



**Letter from the President:** *Michael Westwood*

As I begin typing this letter, I find myself experiencing a new sense of optimism. It might be the spring weather, but I also think part of this feeling is a result of attending the virtual CELT conference. It was a fantastic experience, and, while the sessions themselves were well-done, what I enjoyed most was getting to know other attendees through the icebreakers and networking events, and I doubt I am alone.

Since 2020, all of us have encountered disruptions to our lives and been forced to navigate new kinds of uncertainties. Our social networks weathered storms of distance and discord. We endured virtual meetings and classes, all while wrestling with a sense of helplessness and a frustrated desire to make a difference.

In many ways, the past two years have created an opportunity to humble ourselves, to accept our own limitations, and to place ourselves in the merciful hands of the Lord. While most of us encountered a frenzy of activity early on, I suspect that, for many of us, this initial flurry of activity was replaced by a period of stillness as plans were put on hold and a “wait and see” attitude became pervasive.

As evidenced by the theme for this year’s CELT conference, “Reconnecting: Working Together and Supporting One Another,” many are emerging from this period with full hearts, new visions, and a desire to serve students in even more creative ways. For them, it is time to take what God has been speaking into their hearts and bring it back to their classrooms, lunch rooms, and dinner tables. However, while some are feeling inspired and excited, others may be feeling grieved, wounded, or jaded. For them, it may be time to gather with trusted friends and spiritual guides to heal. Regardless of our current circumstances or outlook, we cannot move forward alone.

Scripture makes the need for others apparent early on. The second chapter of Genesis describes how mankind is not meant to be alone, but to live life in community. Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV) says, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Whether you were able to attend CELT or not, I hope that you will take your passions and your pain and let someone carry them with you.

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As an organization, CELEA has spent the past two years investing in connection and mentoring. Changing web hosts and merging systems might seem like a small act, but it involved a huge amount of work by board members Amanda Dago and Heather Snavely. Rebuilding and maintaining the CELEA website is an ongoing act of service by Alexa Sacramento. Alexa also managed the virtual CELT conference this year, another herculean undertaking. President-Elect Dr. Dana Saito-Stehberger has helped to launch a CELEA mentorship program and establish a special interest group (SIG). All of these projects were above and beyond typical CELEA board responsibilities.

Moving forward, CELEA will continue to focus on encouraging and equipping Christian English language educators to teach with their whole selves while honoring God with their vocation. It is a joy to work alongside you!

*Michael Westwood*



## The Editor's Note

Dear CELEA Friends,

Thanks to the innovation required during the pandemic, the annual CELT conference has been held online the past two years, as well as in-person this year in Pittsburgh. And thanks at least in part to this recasting, CELEA has extended its reach. This community of Christian English teachers has been enriched.

It's a gift to be a part of this international group and to interact with many of you through the newsletter. Maybe I will get the privilege of meeting some of you at the next in-person CELT Conference.



How has God been encouraging you lately? What realizations have you had as a teacher? Please share with us:

[celeanewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:celeanewsletter@gmail.com)

*Hannah Cole*

# Mary Shephard Wong

## Winner of the 2022 Earl W. Stevick Award

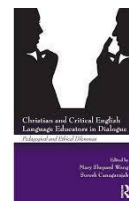
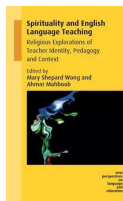
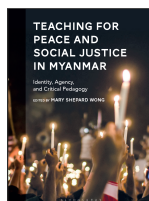
I am quite honored to receive the Earl Stevick Award. Thank you to the nominating committee for considering me. Earl made a lasting impact on our field and was respected by those both within and outside our faith community. His scholarship and character were exemplary, and thus he serves as a role model for us all. I am grateful for his contribution to my 2009 book co-edited with Suresh Canagarajah, in which Earl wrote a poem about "the dilemma" that speaks to the thesis of the volume quite well.



The impatient gate, that swings both in and out,  
Whose work is lost when no one passes through;  
The faithful fence, that marks off false from true—  
No time for hanging back, no room for doubt—  
Exist, not in the world, but in the mind.  
Yet God forgive if what is there for me  
I either hide, or try to press on thee,  
To shout thee deaf, or leave thee lost and blind.  
This dreadful choice sets sister against brother,  
Either to injure, or to fail each other. (p. 297)

Earl Stevick with Carolyn Kristjánsson (2009). Afterword: The dilemma. In M. S. Wong & A. S. Canagarajah (Eds.), *Christian and critical English language educators in dialogue: Pedagogical and ethical dilemmas*. Routledge.

Mary Shephard Wong is a three-time Fulbright Scholar and author/editor of five books. Her doctorate is in International Education (USC), and two master degrees are in East Asian Languages and Cultures (UCLA) and TESOL (APU). She is Professor and Director of TESOL at Azusa Pacific University in southern California. She has taught for 40 years in the US, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Myanmar and conducted over 150 presentations, and written over 30 articles and chapters. Her teaching, writing, and research focus on critical intercultural studies, social justice and peacebuilding in Myanmar, and religious faith in teacher identity and development.



Links to the books can be found by clicking on them.



# CELT 2022 Virtual Conference

A reflection by the Editor

“A singular opportunity to meet Christian TESOL professionals from around the world”- that is how I would describe the virtual CELT Conference. This is the second year that the conference was held online, which allowed English teachers to connect from several different time zones.

Carolyn Kristjansson’s keynote address was full of the joy and hope that she radiates. She pointed us to the connections we need and prioritize. Our primary connection (from which other connections stem) is with God. She spoke of the need for our hearts to be calibrated with His. She reminded us that when we notice the things that matter, this is how our hearts are calibrated for flourishing. As we navigate the major transitions that the pandemic has forced us to experience, be it professionally, personally or spiritually, Carolyn reminded us of the phases of transition: (1) letting go and closure, (2) realignment and repatterning, and (3) exiting transition and making a new start. This is what stood out the most to me as I recognized the phase in which I currently find myself, and that it is just that - a phase.

As mentioned in the President’s letter, the quick networking moments were great fun. I’m shy about doing those types of things, but I’m always so glad when I do. Don’t miss the virtual conference next year (or the speed-networking) if we have the opportunity again!

Kristjansson, C. (2022, March 11). *Ties that bind: (Re)viewing & (re)creating connections for flourishing* [Keynote talk]. CELT 2022 Virtual conference. <https://conferencecelt.weebly.com/kristjansson.html>



# CELT 2022 Pittsburgh Schedule

Tuesday, March 22

4:30-4:45	Opening	
Session 1 4:45-5:30	<b>“Serving Undocumented Adult ESL Learners in a Changing World”</b> <a href="#">Janet Eyring</a> Hunt Room	Advocacy, Social Justice, and Community Building
	<b>“Impact of Culture and Motivation in L2 Theological Writing”</b> <a href="#">Alisha Biler</a> Room 104	Culture & Intercultural Communication
	<b>“Reflections on the CELEA Mentorship Program”</b> <a href="#">Joshua Detherage</a> and <a href="#">Dana Saito-Stehberger</a> Room 105	Personal and Professional Development
5:30-6:30	Dinner and Networking	
Session 2 6:30-7:15	<b>“The Future is Hybrid: Lessons learning from virtual, in-person, and everything in-between”</b> <a href="#">Jolene Dykstra</a> Room 104	Digital Learning and Technologies
	<b>“Nurturing the Soul: EFL through Mr. Rogers’ Poetry and Song”</b> <a href="#">Jill Vernon</a> Hunt Room	Integrating Faith into Teaching English
	<b>“Using Rubrics for Better Student Writing Results”</b> <a href="#">Joshua Detherage</a> Room 105	Instruction of the Skills
Session 3 7:30-8:15	<b>“Teaching Beginners in Remote and Hybrid Settings”</b> <a href="#">Leona Leighton</a> Hunt Room	Digital Learning and Technologies
	<b>“From Temporary Solution to On-going Practice: Strategies for all classrooms”</b> <a href="#">Gena Bennett</a> Room 104	Teacher Education
	<b>“Faith-based Whole Person Perspectives on English Language Teacher Well-being”</b> <a href="#">Michael Lessard-Clouston</a> Room 105	Personal and Professional Development



Photo cred: Maxine Pond

## Fond Memories of the CELT In-Person Conference 2022

by Maxine Pond, CELEA Secretary

There's one word that stands out in the title "In-person." In the short, 4-hour conference, the buzz of conversation never ceased between friends old and new. CELEA Board members and others came together early to set up and prepare for the evening event. Laughs could be heard as people who had only met on Zoom came face-to-face with one another. "I never imagined you were so tall." Chatter continued with each new arrival to the spacious and friendly atmosphere of the Church of the Ascension. While participants and presenters mingled, so did the tempting smells from the church kitchen. An exquisite meal was being prepared for us by a local church member/professional caterer and her staff.

In-person attendees were greeted by David Boersma and his assistants. The registration table held a welcoming scattering of name tags, free CELEA pens and stickers, a brown bag for the drawing to win books and CELEA t-shirts, and the smart, professional conference programs created by our own Dana Saito-Stehberger. (If you looked closely, you could see David's crochet bag at his side.)

As in-person conference Master of Ceremony, David called the enthusiastic group together for a brief welcome, announcements, and prayer. Then off one and all went to partake in the meaningful breakout sessions prepared and presented by our own amazing experts. Presentations were a stimulating mix of titles and topics from nine different strands. What a treat! As the "official" photographer, I was able to slip in and out of each session. Regardless of the size of the audience in each room, I observed well-prepared PowerPoints, animated speakers, and engaged audiences.

No conference worth its salt comes off without a hitch. Right? The planning committee, participants, and presenters quickly adapted to a change in schedule when the dinner needed to be served an hour later than expected. Decaf coffee, tea, and infused water were served. Then with stomachs growling, everyone tightened their belts and cheerfully went to session 2 *before* dinner. Dinner was worth the wait. All 32 of us were delighted to walk through the attractive array of salad, vegetables, meat, fish, and rolls. Dessert was a rich and rewarding ending to a perfect meal. Many books donated by CELEA members were raffled off as well as the CELEA t-shirts. Conversations and discussions flowed from all corners of the dinner tables. Networks and friendships were formed or strengthened. After Session 3 and a brief closing with prayer, the much-needed and appreciated in-person CELT conference came to an end. See you next year in Portland!

Maxine Pond earned her B.A. in Secondary Education, English from Northwest Nazarene University, an M.A. in Linguistics (TESOL) from the University of Surrey, Guildford, and has recently completed her Ed.D in Adult and Higher Education in Montana State University. Maxine has taught in Japan, Lithuania, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Poland, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Russia. Maxine is a retired employee from Montana State University. She serves as a teacher trainer for short, intensive international teacher-training programs such as TEA Fellow Program.



# 3 Reasons Why There is No “Best Time” to Learn a Language

Reflections from a language learner and teacher

by Elsie

“Stepping into the unknown”  
Photo cred: Elsie



## 1. There is no finish line.

So, what are we waiting for? As someone who likes to see the start and finish of a project, maybe I haven't chosen the best area of interest to pursue. My Arabic tutor told me recently that, as a non-native speaker, getting to 90% fluency would be exceptional and she doesn't know anyone who has reached beyond that point even after years of living in the region. This was a little disheartening as I am investing my time and money into something that I'm told I will never truly master! She said this to encourage me, to let me know it's okay to make mistakes and to keep reviewing the basics. After two years, I still find counting hard! The goal is not perfection but communication. I have a choice with this knowledge: Do I just give up? Or do I embrace the challenge and persevere? I must see learning a different language as an enriching part of my life and not simply as a goal to tick off my list.

This undoubtedly makes me a more patient and understanding English teacher as I see my own students struggle with the same thing over and over again. They are also a work in progress.

## 2. The fun is in the journey.

Focusing on the destination takes away from the fun and lessons learnt on the way. Based on my experience so far, Arabic is a particularly nuanced and poetic language with many implied cultural layers. It is on the other end of the spectrum from the direct nature of the German language which I had learnt at university and experienced whilst living in Austria. It will be a long time before I will be able to confidently participate in everyday conversations in Arabic with native speakers at a normal pace. So, should I wait until I am at that point before I initiate conversations with Arabic speakers? I don't want to look foolish. I hate feeling misunderstood. But the truth is I will continue to make many errors linguistically, socially, and culturally. And no-one would expect otherwise from an English girl learning a new language from scratch. It's the effort which is respected.



“Waiting for the fruit”  
Photo cred: Elsie



Learning a language is teaching me so much more than just vocabulary. I'm learning to try and not take myself too seriously. It is freeing to just laugh when I've poured my heart and soul into trying to express something and my teacher looks at me with a confused face and says: شو؟ "What?!" If we're willing to be childlike in learning a language, we'll avoid some pain and frustration, and can help our students to also let go and try their best.

### 3. The results are constantly evolving.

Maybe I would have been more suited as a builder or cook, or someone who starts and finishes their working day seeing tangible results, like my dad. I was watching him build a wall one weekend whilst sitting upstairs diligently studying vocab. In many ways as people passed by and saw me sitting there with a cup of tea and a notepad while he shovelled wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow of soil and lugged rocks, I probably looked like the rather lazy daughter. He was working hard physically, while my mind and brain were being stretched and challenged. You can't see that from the outside! At the end of his day, he can see a finished product. I can only hope that some of those new words I've stared at, repeated, rewritten, and made random associations with have lodged themselves into my long-term memory and will spring to mind when required.



"A work in progress"  
Photo cred: Elsie

It takes diligence and consistency and these are language learning qualities we can point out and encourage in our own students if they feel like they're not making progress. Not giving up is key!

### In conclusion...

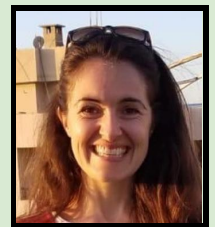
There will never be a "best time" to start learning a language.

I'm so glad for the opportunities and fulfillment I have experienced as a result of speaking another language.

- The moments when you catch yourself in a flowing conversation in a language that was once upon a time completely incomprehensible, or just a bunch of scribbles on a page....
- The first time you catch yourself thinking in that language, dreaming in it, or being able to translate for someone in an emergency situation...

Never underestimate how empowering language can be for us and for our students. It is worth the perseverance and discipline, the ups and downs. I'm thankful to my language teachers who have encouraged me and to my students who inspire me with their own commitment.

Language learner and teacher Elsie currently lives in the Middle East, where she teaches students remotely from around the world. Having studied languages at university and keen to pick up new ones wherever life leads her, she is determined to communicate with people in their heart language. With a cup of tea at the ready, she is equally dedicated to see her students reach their goals.



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## CELEA's New Website

CELEA is proud to announce that our new website is up and running! Although the website is ready for you to look at, there are some updates and documents still in the process of being transferred. We appreciate your patience and understanding during this website transition. Please visit our new website at:

[www.celea.wildapricot.org](http://www.celea.wildapricot.org)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at:

[askcelea@gmail.com](mailto:askcelea@gmail.com)

## CELEA Mentorship Program

Take part in the **CELEA Mentorship** program as either a mentor or a mentee! The only prerequisite is to be a member of CELEA.

(<https://www.celea.net/general-membership.html>)

To learn more about the mentorship program and to fill out an application.

To be a mentor:

[bit.ly/CELEAmentor](https://bit.ly/CELEAmentor)

To be a mentee:

[bit.ly/CELEAmentee](https://bit.ly/CELEAmentee)

The deadline to apply for the upcoming session is **August 1, 2022**.

If you have any questions, please contact the CELEA

Mentorship board at:

[CELEAmentorship@gmail.com](mailto:CELEAmentorship@gmail.com)

## Have You Joined CELEA's Email List-Serv?

The main purposes of the email list-serv of the Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA) are to promote and facilitate professional discussion and interaction among CELEA members and to disseminate relevant professional information and resources. The following are examples of content that is welcomed: book and article notices, publishers' discounts, website links, and job and ministry postings.

This list is moderated. Although a wide view will be taken, any messages that do not fulfill at least one of the list's purposes may not be forwarded. In addition, any message may be refused at the moderator's discretion, for any reason, including issues of privacy or confidentiality. Explanations of message refusals may be provided, if appropriate.

As with any discussion, we encourage participants to be at least polite and respectful, or even better, collegial and humble. Please endeavor to provide appropriate bibliographic information for any quotations or references.

This group is closed and not listed in the Google Groups directory. To receive an invitation to join, please email the moderator, Brad Baurain, [bbaurain@gmail.com](mailto:bbaurain@gmail.com), from your preferred email address. From there, you can set your own message frequency and other factors. (This is an opt-in membership benefit. You will not be added automatically.)

## Interested in CELEA's first Special Interest Group (SIG), the Theological Writing SIG?

Check out its website at <https://celeatwsig.editorx.io/welcome>.

The TWSIG held its first meeting in April, and is planning a second event in fall 2022.