

Wheaton College awards Kharis Publishing founder Dr. Umesiri the 2026 Gieser Award for global orphan literacy.



Chicago, Illinois May 23, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - At the 2026 Honors Convocation, Wheaton College President Dr. Philip Ryken presented the Kenneth Gieser Award to Dr. Francis Umesiri, Associate Professor of Chemistry, for his role in promoting global literacy for orphans and street children in developing countries. The prestigious award is granted annually to a faculty or staff member who demonstrates a profound commitment to sharing the Gospel through service and ministry that extends far beyond the college campus.

The Gieser award was established in honor of Dr. Kenneth Gieser, who graduated from Wheaton in 1930 and served for over four decades as a college trustee. He also founded valuable organizations that are still thriving today such as the Wheaton Eye Clinic, the Christian Medical and Dental Association, and the Wheaton College Alumni Association. His son, Dr. Dick Gieser, witnessed the award presentation.

Dr. Umesiri, a specialist in organic medicinal chemistry, was recognized for his role as the founder and CEO of **Kharis Publishing**. The independent book publishing house has published more than 100 titles

aimed at Christian discipleship and leadership, with a significant emphasis on reaching readers across the continent of Africa.

In his presentation of the award, President Ryken highlighted the unique intersection of Dr. Umesiri's scientific career and his ministerial outreach. "Today's honoree has developed a small but thriving Christian publishing house that has printed more than 100 edifying books by authors who help Christians in their daily discipleship," President Ryken stated. "His vision is a fresh and deeper revelation of Christ to the hearts and minds of people inside and outside the local church... he carries forward evangelism and discipleship, especially on the great continent of Africa."

While Dr. Umesiri is a distinguished academic in the field of organic medicinal chemistry, his work through Kharis Publishing addresses critical social needs. The publishing house operates a mission-driven model where a portion of proceeds supports orphanage literacy. Through this initiative, the Kharis provides mini libraries equipped with books, including literary classics, Bibles, and computer equipment to orphanages and street homes in Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and other developing nations, aiming to empower the next generation through education. Each computer is pre-loaded with thousands of books in public domain, including the great classics such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, etc. This important aspect was acknowledged by Dr. Ryken during the presentation, "Our honoree's publishing house also promotes orphan literacy by providing mini libraries with books, Bibles, and computers that empower children in his native Nigeria and other poorer countries to read, dream, and grow into the full purpose of God for their lives."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuYR9DYGvsY>

Accepting the honor, Dr. Umesiri expressed his appreciation for the collective effort behind the mission. "It is with deep gratitude that I accept this award on behalf of the workers and volunteers at Kharis Publishing who spend hours working behind the scenes to carry out this mission," said Dr. Umesiri.

About Dr. Francis Umesiri: Dr. Francis Umesiri is an Associate Professor of Chemistry at Wheaton College, where his research focuses on organic chemistry and medicinal applications. He is a frequent speaker on the integration of faith, science, and social entrepreneurship.

About Kharis Publishing: Kharis Publishing is an independent publisher based in the Greater Chicago area. Kharis Publishing continues to serve as an international platform for inspirational and practical Christian literature. By maintaining a focus on high-impact, mission-centered content, the press ensures that diverse voices in the faith community achieve meaningful reach in a globalized digital environment. It specializes in Christian resources, self-help, memoirs, and inspirational fiction, with a dedicated social mission to provide literacy resources to orphaned children globally. For more information, visit <https://kharispublishing.com/kp/>.

Kharis Media LLC

*****@kharispublishing.com

331-312-2376

<https://kharispublishing.com>

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