Leadership Updates

Letter From the Chair

Karen Asenavage, kasenavage@hct.ac.ae

As the chair of the Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus, I would like to welcome you to a new year with the caucus. I write as a member of the team that serves as your leadership. Mary Wong, at Azusa Pacific University in California, is the outgoing chair; Eleanor Pease, at Nyack College in New York, is the incoming chair; and I am writing from the United Arab Emirates. This geographic variety is, I believe, representative of us as a caucus and of our goals for the year. We'd like to expand our borders internationally and strengthen our links within North America.

We would first like to thank you for your participation at TESOL in San Antonio this year. The Colloquia "Respecting Religious Differences in ESL Classrooms" was a success as was Mary's role in the All Caucus colloquium, "Teacher Identity and the TESOL Profession." The caucus and CELTs have weathered some communication issues during the past year but through the grace of God we have been able to maintain integrity and professionalism. Thank you to those who volunteered at the CETC booth and all of those who attended the CETC open meeting. All in all it was a successful conference.

We have a number of goals for the year that we'd like to share with you. The TESOL 2006 Convention, to be held in Tampa, is our largest gathering and so most of our efforts are focused on making that event a success for all of you. This year caucus members from around the world will participate in two colloquia, in the CETC evening meeting, at the CETC booth, and hopefully in energy sessions and other breakout

events. But we'd also like to highlight sessions that you as caucus members are involved in at the convention. Let us know and then we'll let other CETC'ers know when and where you'll be presenting. We'd also like to reinstitute lunch or dinner gatherings of believers to talk about your work and learn more about each other.

Other goals are as follows:

Use the communications tools available to us to their fullest to help you communicate and keep you informed. These communications tools include the TESOL newsletter, Web site, e-lists, e-blasts, and the conference. They also include the newsletter edited by Andy Bowdler and our own Web site managed by Frank Tuzi.

We'd like to have an increase in the number of members on the e-lists from 155 to 200 by conference time. Our current membership listing is 882, so we would be adding just a quarter of the membership.

Collaborate with the other caucuses. One way we are doing this is through participation in the All Caucus Colloquium. Eleanor Pease will represent us in that colloquium. You can also collaborate by participating in the All Caucus social event at TESOL Tampa. Nibbles and conversation help you get to know others in the caucuses.

Respond to your comments from TESOL San Antonio. You gave us lots of good ideas. The colloquium topic comes from those comments as will e-list manager Gena Bennett's monthly e-list topics.

Increase the number of international connections among CETC'ers. One way that we are doing that is to support the Christian Educators in TESOL Conference at Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand, January 23-25, 2006. (*Editor's note: You can get information on the conference by contacting Brad Baurain at bbaurain@elic.org.*)

Enlarge the slate of candidates for CETC positions in TESOL. Last year was the first year we had e-elections. This year we will continue with that method, with hopefully more of you willing to serve.

Actively participate in TESOL and other professional forums in ways that identify us as Christians of integrity and professionalism. The conference in Chiang Mai is one way, the TESOL Convention in Tampa is another, and Mary Wong is forging ahead with a book edited with Suresh Canarajah.

We're looking forward to an active year as the Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus. Take advantage of all that is available to you. Let us know your needs and ideas. Check the TESOL Web site today; go to caucuses and subscribe to the e-list. Respond to the e-list topics and write for the newsletter. Come to the convention in Tampa. While you're there, go to lunch with fellow CETC'ers. And always continue to grow, develop, and shine as Christians of integrity and professionalism wherever in the world you are. "***You are like light in the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden***" (*Matthew 5:14, WE*).

Blessings to you for the only cause that matters,

Karen

[Articles and Information](#)

[Thank You to CETC Booth Volunteers](#)

Probably the most active part of the CETC year is the annual TESOL convention. This is the time when everyone comes together, shares ideas, *and* stops by the CETC booth. But CETC'ers are not the only people who stop by the booth. Over the past few years some provocative topics have led curious TESOL'ers to stop and ask questions. The questions are not always easy, but the opportunity to discuss them is invaluable!

That's why CETC booth volunteers are so important to CETC and the TESOL. We appreciate the time you spent at the booth this past year! On behalf of Mary and Eleanor, we'd like to thank all those who volunteered at the CETC booth in San Antonio. A special thanks to the following folks:

Gena Bennett
Wes Eby
Tomas Gault
Phebe Gray
Kristin Hubert
Keri Lucas
Adrienne Ochoa
Carol Ogden
Monica and Michael Pasquale
Eleanor Pease
Cheri Pierson
Troy Peters
Rita LaNell Stahl
Mary Wong

If you'd like to help in Tampa and volunteer at the CETC booth, watch the CETC-L list for a call for volunteers or contact Eleanor Pease at Eleanor.Pease@nyack.edu.

[Wise as Serpents, Harmless as Doves?: Reflections on the Plenary Panel at the Christians in English Language Teaching \(CELT\) Conference, Long Beach 2005, "On being a Christian ESL Instructor in a Secular Context."](#)

Mary Wong, mwong@apu.edu

As I sit looking out on the Queen Mary in the beautiful Long Beach harbor this morning and reflect upon the CATESOL and CELT conference, I feel like an overfed passenger on a cruise ship needing to push myself away from the table for a little exercise. Thus, instead of rushing back to the conference this morning, I will take a respite from the "buffet" of sessions and spend some time in reflection.

How many times have we taught a class, only to know the moment it ended how we should have presented the content, responded to a student, arranged the activities, or rephrased a question. So it is with my part on this panel. I greatly appreciated the comments from the other panelists: Heather Bock, who spoke of ways she prayed for, interacted with, and ministered to both the students and faculty on her high school campus, and Amy Adwalpalker, who described how her role as an ESL teacher of adults in Garden Grove was an opportunity to minister to those in need in the community in which she lived and worked, whether that meant providing a bed for a student whose son slept on the floor or a listening ear and compassion to the students who visited her at home.

In light of her experiences in China, Turkey, and Turkmenistan, Kitty Purgason discussed the importance of being transparent about our identity as believers, allowing

for student choice, and ensuring that whatever the content of our lessons might be, there are pedagogical objectives that must be met. A key verse that guides her interaction as a Christian in a secular setting is Colossians 4:5-6.

For my part, I reflected on 20 years of teaching in a secular context, which included three private language schools, three community colleges, and three universities. The strategies I used on these campuses were not particularly well informed, and if I could talk to that young teacher over 20 years ago, I would remind her to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” By *wise* I mean both worldly and spiritually. First we need to be smart, or informed, as to the rules, history, and climate of our campuses regarding the use of religion in the classroom. In the United States this means getting, reading, and following *A Teacher’s Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* published by the First Amendment Center <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org> and endorsed by over 20 organizations; it can be found on their Web site at <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/PDF/teachersguide.PDF>. The 16 pages of FAQs will inform you about your rights and responsibilities in using religion in the classroom.

This document states that it is indeed constitutional to teach about religion and provides a rationale as to why it is important to include religion in the curriculum. It also provides guidelines for teaching about religion in public schools such as adopting an academic rather than devotional approach; striving for awareness but not acceptance of any religion; exposing the student to a diversity of religions, but not imposing any particular view; educating about all religions but not promoting or denigrating any religion; and informing students about various beliefs but not seeking to conform students to any particular belief.

The Web site offers an extensive list of organizations and publishers providing classroom resources. Some classroom resources, such as *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public E*, are available for free download. For secondary school teachers a 17-volume series called *Religion in American Life* and a CD-Rom entitled *On Common Ground: World Religions in America* are recommended.

As to how to respond to student questions about a teacher’s personal religious beliefs, it is stated that if appropriate, “the teacher may answer at most with a brief statement of personal belief—but may not turn the question into an opportunity to proselytize for or against religion.” Christians may ask if this guideline violates the Biblical command to provide “a defense of the hope that lies within you.” Yet, there is also the command to obey the government and the concept of “rendering unto Caesar.” Professing your faith in this setting may involve simply stating your identification with Christ and saying no more, while praying for the Spirit to speak to this student and being available for additional interaction in an out-of-class setting.

And now I’d like to address the second aspect of being wise—seeking wisdom from above. We are told in Scripture that we have not because we ask not. This spiritual wisdom does not replace the work one must do studying the national laws, rules, and responsibilities about teaching religion, or investigating the local history and climate of the campus regarding the openness to religion, but it is an essential element. Ultimately it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict and to change the heart of whom God has chosen, so this work is not ours, but His.

We need to ask for wisdom as to how one might be a witness, be it through the diligence of one’s preparation and the excellence in teaching, the sensitivity with which one approaches and engages in religious or spiritual matters, the manner in which one responds to and values students, the humble attitude of serving one’s students and one’s school by taking on tasks others won’t, the interactions with colleagues including admitting when one has wronged another or responded inappropriately, the selection of activities and materials that are holistic in nature, or acknowledgment of the spiritual

dimension of our students while maintaining the central goal of helping them acquire linguistic competence. These are ways in which we are Christ's hands to the international students whom we are fortunate to serve.

But what of being harmless as doves? We view ourselves as harmless, but how might others see us? Consider how you might feel if your son, who is required to attend school, had a teacher in your local public school who was Buddhist and when your son asked him about his faith, used this opportunity to persuade your son to accept his Buddhist beliefs and ask if he would like to go temple, engage in a study of Buddhism, or learn Buddhist chants in class?

Consider how you might feel if you discovered that your language tutor's skills and motivation lie more in her desire for your spiritual conversion than in your language acquisition. Given that teachers have a powerful and authoritative position over children, who at young ages are often very impressionable, it is imperative that we acknowledge the power we have and not abuse it in ways that might be construed as manipulative, applying the Golden Rule, if you will, to how we approach religion in schools.

But what about the context outside the United States? Christians who teach English in cities and villages all over the globe have the opportunity to honor God in and through their teaching, but they also have a responsibility to be open, honest, and legal about who they are and the activities of their sending agencies, including the training, advertising, and practices of these agencies. One does not have to look for long on the Web to find examples of Christian organizations that do not take seriously the importance of professionalism and transparency in maintaining a Christian witness overseas. This inappropriate approach to ESOL does much to undermine the efforts of Christian professionals and causes non-Christians to view our teaching as a façade for proselytization.

Christian professionals teaching English overseas should not regard their position as a means to an end or a covert way into limited-access countries. If professionals engage in deceptive activities such as using teaching as a platform to proselytize instead of genuinely meeting the educational needs of the students, our integrity is questioned, our credibility tarnished, and our witness for Christ compromised. This unethical behavior corrodes our Christian witness, diminishes the TESOL profession, and harms our students.

Teaching *is* our ministry, and living out our lives as Christian teachers is our witness. The Biblical command to be a witness and to live out our beliefs does not conflict with our professional commitment to our students; rather, it serves to enhance it. By teaching with excellence, we honor God and bring glory to Christ. Our personal integrity, professionalism in teaching, and dedication to our students goes far in prompting our colleagues, administrators, and students to seek out the God whom we serve.

[On Becoming an EFL Teacher](#)

William Schmidt, schmidtwil@yahoo.com

"I was plopped into it," is my response when my students ask how I became a teacher. I was doing charity work in Pakistan and was asked me to teach a newly formed English class. "But I am not a teacher," was my rejoinder. "But you speak it!" was the response.

I didn't know what I was doing with that first class but I did learn one thing: how important English was to my students. They said they needed English to get a good wife. This surprised me. I knew English was needed for work and better pay. But I didn't know matchmakers would pair you with a better spouse if you spoke English.

That was news to me.

Actually I had heard about the strategic importance of language study before this. In my own studies, I had learned a number of things about several languages. One wise professor said languages could be learned with diligence, time, and focus. You don't often hear that in America. Another old professor told me that people study a language because they want the information it provides. But in language study, so many wanted English. International students told me they had to provide for their families. English education would help accomplish that.

Quality is important to me, so I decided to get a second master's. My father always said if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well. This master's combined linguistics and educational training. I especially appreciated the hands-on training in field education and during my practicum. Having another pair of eyes in my classroom, watching my teaching and classroom dynamics, has helped me ever since. For me, it showed that creativity and enthusiasm can be combined with solid pedagogy.

My students have always been a source of encouragement for me. They need this strong, vibrant, and all-encompassing language. Seeing them progress in it has always been satisfying, regardless of whether or not they get a spouse because of it!

[The Great E-list Debate](#)

Gena Bennett, genabennett@yahoo.com

Being a member of TESOL and the CETC, especially its e-list, is a great way to continue your professional development. To contribute to not only your professional development but also your personal/spiritual development, the CETC leadership has begun a series of monthly e-list discussions.

The aim of the monthly discussions is to help CETC members foster growth, both personally and professionally, by participating in ongoing dialogue with their Christian colleagues through the CETC e-list. The first week of every month, a discussion topic will be sent to all current subscribers, and, ideally, members will respond with their thoughts and opinions about the topic throughout the entire month.

We have a list of topics that was generated in San Antonio at the 2005 TESOL Convention, but if you have a particular topic you'd like to see discussed, please e-mail me personally at genabennett@yahoo.com

Our first monthly e-list topic centered around what has us all here in the first place: being a Christian and ESL/EFL educator. Many of us discussed how being a Christian affected our daily routines in our schools and classrooms. The general consensus was that for most, being a Christian ESL/EFL educator is no different from being a Christian in any other profession. Although students often see teachers as an authority figure, and we as language teachers often have a part in forming a students' identity, which are privileges not afforded to most other professionals, we all try to honor God in our everyday actions and let those around us see His light in us. We seek God's guidance to take advantage of the opportunities He provides to share Him and do the best job we can to honor Christ.

In addition, many of us agreed that we discovered more about ourselves by considering this question and participating in the discussion. I encourage everyone to subscribe to the CETC e-list and participate in our monthly discussions. We look forward to hearing

from you!

Conference Updates

A Preview of CETC in Action at TESOL 2006 in Tampa

One of our goals this year is to have broad representation from CET'ers at events at TESOL 2006 in Tampa. We can reach this goal by having CET'ers present colloquia, sessions, and energy breaks and by CET'ers acting as volunteers in governance, on committees, and at the convention. CET'ers can also participate in sessions and at the CETC General Meeting. Here's what has been scheduled to date. If you have had a presentation accepted, please let us know so we can let others know.

CETC Events

Wednesday, March 15 9:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

All Caucus Colloquium: Caucus Strategies for Leading TESOL Internationally

Richard Kappra, Jose Francisco Castillo, Lucie Moussu, **Eleanor Pease**, Rosemary Schmid, Marinus Stephan, Tomas Wallis

This session focuses on how language educators from different backgrounds interconnect with the topic of leading within an international context. Speakers discuss their experiences and perspectives and suggest how these could affect ESL/EFL instructors, students, and materials designers worldwide.

This session focuses on international Christian ELT professionals as they lead and work alongside nationals in countries throughout the world. **Eleanor Pease** (CETC incoming chair) will discuss leadership experiences and strategies for supporting English language training and professional development in a variety of educational settings worldwide.

Thursday, March 16 9:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

CETC Colloquium

Professional Integrity and the Christian ELT Leader

Karen Asenavage, Thomas Scovel, Rich Robison, Darla Cuppery, Karen Burroughs, Jeff Stebbins

Christian TESOL leaders discuss how they struggle with, develop, and maintain professional integrity. Speakers representing a variety of contexts including the classroom, administration, research, and the community discuss their leadership experiences and offer suggestions for establishing and maintaining professional integrity.

Thursday, March 16 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

CETC Caucus Open Meeting

CETC Members

Various Times

Energy Breaks

We also hope to offer some Energy Breaks so if you have a topic that would fit this format well, please contact Karen Asenavage at kasenavage@hct.ac.ae.

CETC on the Town

One suggestion from last year was to have more opportunities to meet other CETC'ers. CETC lunches or dinners are a great way to do this. An idea would be to meet for dinner on Wednesday evening and then for lunch at various venues throughout Tampa during the convention week.

If you'd like to help organize this event, please contact Karen Asenavage at kasenavage@hct.ac.ae.

It is still early. The conference is months away, but let's work together to provide as many collaborative opportunities as we can!

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