

MAY 17, 2017



# ISSACHAR FUND

## 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

ISSACHAR FUND  
949 Wealthy Ave SE, STE 203, Grand Rapids, MI 49506

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## PRESIDENT'S GREETING



*I am delighted to share the Issachar Fund's 2016 Annual Report with you. In 2016, we saw the launch of new programs; the continuation, and in some instances, the expansion of existing programs; and the commencement of key consultations. In what follows, you'll get an overview of the work we and our partners achieved this past year.*

*It is both an honor and pleasure to come alongside so many talented, dedicated individuals, both in the US and abroad. We are particularly gratified by the thoughtful care with which our partners have approached their work, and we see their work as the first fruits of what will be an extended conversation on key issues that concern us all. Further details about many of our programs may be found on our [website](#).*

*On behalf of our staff and board, I want to thank you for your interest and partnership in the work we do.*

*Kurt Berends  
President*

*IDEA Fund Launch Breakfast*

New York, April 29, 2016

The IDEA Fund (Interfaith Dialogue and Entrepreneurial Activities) is a non-profit organization through which Muslims and Christians jointly lead, own, plan, administer, and fund cooperative and collaborative projects that benefit society. Over thirty persons from a wide range of educational, philanthropic and social agencies attended the launch breakfast held near the United Nations. The keynote address was delivered by Chawcat Moucarray, a Syrian Christian who is International Director for Interfaith Relations at World Vision. He has written several books that attempt to guide Christians and Muslims toward mutual understanding and peaceful cooperation through humility and respectful dialogue. The IDEA Fund is an ongoing partner with The Issachar Fund (see [www.idea-fund.org](http://www.idea-fund.org)).

Area of Inquiry: Christ-like Virtues in a Pluralistic World

*IDEA Generators' Conference on Care for the Environment*

Chicago, May 27-30, 2016

This initial IDEA Generators Conference (IGC) was a joint Muslim-Christian project focused on care for the environment. It developed out of the Idea Exchange (IEX) consultation on Creation: Our Shared Inheritance, sponsored by the Issachar Fund in Istanbul in 2015. This IGC was the project development phase of that consultation. Over the course of four days, 32 participants and over a dozen resource personnel designed campus-based environmental projects that would be jointly organized and run by joint Muslim-Christian leadership groups.



Afterward participants offered some truly moving statements about how meaningful and educational the process of working in an interfaith action group had been for them. The final stage in this project will be a major implementation grant in 2017 to The Center for Reconciliation at the Duke University Divinity School. This was a joint project between The Issachar Fund and the IDEA Fund (see [www.issacharfund.org/idea-generators-conference](http://www.issacharfund.org/idea-generators-conference)).

Areas of Inquiry: Christ-like Virtues in a Pluralistic World; Creation Care

## *Bethany Land Institute Consultation*

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Chicago, September 8-9, 2016



Bethany Land Institute (BLI), founded by Roman Catholic priest Fr. Emmanuel Katongole, is an education initiative in Uganda that addresses three critical challenges connected with land in Africa: land degradation and low food production, deforestation, and the lack of rest stops on highways. In 2015, the Issachar Fund made a \$15,000 seed money grant to help launch BLI. This 2016 consultation brought together Fr. Katongole, the Board of Bethany Land Institute USA (a U.S.-based

non-profit that supports BLI), and several "Friends" of BLI to provide feedback on BLI's "Vision Statement." (See [www.emmanuelkatongole.com/](http://www.emmanuelkatongole.com/)).

Area of Inquiry: Creation Care

*Science and Faith*

**Faithful Engagement: The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Social Policy Practice**



Lori Sousa, Roberts Wesleyan College

Research to develop a theoretical understanding of the role of religion in social policy advocacy and formation, with a goal of equipping people of faith to pursue effective social policies.

(Co-sponsored by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities)

*Technology, Medical Care and Human Dignity*

**Use of Communication and Information Technology in Christian Middle Schools in Cameroon**

Emmanuel Beche, University Institute of International Development of Cameroon

Research on how adoption of classroom and personal technology challenges traditional pedagogical methods and necessitates more active learning methods.

**The Role of Technology in Workplace Readiness**

Chuck Hannema, Bethel University (MN)

Survey of businesspeople to identify emerging trends for the use of technology, competencies new hires need, and the ethical questions technology poses.

(Co-sponsored by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities)

**Toward a Theology of Posttraumatic Growth: Contributions of Pauline Writings and Positive Psychology**

Luis Cruz-Villalobos, Latin American Doctoral Program / Free University of Amsterdam

English translation of doctoral thesis, which is a multidisciplinary research project, within a framework of practical theology, on post-traumatic coping.



### The Theology of Jeremiah in African Context



Katho Bungishabaku, Shalom University of Bunia

An interpretation of Jeremiah that arises from the African context and speaks to the African need for stability, peace and ecological healing.

### Practice Resurrection: Wendell Berry's Formal Imagination

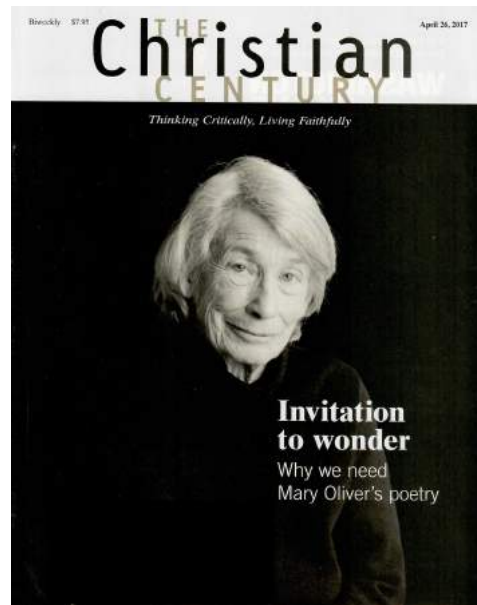
Jeffrey Bilbro, Spring Arbor University

Asks how the three primary literary forms in which Wendell Berry works—poetry, essays, and fiction—help us better understand sustainability in literature, ecology and agriculture.

### World-Care and Care of the World: Mary Oliver and the Aesthetics of Environmentalism

Debra Dean Murphy, West Virginia Wesleyan College

Asks how the intersections between theology and Mary Oliver's poetry might be fertile ground for confronting contemporary ecological crises and promoting the flourishing of all creation.





*Science and Faith*

**Faith and Human Flourishing**

Westmont College; Jeffrey Schloss, PI

Dissemination phase of an earlier Issachar-funded empirical research project that found positive relationships between religious worship and biological and behavioral measures of well-being.

\$47,000; two years

*Technology, Medical Care and Human Dignity*

**Christian Flourishing in a Technological World**

Trinity Western University; Jens Zimmerman, PI

A collaborative, multinational, interdisciplinary theological assessment of the impact of recent technologies on our conceptions of human nature.

\$251,425; three years

**The Fellowship for Theology, Medicine and Culture (TMC)**

Duke University Divinity School; Carl Weisner, PI

Provides matching scholarship support for participants in the TMC Fellows program, a year-long intensive theological formation program for medical professionals.

\$236,453; three years

**"When Others Dress and Lead You:" The Challenge of Aging to Contemporary Bioethics**

University of Aberdeen; Michael Mawson, PI

A book project using philosophical and theological tools to examine the significance of aging for contemporary bioethics.

\$44,024; one year

**Technology and Social Architecture**

Comment Magazine; James K. A. Smith, PI

A theme issue of Comment magazine devoted to critical, constructive Christian reflection on the role of technology in civil society.

\$25,000; one year





## SUMMER INSTITUTE for RECONCILIATION

Featured Seminar  
Religious Peacemaking for  
Christian and Muslim Leaders

Presented by



Dr. Ellen Davis



Dr. Abdullah Antepli

One of seven seminars offered during the 2017 Summer Institute for Reconciliation, this seminar will explore Islamic and Christian views of peacemaking, noting both similarities and differences. There will be a special emphasis on analysis of the key peacemaking texts used by both faiths, along with a focus on finding common ground for the common good.

### PROGRAM DETAILS

Dates: June 5-9, 2017

Tuition: \$500 (includes most meals)

Registration deadline: May 1, 2017

Scholarships available



REFRESH your spirit. RENEW your mind and ministry.  
EXPAND your Christian community.

Registration and more information at [www.dukesummerinstitute.org](http://www.dukesummerinstitute.org)

### January Series, 2016 and 2017

Calvin College; Kristi Potter, PI

To bring Abraham Nussbaum and other speakers on technology, medicine and human dignity to the annual January Series lectures at Calvin College.

\$12,500; two grants over two years

## Creation Care

### Creation Care: Securing Enduring Impact

Congo Initiative, Inc.; Cullen Rodgers-Gates

Enriches and extends the creation care work at the Bilingual Christian University of Congo (UCBC) previously supported by the Issachar Fund.

\$60,000; three years

### Feasibility Study for Forming Energy Service Companies for Rhode Island Houses of Worship

Rhode Island Interfaith Power & Light; Kristen Ivy Moses

A study of the feasibility of forming Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) in Rhode Island as a mechanism for helping finance energy-saving retrofits for houses of worship of all faiths.

\$5,000; one year

## Christ-like Virtues in a Pluralistic World

### Author Training Program

Whitestone Foundation; Anbar Sheikh, PI

A training program to build the capacity of potential Muslim authors targeting young American Muslim readers to subtly, but effectively, incorporate positive character values into their stories.

\$23,000; one year

### **Religious Peacemaking for Christian and Muslim Leaders**

Center for Reconciliation at Duke University Divinity School; Abi Riak, PI

Summer seminar for Muslim imams and Christian pastors that explores Islamic and Christian views of peacemaking, taught by Imam Dr. Abdullah Antepli and theologian Dr. Ellen Davis.

\$20,000; one year

### **Biblical African Interpretation Project**

Duke University Divinity School; Ellen Davis, PI

A second iteration of a for-credit seminar on African Bible interpretations for both Western and East African students, co-taught on both continents by Ellen Davis and Jacob Onyumbwe Wenyi.

\$6,613; one year



***Virtuous Character: Common Values, Shared Visions***

July 13-15, 2017 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands

In December 2016, the Issachar Fund staff received word that the Templeton Religion Trust was awarding Issachar a \$157,467 donation for an IDEA Exchange (IEX) Conference on character formation in Islam and Christianity. It will be matched by \$130,850 from the Issachar Fund. This will be similar to the 2015 IEX on Creation: Our Shared Inheritance held in Istanbul in that half the participants will be Muslim and half Christian.

Area of Inquiry: Christ-like Virtues in a Pluralistic World



***Consultations in the Social Scientific Study of Science and Religion***



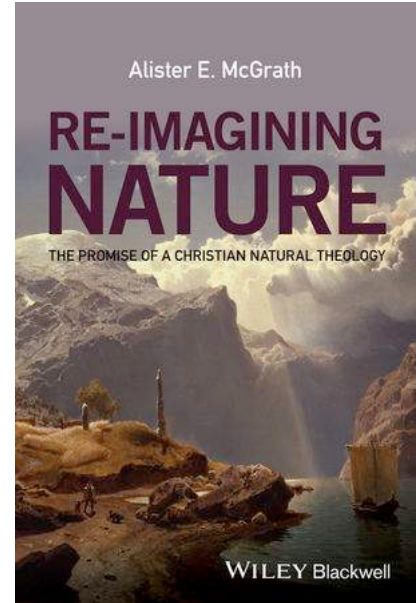
Also in December 2016, the Templeton Religion Trust notified the Issachar Fund staff that it would provide an award of \$85,000, matched by \$85,000 in Issachar funds, for a program of three planning consultations for future strategic grant-making in the study of religion and science through the social science disciplines, especially sociology, cognitive science, and anthropology. The Consultations program will be run out of the office of the Issachar Fund. It begins in Spring 2017 and will carry through to early 2018. This project is the direct product of a small Issachar-

sponsored consultation in San Francisco in November 2015.

Area of Inquiry: Science and Faith

**Alister McGrath, Andreas Idreos Professorship in Science and Religion, Oxford University**

In 2014, the Donor Advised Fund made a \$500,000 grant to secure the Andreas Idreos Chair in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford. That gift enabled the university to secure Alister McGrath to that post, and also serve as Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion at Oxford. Since his appointment, McGrath has continued to be a highly productive and influential Christian voice on religion and science questions. This past year he published what is arguably his best book on his most important project yet: *Re-Imagining Nature: The Promise of a Christian Natural Theology* (Wiley Blackwell). The project is reconceptualizing the idea of "natural theology" in order to develop a robust Christian understanding of what science teaches us about the natural world. In his review of the book, Ian S. Markham, theologian and President of Virginia Theological Seminary, wrote, "In this remarkable text, McGrath is judicious, audacious, and perceptive. Setting the entire project of Natural Theology in an historical context, he weaves together an account of natural theology that is innovative, powerful and intriguing. Critics and advocates for Natural Theology alike will have their worldview changed as they encounter this remarkable argument."



Area of Inquiry: Science and Faith

**Developing a Christian Mind Project; Ard Louis, Professor of Theoretical Physics, Oxford University**

This project, funded by a 2015 DAF grant for \$20,000, last year completed the first of its two major components—an interview series with Christian academics at Oxford from numerous disciplines, ranging from the natural sciences to the social sciences to law to theology. The purpose is to provide living, inspirational, individual examples of "how 'true wisdom' can be pursued through an integrated life of mind and spirit." The interviews appear on a dedicated website (<http://www.oxfordchristianmind.org>), as well as on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

Area of Inquiry: Science and Faith

## **The Amish, Technology, and the Rest of Us; Steven Nolt, Goshen College/Elizabethtown College**

Steve Nolt is perhaps the leading scholar of Amish history, life and thought. In this project, funded by a \$33,000 DAF grant, he asks what other Christians can learn about critical use of communication technology from the Amish—Christians with a long history of being highly selective in their use of modern technology? He recently published the first of two scholarly articles, "You Hold the Whole World in Your Hand: Cellphones and Discernment in Amish Churches," in *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 16 (Fall 2015): 27-37. The article recounts how the Amish have creatively used technology to address technology. For example, by creating their own mobile phones not connected to the internet, the Amish have been able to separate two technologies—mobile telephony and the internet—and deal with them separately, while not being naive about the many connections that tie their lives to larger society. Nolt's chief conclusion? The Amish experience with technology is a reminder that even in a community skeptical of technology's claims, discerning technology is still necessary, ongoing, and not easily resolved. Their general approach to discernment is one of humility—go slow, think about others, and check with the church.

Area of Inquiry: Technology, Medicine and Human Dignity

## **The Theology, Medicine and Culture Program at Duke University Divinity School**

Recipient of a three-year, \$290,000 DAF grant in 2015, the Theology, Medicine and Culture Program (TMC) logged two important milestones in 2016. In May it sponsored the first annual Practice and Presence Conference: A Gathering for Christians in Healthcare. The conference drew 60 attendees to explore how the church matters for modern medicine and health care, and to engage with scripture, theology and Christian history to learn how to transform how we think about health and health care. Then in August, *First Things* magazine announced that a TMC Fellow, John Brewer Eberly Jr., had won first place in the annual *First Things* Student Essay Contest. Eberly's essay is "The Only Begetter of Truth," and it can be found online at <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/08/the-only-begetter-of-truth>.

Area of Inquiry: Technology, Medicine, and Human Dignity

## **Reimagining Medicine Conference, Denver, April 6-7, 2016**

REIMAGINING MEDICINE  
PORTER ADVENTIST HOSPITAL  
06-07 APRIL 2016



This conference was funded by an \$18,000 DAF grant awarded in 2015 to the Denver Institute for Faith and Work. It drew 35 health care professionals to discuss Christian practice and medicine. Lead speakers included Abraham Nussbaum, and Farr Curlin and Warren Kinghorn of the TMC program at Duke. The conference was designed to foster relationships among attendees and participants, so there was extensive time built in for discussion and relationship building. The lectures are online at <https://vimeo.com/denverinstitute/videos/>.

Area of Inquiry: Technology, Medicine, and Human Dignity

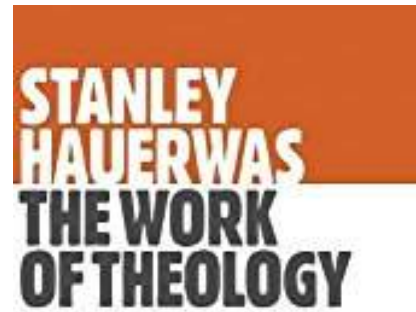
[[Denver Institute Reimagining Medicine/](#)]



### **Stanley Hauerwas Seminar on Time**

This 2013 grant funded a seminar at Duke University that brought together younger and senior scholars to discuss theological and biblical questions surrounding the concept of time. It also supported research by Hauerwas, which resulted in his recently-published book, *The Work of Theology* (William B. Eerdmans, 2015). The supported research especially shaped Chapter 5, "How to Tell Time Theologically."

Area of Inquiry: Faith and Science



## 2016 ADMINISTRATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

On July 1, the Issachar Fund welcomed Michael Hamilton as Vice President for Programs and Special Initiatives. Mike comes to us from Seattle Pacific University (SPU), where he spent sixteen years as Professor and Chair of the Department of History, where he taught American history, with a special interest in the history of American Christianity. Prior to his stint at SPU, Mike spent nine years coordinating the Evangelical Scholars Program and the Pew Younger Scholars Program at the University of Notre Dame. Mike comes with extensive experience in the design and evaluation of academic programs and grant programs in higher education.



In November, we moved. Our new offices are located at 949 Wealthy St. Ste. 203, Grand Rapids, Michigan. In addition to an abundance of natural light, our new space gives us the capacity to host small consultations. We also enjoy the benefits of free parking, room to grow, and many nice restaurants within walking distance.