



Transforming Iran through Servant Leadership.



PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE
TRAINING LEADERS | TRANSFORMING IRAN

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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** Please note that some photos in this report are purchased online and are used for solely illustrative purposes. Most names and locations have also been changed for security.**



A LETTER FROM
THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rev. Dr. Mehrdad Fatehi

is bringing about true transformation.

At Pars, our mission is centred on nurturing and cultivating the flame of faith that has been kindled in Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, and the Persian-speaking diaspora. The journey from a “heart of stone” to a “heart of flesh” embodies qualities of tenderness, receptiveness, and a yearning for goodness and love, echoing the fundamental commandment to love God with all your heart, mind, and strength as well as loving one’s neighbour as oneself. Nowruz serves as a poignant reminder that Jesus lies at the heart of transformation. It inspires steadfast dedication to our task of equipping and training faithful servants. Witnessing our students deepen their devotion to Christ, being shaped by His Spirit through His Word, their fellowship with their mentors, and worshiping together has been a profound honour. Many of our students actively engage in society-changing ministries from the inception of their programmes. While their ministries are crucial, it is the inner transformation of their hearts that empowers them to persevere in the already challenging work they undertake.

Your contributions and prayer have been instrumental in this endeavour. We invite you to review our report from our work in 2023 and join us in celebrating this Nowruz—the advent of light into Iran through Jesus. As we embrace the promise of transformation in Christ, may we continue to open ourselves up to the transformative grace of Christ this Nowruz and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mehrdad Fatehi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Dear Friends,

Happy Nowruz! Emerging from ancient Persia, Nowruz heralds the onset of the Persian New Year, a cherished occasion millions globally observe as they welcome the vernal equinox. This year, Nowruz graces us on March 20th. Translating to “New Day,” Nowruz embodies a period of introspection and eager anticipation for the possibilities ahead. It commemorates the advent of spring, symbolizing the emergence of freshness and abundance. Recognised by the United Nations Cultural Agency (UNESCO), the arrival of spring carries profound spiritual connotations, signifying the victory of light over darkness and the triumph of joy over despair.

In the book of Ezekial, the prophet speaks of a divine promise made by God that He will transform the hearts of the people, replacing their hardened, unyielding nature with one that is receptive, compassionate, and alive. He says, “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” (Ez. 11:19). A “heart of stone” is one that is impervious to change, resistant to growth, and devoid of empathy. Many experience this hardening of heart due to the challenges and bitterness of life. In Iran, many individuals grapple with a hardening of the heart—disillusioned by the regime and the overwhelming adversities. Economically, spiritually, and psychologically, the nation faces formidable obstacles, often resembling a wasteland. Yet, in the midst of the shadows, the Spirit of God stirs. A light has emerged from the darkness, as many individuals miraculously encounter Jesus. A fresh movement orchestrated by God’s Spirit is underway in the Middle East and Iran, giving rise to hearts of flesh softened by the love of Jesus even in the most hardened. It is this new awakening within the hearts of those oppressed that

School of Theology & Leadership.

1. Module Development.

In 2023 we have completed the creation of 4 new modules, bringing the total of completed online modules to 40, equivalent to 167 credits:

- The Person and Work of Christ (4 credits)
- Old Testament: Psalms and Wisdom (4 credits)
- Youth Ministry (4 credits)
- Evangelism (4 credits)

We also have 3 modules are under production:

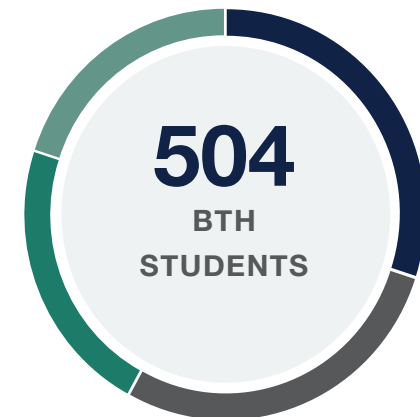
- Induction to Pars (1 credit)
- Homiletics: Preaching in Iranian Context (4 credits)
- Critical Thinking for an Iranian Context (3 credits)



2. Online Classes & Tutoring.

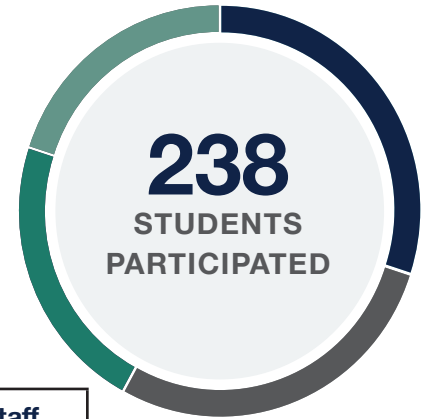
In 2023 we have offered 504 students 16 online courses at a B.Th. level during two terms of study. These courses include:

- Practices of Holistic Formation: The Christian Disciplines
- A Survey of the Old Testament
- Christian Marriage and Family
- The Person and Work of Christ
- Old Testament: Psalms and Wisdom
- Science and the Christian Faith
- Servant Leadership II
- Essentials of Holistic Formation: Healthy Christian Living
- A Survey of the New Testament
- The Grand Story of Salvation
- Introduction to the Mission of the Church
- Christian Worldview: An Introduction
- The Triune God
- Crisis and Trauma Counselling
- Inner Healing and the Ministry of Deliverance
- Youth Ministry



3. Formation Retreats.

In 2023, we hosted 11 in-person conferences and 2 online conferences. Our students met over a week-long period. We offered two seminar topics for each conference. A total of 238 students participated in the Formation Conferences. The seminar topics included:



	Date	Online/ Residential	Topics	No. Students	No. Staff
1	04/01-10/01	Residential	Discovering Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Awareness and Healing	22	2
2	01/02-07/02	Residential	Mental Health and the Bible The Person and Work of Christ in the Letter to the Hebrews	13	3
3	10/02-16/02	Residential	Discipleship & Civic Engagement	14	3
4	24/02-02/03	Residential	Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark Women in Christ	18	3
5	14/04-20/04	Residential	The Minor Prophets Resilient Ministry & the Sufficiency of God	13	3
6	12/05-17/05	Residential	The Beatitudes and the Way of Discipleship	11	3
7	09/06-15/06	Residential	Engaging Cultural Trends: Living Christianly in an Upside-Down World	18	3
8	22/06-28/06	Residential	Discipleship & Civic Engagement	14	3

9	07/07-09/07	Online	Resilient Ministry & the Sufficiency of God	20	2
10	10/12-16/12	Residential	Christian Calling in Life and Ministry Discipleship & Civic Engagement	28	3
11	04/09-08/09	Online	Discipleship and Civic Engagement	43	2
12	21/09-26/09	Residential	Discipleship and Civic Engagement	16	3
13	03/11-09/11	Residential	The Beatitudes and the Way of Discipleship The Healing Power of Forgiveness	28	4



4. Mentored Growth & Development.

In 2023, 284 students have been covered by our mentoring program. Of the 284 students matched with a mentor, 17 are new mentees. We have also recruited 10 new mentors for our team. The ongoing mentoring relationship is another means by which we foster the spiritual and character formation of our students and provide them with pastoral care. The aim is to provide a relationship where they gain spiritual encouragement and guidance, are prayed for and listened to, and have spiritual direction through their years of studying with us. Another responsibility of a mentor is to provide our students with guidance as they engage in ministerial practice and reflection.

“Training at Pars has had a profound impact on the way I do ministry. I have never been mentored before and never had anyone to talk to about the challenges and struggles of being a leader. I am grateful for all I have received till now at Pars. I am grateful for finding a safe community of pastors and leaders with whom I can be vulnerable and from whom I can receive wise counsel. With the grace of God, I am now a different person than I was before joining Pars.”

“I have been seeing my mentor once every three weeks for eight months. It has been a deeply challenging and deeply encouraging experience. To have someone to talk honestly with, to share one’s genuine hopes and fears with, has been truly liberating for me. My mentor has become a close friend and companion at a time of my life when I have felt most alone.”

5. Ministerial Practice & Reflection.

In 2023, 295 students will have taken part in our Ministerial Practice and Reflection Program. This is the fourth component of our School of Theology Program, through which students are required to have at least 2-3 hours of ministry every week, which can be in a variety of ministries. The aim is to help students apply what they have learned in real life and develop their ministerial skills. Another objective is to help students make their ministerial practice a learning experience and theologically reflect on what God is doing in their lives and the lives of others. Ministries that our students are currently involved in are as follows: Pastoral Ministry, Evangelism, Youth Ministry, Social Media Ministry, Literature Translation, Teaching Ministry, Worship Ministry, Women’s Ministry, Media Ministry, Organising Christian Conferences, Underground Housechurch Ministry, Children’s Ministry, Ministry among Refugees, those with Special Needs, Elderly, and Addiction.



Our First Graduation in October!

We had the privilege of hosting our first graduation ceremony on October 7th in London. This was a momentous occasion for our all our students and faculty. At the ceremony, 15 of our students proudly received their Bachelor of Theology and Ministry, a testament to their hard work and dedication. This milestone would not have been attainable without the invaluable financial and prayer support from individuals like you. We are encouraged by Christianity Today's coverage of this event, which beautifully captures the spirit of the occasion. If you have not read it already, you can do so [here](#).

One of our graduates, Hushang, is an Afghan young man who is actively teaching and developing biblical studies curriculum and mentorship for other Afghan Christian leaders. Through his initiative, our faculty has conducted workshops for members of underground house churches in Afghanistan, directly impacting the spread of the gospel in the region. To see a short testimonial from him, use the QR code below.



INTERNATIONAL

First Graduates of Persian Seminary Prepared to Serve a Traumatized Iran

London-based theological institute celebrates the academic success of 15 Muslim-background students, many of whom have suffered family rejection and political repression.

JAYSON CASPER | NOVEMBER 8, 2023 08:00 AM



Meet our Students.

Maryam, 41.



While previous counseling experiences provided some relief, it wasn't as comprehensive as expected. Engaging in counseling sessions with Rima proved transformational in several ways. Notably, Rima's Christian counseling approach, guided by the Holy Spirit and rooted in the Word of God, helped me gain a profound understanding of my identity in Christ and navigate past issues as a Christian. Learning to establish healthy boundaries, both with my parents and my own children, significantly altered my relationships and alleviated my prevailing anxiety. Rima's warm and compassionate demeanor, coupled with her deep understanding of my situation, provided the encouragement I needed to move forward. This counseling experience has been one of the most impactful, allowing me to confront life's challenges with newfound strength and happiness.

Shahram, 36.



Without a doubt, Pars' mentoring scheme has become sanctuary for me, fortifying, building, and rejuvenating my spirit. My mentor has been a faithful advisor and caring brother. His communication, advice, and profound insights into various issues have been a tremendous blessing by God's grace. Pars Theological Centre has profoundly shaped my journey of discipleship from multiple angles. Firstly, its theological impact: I have gained a systematic understanding and knowledge of God, acknowledging that it is firmly grounded in the grace of our Father. Secondly, being part of the community means engaging in challenges, celebrating victories, navigating through failures and criticisms, and fostering profound spiritual maturity. Thirdly, Pars has provided the emotional and psychological support I need to persevere in ministry challenges.

Counselling Centre.

1. Therapy.

Between the months of January and December 2023, Pars counsellors provided 1690 hours of therapy to Iranian Christian individuals living in Iran, Turkey, and the Persian-speaking diaspora. 250 people received counselling, and 58 clients were from inside the country. Approximately 63% of our clients are women and 37% are men. Counselling was primarily provided through online sessions or on the telephone.

Over the past year, our clients have grappled with the complexities of trauma and its myriad repercussions. These encompass anxiety disorders, internal conflicts within their communities, stress and pressures within their ministerial roles, discord in marriages, feelings of abandonment, and challenges in parenting. A significant number of young individuals contend with severe depression, thoughts of suicide, substance abuse, and both physical and emotional mistreatment. Emerging issues that have gained prominence include feelings of hopelessness, instances of sexual assault, and domestic violence. Our counselors have been actively assisting clients in confronting and managing these multifaceted challenges.



2. Training.

In total, our Counsellors provided over 146 hours of counselling training on various online platforms. This included a four-day conference in Jordan in October that gathered twenty Afghan leaders and 15 ministers from other nationalities who work with Afghans, as well as monthly online training sessions on Trauma with 2 other groups of Afghans (one of these groups was introduced to us by an Afghan graduate). Other trainings included an “Empowering Families” seminar for women with family members’ fighting addiction in Iran and Turkey, as well as multiple workshops in Turkey on Depression, Abuse and Addiction.



Dr. Ashkan Amlashi.

Testimonial.

The image I hold of Dr. Ashkan’s service is akin to a skilled doctor whose hands are guided by Christ in the operating room. With the divine razor in his hands, Dr. Ashkan operates on the ailing patient, delving into the deep layers of the subconscious, revealing and healing wounds and injuries.

Wider Training.

1. Publications.

One of the greatest needs in equipping our students is providing them with a robust collection of theological books. Many of our students have read all the textbooks that we have already translated and are eager to read more books about Christianity and theology. Our team of translators was able to complete the translation of 5 books:



1. Douglas H. Gregg and Mike Flynn, *Inner Healing: A Handbook for helping Yourself and Others* (IVP Books: Grand Rapids), 2009.
2. Henry Cloud & John Townsend, *Safe People: How to Find Relationships that are Good for You and Avoid Those That Aren't* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids), 1995.
3. Ron Boyd Macmillan, *Faith That Endures: The Essential Guide to the Persecuted Church* (Revell: Grand Rapids), 2006. (This book was translated a few years ago, but published this year).
4. Philip E. Satterthwaite & J. Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Historical Books* (IVP Academic: Downers Grove), 2016.
5. Tom Smal, *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person* (Wipf & Stock Publishers: Eugene), 1994.

The translation of 6 other books is still in the process of completion and will be completed by the end of 2024:

1. Gerald O'Collins SJ. *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*. (Oxford: Oxford UP), 2009.
2. Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Recovering Jesus: The Witness of the New Testament* (Brazos Press: Grand Rapids), 2007. (70% complete)
3. Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville) 2016.
4. Derek J. Tidball. *Skillful Shepherds* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids) 1986. (85%)
5. Doug Fields, *Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry: A Personal and Practical Guide to Starting Right* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids) 2009.
6. David Gustafson, *Gospel Witness: Evangelism in Word and Deed* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids) 2019.



2. TV Broadcasting.

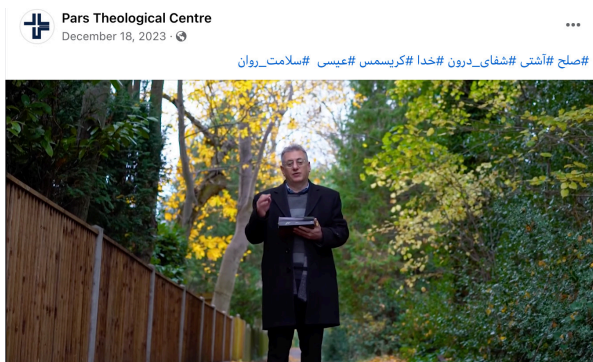
In 2023, we broadcasted 548 hours of our video lectures (including repeats) to the Persian-speaking world; this is a combination of 258 hours through our partnership with SAT7 and 290 hours via MOHABAT TV.



3. Shagerd Website & Media.



Our main public Farsi online platform Shagerd has been meeting our objectives to make our content on Spiritual Formation, Discipleship, Christian Worldview and Leadership accessible to Iranians and Persian speakers worldwide. We launched 9 articles throughout the year, as well as 25 videos. In November, we had the highest number of visits to Shagerd with 3,149 people visiting our website.



4. Pars Academy.

In 2023, we have had 114 new students register with Pars Academy for a total of 490 participants. We are preparing to launch a new course, “An Introduction to Missions.”



5. Iranian Leaders Forum.

ILF seeks to create a safe space for mutual learning and prophetic dialogue among Iranian leaders worldwide, and to offer biblically-grounded, research-informed, and contextually-appropriate responses to the complex issues that the church of Iran encounters within Iran and in the diaspora.

ILF 2023, titled ***One Body in Christ: Preparing in Unity for God’s Kingdom Dreams in Iran***, focused on advancing unity amongst Iranian Christian leaders by examining the theme of unity from biblical, theological, missiological, and social-scientific perspectives. 135 Christian leaders were present, representing a plethora of Iranian ministries, churches and denominations. One of the main objectives of the gathering was to discuss the idea of forming the first Iranian Christian Alliance. We give thanks that after years of prayer and hard work, the week ended with a unanimous vote to set up the interim committee for launching this alliance. Rev. Dr. Fatehi is now appointed as its Chairman. For more information, please read [this article](#) on the event, published by Christianity Today.



Prayer Requests.

- **Please praise** God for the success of our inaugural graduation ceremony held in November 2023. Your partnership played a crucial role in making these events a reality for our students, and for that, we are truly thankful.
- **Please pray** for our student Daria (name changed for security reasons). She and her husband were arrested while she was taking an exam online in front of their children. They were both interrogated and placed in solitary confinement. They have since been released on bail and await their sentencing. Pray for wisdom as they navigate the circumstances of their arrest. Pray that the government will show mercy on them.
- **Please pray** for our students who are fearful of continued oppression and antagonism in their communities and families for their faith. Pray for their perseverance and for the joy of their salvation to be their strength.
- **Please pray** for our faculty, mentors, counsellors, and tutors as they continue to give of themselves to our students. Pray for God's wisdom and discernment to continue guiding their lessons and guidance.
- **Please pray** for this new year of training and equipping. Pray for financial provision for our students as they trust God with their livelihood as they pursue deeper knowledge of God and serve their churches/ministries.

- **Please pray** for the newly formed Iranian Evangelical Alliance. We are excited to see this alliance of leaders formed out of the Iranian Leaders' Forum.





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