



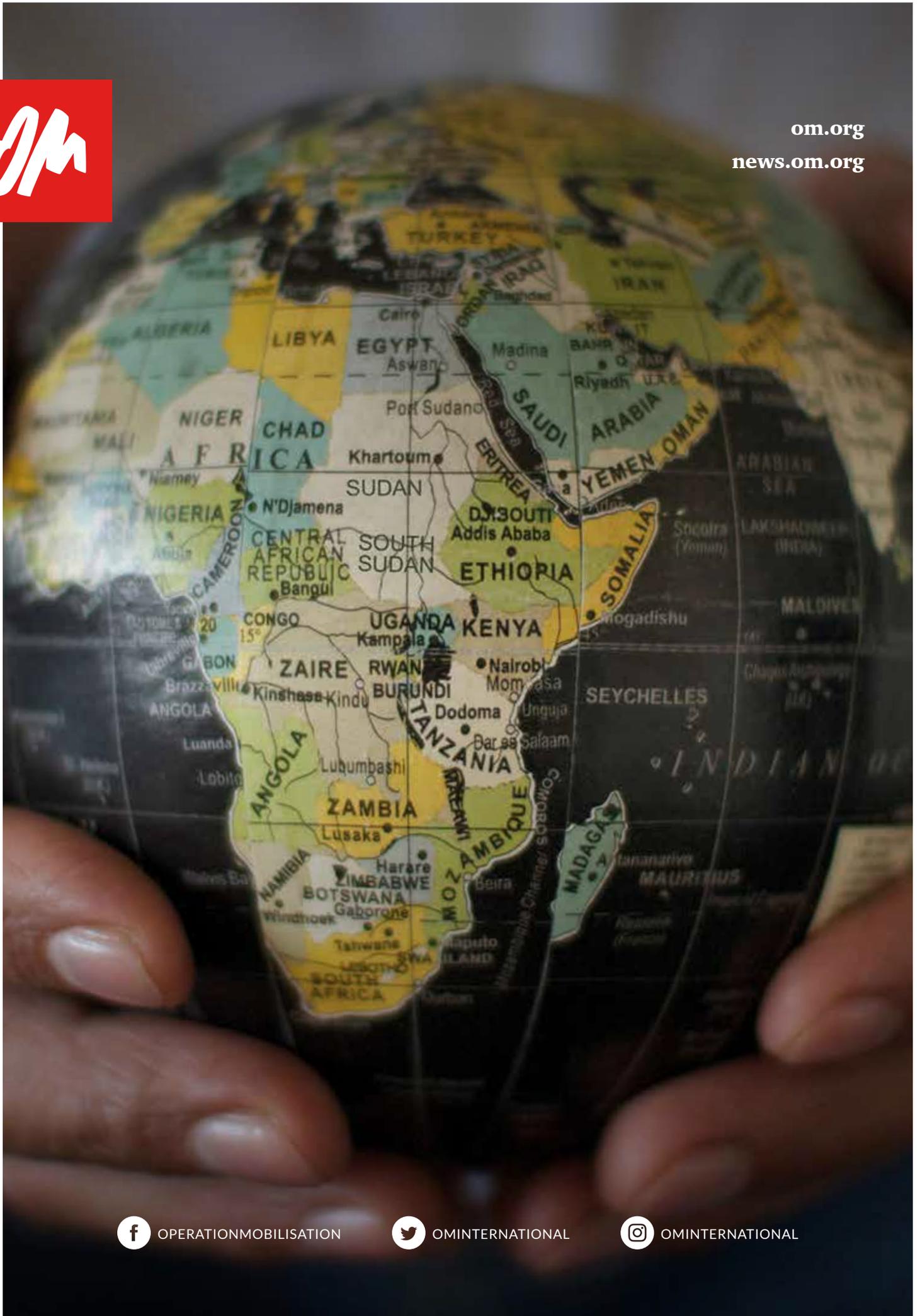
1957 - 2017



**To the least
reached**



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12



34

- 8 Credits**
- 9 From the editor**
- 142 Timeline of OM Milestones**
- 144 About OM**
- 146 Ministries founded by OM workers**
- 148 Meet the authors**
- 10 Celebrating 60 years**
Knowing Him and making Him known
- 12 George Verwer and the birth of OM**
OM is a clear reflection of the founder
- 14 God calls ordinary Christians to **short-term** outreaches**
OM becomes a gateway into missions
- 16 OM's radical lifestyle**
Radical discipleship is demonstrated in lifestyle and philosophy
- 18 Pioneers and icebreakers**
OM begins work in the **Middle East** and **North Africa**
- 22 OM's early days in **India****
Initiating a movement that would reach millions with the gospel
- 24 No risk too great, no idea too crazy**
OM workers 'sold out for the gospel'
- 26 God's loophole in the **Iron Curtain****
Risk and reward in smuggling Bibles into Eastern Europe
- 28 Turks turn to Christ**
The story of the **Bible Correspondence Course**
- 30 Beginning of **long-term** ministry**
OM outreach participants catch the vision for more



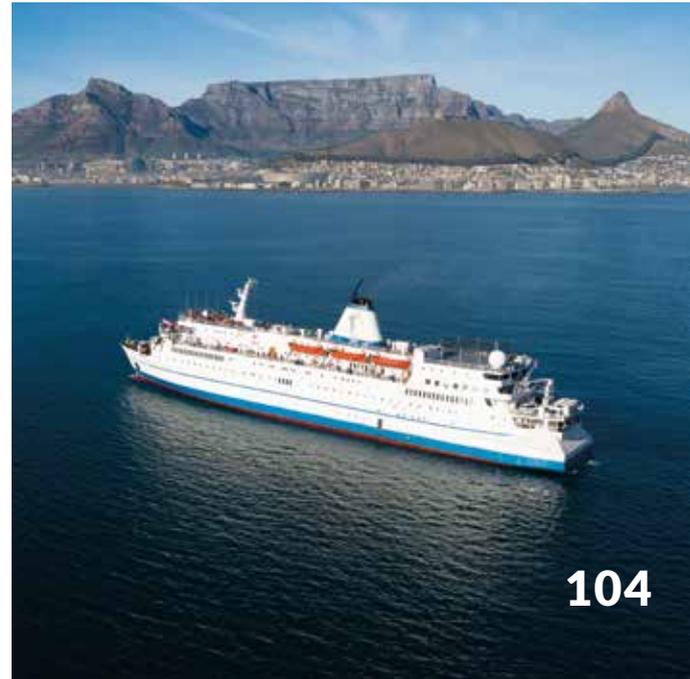
48



72

- 32 From vision to reality
The beginning of OM's **Ship** Ministry
- 34 Reviving **Korean** passion for missions
OM ships act as a catalyst to awakening Korean believers
- 36 The catalyst of two new believers
Hundreds of workers trained in **Bangladesh**
- 40 Pray, then act
The value of prayer in OM
- 42 Awakening **Latin America**
Doulos is remembered as the initiator of the mission movement in Latin America
- 44 Finding God's purpose in **Pakistan**
The story of OM's work among the unreached people in Sindh province
- 46 Close your eyes and listen
God opens doors in **Iran**
- 48 Justice for **refugees**
Workers show Jesus' love to refugees in both word and deed
- 52 One generation plants the trees, another gets the shade
A ship visit paves the way for mobilising **Chinese** churches across East Asia Pacific

- 54 God loves **Albania**
An OM team starts one of the first fellowships after Communism falls
- 56 Something for everyone
OM covers every village in **France** with Christian literature
- 58 On this rock (or from this dock) churches founded
New churches are planted in the wake of a **ship** visit
- 60 'God is enlarging our dream'
The growth of the **Algerian** church
- 62 **Missions Discipleship Training** in OM
Discipling thousands of young people in faith
- 64 Shipwrecked—yet full steam ahead
Logos is shipwrecked and partners around the world respond
- 66 Blessing borne out of persecution
God's greater purpose in **Eastern Europe** and the **Middle East** prevails
- 68 By bus, bicycle or boat
OMers make **Bengali** New Testament #1 bestseller



- 70 Revamping summer outreaches
The **Love Europe** conference inspires thousands
- 72 Modelling how Jesus lived
From five to one million believers in **Nepal**
- 76 Reflecting diversity in leadership
Recognising and supporting national leadership
- 78 'Train our young people!'
OM trains **Russians** to share the gospel and plant churches
- 80 Broadcasting the gospel to **Afghans**
Pamir Productions passionately spreads the gospel to Afghans worldwide
- 82 Loving in word and deed
A look at the beginning of OM's **relief and development** work
- 84 Counting the cost
OM honours martyrs
- 86 A family to children at risk
Caring for and empowering underprivileged children
- 88 Reflecting Him in their world
TeenStreet inspires the next generation
- 90 Using your professional skills in missions
Professionals use God-given gifts and skills to further His kingdom
- 92 A platform for peace in **Papua New Guinea**
Doulos facilitates historic reconciliation after conflict in the Pacific islands
- 94 Freeing the Dalits
OM responds to the needs of the 'untouchables' in **India**
- 96 Bringing Christ to the youth of **Hungary**
OM impacts young lives through baseball
- 100 Being a **go-fer** for George Verwer
George Verwer's go-fers are impacted by his life and witness
- 102 Bringing structure to a pioneering movement
Peter Maiden's impact as OM's second International Director
- 104 The next ship project
Logos Hope, OM's fourth ship, is launched
- 106 Jesus' hands and feet
Restoring hope and dignity to those suffering from the effects of **HIV and AIDS**
- 108 A people rising to reach their nation and beyond
Moldovan believers transform their communities, their country and the world



110 The transformational power of the **arts**
Artists present the gospel to the nations

114 A new wave of missionaries
Believers in the **Global South** take up the command to go and make disciples of all nations

116 You can't shoot a cannon from a canoe
OM and Pro Christo merge to expand vision to send out **Africans**

118 **Sustainable solutions** for missions
Finding new ways to support workers to go to the least reached

120 **Microbusiness** is ministry
Esteeming people through investment in business enterprise

122 Embracing kingdom impact
Ministries founded by OM workers

124 Planting churches through **sports**
God uses sports to break down barriers

126 An amazing God-given tool
Global Village inspires people to make a difference

128 Freedom for captives
At the heart of missions lies a passion for **justice**

130 Hope amidst desperation
How the Syrian War changed OM's ministry in the **Near East**

132 A Bible on the shelf
The 1881 Project engages all of **Turkey** with the gospel

134 Local volunteers on board **Logos Hope** make a difference
A look at how *Logos Hope's* Visitor Experience engages people with the gospel

136 Welcoming strangers
Teams reach out to refugees settling in **Europe**

138 Using **new technology** to share the gospel
Technology makes ministry more effective

140 Letting God lead us forward
OM International Director Lawrence Tong looks toward the future

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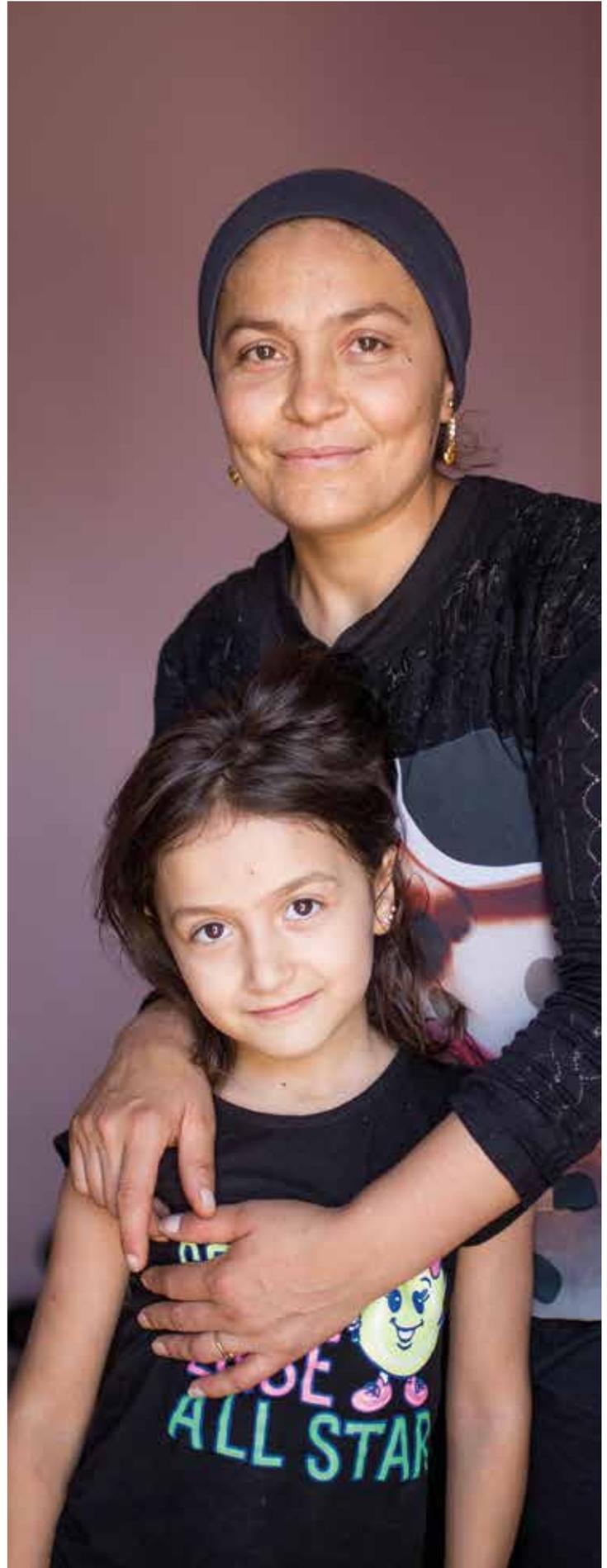
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Ordinary people, extraordinary God

They say that hindsight is 20/20: What we should have or could have done at almost any given time in our past becomes as clear as day. That clarity not only magnifies the circumstances of the moment, but also our inadequacies—our humanness—as we are privy to the consequences of our actions.

Looking back over OM's history is no exception; we can always find what might have gone differently if only this or that had happened. However, the exception to the 20/20 rule you'll find in the 60 articles that follow is that the men and women of OM's history were keenly aware of their inadequacies—and their total dependence on God—even in the midst of the story unfolding.

Highlighting 60 transforming movements of God over the last 60 years, these stories tell of dreamers and visionaries and pioneers, most of whom were very ordinary men and women who had no business smuggling Bibles into Eastern Europe (p. 26), buying a ship—and then three more (p. 32)—circling the Mediterranean in an old truck (p. 18) or passing out Christian literature to every household in France (p. 56).

Yet they did, because they were in the employ of God, whose business it is to search out men and women willing to answer His call to find people who have never heard of Him and tell them of His goodness and salvation. And so they went—to Mexico, then to Spain, India, Turkey, Bangladesh and Pakistan—and never stopped. This earnest desire to see lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ has led

to OM's work in over 110 countries.

These 60 stories are by far the largest content-compiling effort toward a single end OM communications has ever made. Over 30 writers contributed, covering people and events on six continents and four ships. To compile the list of topics, we took feedback from around the OM world; then, 15 of us spent time in South Africa hashing through that and piecing together these events in OM's history.

The moments highlighted were chosen with two criteria in mind: First, did the event have a lasting impact on the organisation? Second, did the event support OM's mission to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached? What you'll read in the following pages are the shared values, risks, triumphs, disappointments, heartbreaks and celebrations of the thousands who have served with OM over six decades. There is absolutely nothing that brings us together to share this common history other than the finished work of Jesus' death and resurrection, and the continuous work He does in our lives.

Thousands have heard the call to go, and millions have heard the good news of Christ as a result. Hopefully, what you'll find in these stories is that, time and time again, God chose to use the foolish things of this world to further His purposes. He continues in that way today, using the most inadequate and ordinary of us so that, in reflecting on how far we've come in another 60 years' time, the only thing we remember is Him.



Janet
Janet Weber

International Communications Director

Celebrating 60 years: Knowing Him and making Him known

AUTHOR: GREG KERNAGHAN • PHOTOGRAPHY: REBECCA REMPEL

Operation Mobilisation's six decades of mission reveals a story with a high improbability of ever being told at all, considering the characters and events involved.

From its beginnings, with a handful of college students to today's fellowship of 3,400 workers from over 115 nations in over 110 countries and a ship, OM remains a movement at heart, an ideal, a challenge, an invitation, a celebration, a family more impressed with the greatness of God than the size of the task.

Over 60 years, large numbers are involved: hundreds of thousands of workers, hundreds of millions of people personally presented with the gospel, hundreds of other missions birthed as a result, and vast sums released to transform lives and communities.

But the real story is not about numbers; it's about very ordinary people with a small faith in a big God. A core OM message is that God will use anybody seeking to put Him first, and we are living proof.

In this publication, we will present 60 such defining moments that have shaped OM into what we are today.

Most were not planned mission strategy; rather, God allowed circumstances to refine us and prepare us for things impossible to imagine. Still, being human, mistakes have been made, opportunities lost, relationships strained. And yet, overwhelmingly, the grace of God has been experienced and become central to our testimony.

OMers, particularly in the early decades, were often pioneers. Consider the breadth of initiatives launched:

- Calling thousands of young people not to merely see the world abroad but to change it for Christ
- Actual nights spent in intercession for the world, particularly lands untouched by the gospel. After praying over a world map, then launching a ship (eventually four) to reach the nations
- Boundless zeal in general, but particularly in adopting a simple, radical lifestyle that freed money for evangelism and helped build shared team life
- Smuggling Bibles and Christian literature in local languages (and eventually the means of production) into



The **real story** is not about numbers; it's about very ordinary people with a small faith in a big God.

Eastern Europe and the Muslim world

- 'Blitzing' entire countries with short-term teams to put gospels into every mailbox, creating follow-up opportunities for resident missionaries
- Embracing emerging technologies to further spread the gospel in closed lands

Underpinning explosive growth and increasingly indigenous leadership worldwide lay a number of principles (ourethos) that still direct our discipleship and tie us together globally:

- A sense of urgency in furthering God's kingdom on Earth by any means, and a willingness to serve where and as needed
- A willingness to act in faith and risk failure
- A commitment to work with local churches both in resourcing and mission fields
- A commitment to networking with other organisations to advance the gospel by all means. For example, others may produce media that OM more effectively distributes
- A 'flat' organisation with approachable, accountable and transparent leadership
- A culture of esteeming one another and striving for balance in life
- A healthy sense of humour to restore us in the midst of our serious task. At one international leaders meeting, where worship included sing-

ing Indian praise choruses, our Indian brothers led the assembly every day, teaching a new song in Hindi, which Westerners learnt to sing heartily. On the final day, they revealed that the lyrics read, "We love OM India! We promise to give them half our income!"

- At a similar event, an agenda item was introduced from the front regarding the need for an earring policy for men. Heated discussion ensued for several minutes, until it was revealed that it was a hoax! Such humour is encouraged.

The re-telling of moments that will follow varies widely because OM has had a complicated history. You might say that, were OM a vehicle—and we have had thousands—it would have a very large accelerator pedal and very tiny rearview mirrors. We are forward-looking people keenly aware of the promises of God.

Part of our story reads, "Since our beginnings, we have been driven by a deep conviction that everyone should have the opportunity to hear the gospel at least once. So we went. No place was too hard, no people too far, no idea too crazy, no dream too big and our failures did not hold us back. Tens of thousands have joined us and hundreds of millions have heard the gospel. But we are not done yet."

Where will this 'yet' lead us? Journey with us and find out. •



George Verwer and the birth of OM

AUTHOR: PATRICK WOOD • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Who would imagine that a popular, foul-mouthed teen—preoccupied mostly with chasing girls—would in a few short years lay the groundwork for an international ministry? George Verwer's story began when a New Jersey (USA) woman, Dorothea Clapp, placed him in the crosshairs of her 'Holy Ghost Hit List.'

In Wyckoff, New Jersey, in 1953 George was 14 years old, high-spirited, and showing promise as a natural-born leader at Ramsey High School when Mrs. Clapp's son first gave him a copy of John's Gospel. Two years later, her prayer for his salvation was answered at a Billy Graham crusade in Madison Square Garden where George received Jesus. The persistent Mrs. Clapp then began praying that George would become a missionary. Little did she realise how soon this seed of faith would take root.

George used his position as Student Council president to share his testimony in an assembly and had copies of John's Gospel distributed in the hallways. About 200 students came to faith that year as a result, and a passion and gift for winning souls had emerged.

In college, he learnt that over 70 per cent of Mexico's people owned not a single portion of Scripture. Appalled by this—considering Mexico's proximity to the chief missionary-sending nation—and burning with the conviction that “everyone must hear the gospel at least once,” he hatched a plan for his summer holiday.

In June 1957, he and classmates Dale Rhoton and Walter Borchard drove from Chicago to Mexico City in a beat-up 1949 Dodge truck filled with Spanish gospels and tracts. Committing to repeat the trip for the next three summers launched Send the Light (STL), a full-fledged literature distribution ministry that included a board of trustees and the establishment of La Vida Abundante (The Abundant Life), the first evangelical Christian bookstore in Mexico City.

While in college, George met Drena Knecht, a film department secretary from Moody Radio who shared his heart for missions—so much so that after their simple wedding in January 1960, they skipped their honeymoon and moved straight to Mexico to operate the bookstore together. Any doubt in Drena's mind that life with George would be an adventure probably vanished on the trip south, when he bartered their wedding cake in exchange for fuel!

Learning by doing

Eight months later, the work in Mexico was well established, prompting the Verwers to plant STL's ministry in Spain. Under fascist dictator Franco, religious freedom in Spain was restricted; only the Catholic Church could promote religious literature, closing doors to evangelical mis-

sionaries. However, when the Catholic Church published its own edition of a Spanish New Testament, George and his team used the Mexican experience to successfully open a bookstore in Madrid.

Although not overtly a Christian store, Victoria, as it was called, happened to sell mass copies of the Catholic Church's New Testament—as well as ‘supplemental’ materials that placed emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Blending products this way minimised attention from the authorities and shaped a key part of George's missional DNA: finding creative paths for the gospel in unsympathetic nations.

Later that year, George and team pursued this challenge in another form: The smuggling of gospel tracts into Russia, which at first didn't go well. After George carelessly tossed a misprinted tract out of a hotel window in Moscow, a pedestrian recognised the literature as forbidden and filed a report, resulting in the team's KGB interrogation and swift deportation.

The effort, however, was not in vain: For George, visiting Russia strengthened his resolve that, in a day of explosive media, technology and travel, everyone in the world could and should hear the gospel at least once! Upon his return from Russia, while in prayer, a vision for how this could be done emerged.

At a rest stop in Europe, George was overlooking the landscape when, in the distance, he saw a group of young people entering a school bus, bringing to mind the words ‘Operation Mobilisation’ and, with it, a novel idea: to acquire a

fleet of buses and load them with teams of youth passionate about sharing their faith.

Like his first trip to Mexico in 1957, this was meant to be a one-time project. But as George met with European church leaders, organising conference after conference to share the vision, the project evolved into a movement. OM has since earned its description as a collective of 3,400 people “who can't sit still and who love the adventure of serving Jesus.”

And to think it all began with that obscure New Jersey woman, Dorothea Clapp. Through her prayer, the small seed of faith planted in George 60 years ago has flourished into a tree much like the one Jesus described to illustrate God's kingdom—large and growing, with fruit-bearing branches that make their way throughout the Earth ... despite a small beginning. •

For George, visiting Russia strengthened his resolve that, in a day of explosive media, technology and travel, **everyone** in the world could and should hear the gospel at least once!

God calls ordinary Christians to short-term outreaches

AUTHOR: ANNE MARIT VILJOEN • PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER CONLAN

Sixty years ago, the world looked different. Presidents and priests had more authority and influence over the general public. Flying was a luxury few could afford. Mission societies were looking for people with a solid education and willingness to spend the rest of their lives on the field. Short-term missionary campaigns were unheard of.



The book van was a creative way of distributing Christian literature in Spain in the early '60s.

In 1960, OM founder George Verwer and his wife, Drena, moved to Madrid, Spain, soon joined by Betty Holt and Jean Davey. A year later, they were joined by 25 Americans, that together formed three teams working in Spain, France, Netherlands, Germany and Austria with the purpose of recruiting workers for the first-ever summer campaign, organised by Jonathan McRostie, who later became the leader for OM in Europe.

They took meetings in local churches on evenings and Sundays, and used the daytime Monday to Friday for door-to-door evangelism with tracts and books. Some young people from local churches joined them on Saturdays for tracting 'blitzes'.

The teams prayed for 200 young people to help reach Europe's cities during the summer of 1962; God exceeded their expectations by bringing 400 people. Ordinary Christians were invited to take part without any prior training ... and the numbers continued to grow.

Forsaking comfort and time

'Revolution of Love' and 'Forsaking all for Christ' became watchwords: The message of the gospel had to be proclaimed as widely as possible, even if it meant forsaking comfort, time, money and luxuries. It could mean sleeping on a church floor (or even in a van), working long hours, often with very little money and sometimes scarce food; sharing the gospel was more important than personal needs.

Tracts with a gospel message offering a Bible correspondence course were mass distributed. Christian litera-



*Prayer was a vital part of preparing for the summer campaigns.
Conference at Lamorlaye, France, early '60s.*

ture and Bibles were sold or given away, the money providing fuel for the van and food for the team. The message was proclaimed through open-air meetings, film evenings, door-to-door visitations and sharing of testimonies one to one. Prayer was of utmost importance; each morning, the team gathered for devotions and Bible study. A set of phrases in the local language was provided, helping foreign team members hold simple conversations.

In the following year (1963), summer teams majored on reaching villages throughout Southern Europe, instead of cities as the year before. Almost 2,000 people came from 30 countries (700 from the UK alone!) and, over a three-month period, teams worked with 400 local churches and 25 mission organisations. In addition to recruiting participants and the logistics of training conferences and transport, they also faced opposition; in some countries, they frequently experienced arrests or questioning by the police.

Priests tearing up leaflets

Betty Holt was the women's leader in a team that travelled throughout five of the six provinces of Andalucia in southern Spain, which was still very much under the power of the Roman Catholic Church and General Franco. Everybody in Spain was afraid of Protestants yet hungry for the Word of God. "In most villages, we freely distributed gospel leaflets to everybody we met, only to see the priest tear them up later," remembers Betty.

In one village, while the Spanish girls on the team were speaking animatedly with the policeman, Betty held a quiet conversation with the priest. "He asked who we were,

what we believed, and why we were doing [this]," shared Betty. "Finally, he acknowledged that he grasped what I said about being saved by believing in the finished work of Christ on the cross, and that our good works could never get us to heaven," she continued. "He told the police to release us, and took us (six young ladies) to his house where he showed us a publication he had written and was giving to people, based on the Bible. We had an encouraging time of sharing the things of Christ with him."

Fear of being arrested gradually disappeared as they discovered that those arrests led to the best opportunities for sharing the gospel—with the police! "This summer in Spain prepared me for work in the Communist World by teaching me to deal with police authorities, and by testing my willingness to go to jail or to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ," wrote Betty years later in her book *From Chicago to the Ends of the Earth*.

Summer campaigns continued and teams were sent to an increasing number of countries, including behind the so-called Iron Curtain, smuggling Bibles to secret believers in the Communist Soviet Union. Later, short-term campaigns were also held over Easter and Christmas and today happen all through the year and on all continents. Methods and locations may have changed from the pioneering era, but short-term campaigns are now a major gateway into missions for OM and numerous other organisations.

God is still calling ordinary Christians to share the good news and work towards seeing vibrant communities of Jesus followers in all parts of the world. •

OM's radical lifestyle

AUTHOR: GREG KERNAGHAN • PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER CONLAN

OM began on the cusp of the '60s, when young people worldwide were challenging the status quo. This was the perfect environment for an iconoclast like George Verwer and his non-conformist followers to bring a clear call to radical discipleship demonstrated in lifestyle and philosophy, not for a summer but for a lifetime.

Its purpose was to put God and His kingdom above all else, particularly personal comforts. *"The Spanish Manifesto"*, written in 1961 by a group of early OMers—"25 students in love with Jesus Christ"—captured this spirit: "The Lord Jesus Christ was a Revolutionist! Consider ... His most basic teachings: 'Love your enemies. Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Lay not up for yourselves treasures in Earth. Except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple'. ... The Lord Jesus broke with any cultural pattern which interfered with the life of sacrificial love which He came to give! The individual who would live this life is of necessity a revolutionary individual, a cultural non-conformist, a 'fanatic', if you please! Literal adherence to the principles laid down by Jesus Christ would, without a

doubt, result in worldwide revolution. ... It is true that we are only a small group of Christian young people, yet we have determined, by God's grace, to live our daily lives according to the revolutionary teachings of our Master. [Herein] lies the power that will evangelize the world. ... We will press forward until every creature has heard the gospel."

OMers became known for their enthusiasm to live radically, both in lifestyle and worldview. George, of course, led by example; every non-essential was challenged since, after all, that second pair of shoes could pay for a thousand tracts or fuel for reaching another village. After receiving a sacrificial donation from a small Mexican church, George asked the pastor if he had a suit (he did not). Sitting in a darkened van, George said, "I have plenty of clothes" and took off his own suit, passed it to the pastor and drove off. He arrived at the team house around midnight, wearing only his underwear. This was typical.

The OM culture was radical in fostering multiracial, multiethnic teams that strove to esteem each other and thus prove the power of the gospel. This transparent, simple lifestyle spoke highly to national believers accustomed to seeing Western missionaries living at a higher level. Teams shared accommodation (even if only the back of a truck) and life in general. An "OM Happening" in 1969 in India was advertised as "living, eating, sleeping, praying, preaching, studying with young people from across India, England, America, Africa and Europe." Attractions were listed as "sleeping on the floor and eating off banana leaves." This was pure OM vocabulary.

Convinced that every person should hear the gospel at least once, OM teams became "as shrewd as serpents and harmless as doves" in distributing literature or otherwise engaging people. Teams would work throughout the night, putting Scripture into every mailbox, staying one town

ahead of police.

Specialised vans were built with secret compartments for smuggling Bibles to grateful churches behind the Iron Curtain. Even in 'free' countries, teams were motivated to sell vast quantities of literature not only to spread the gospel but to buy food and fuel their vans.

OM was passionate about breaking down barriers between church and parachurch organisations. In the early decades, few if any other organisations would entrust leadership to young people, or submit to national leadership as Westerners. George's own example of 'walking in the light,' admitting weaknesses and seeking forgiveness—a practice he continues to this day—helped to keep the movement on track and has motivated countless others to do likewise.

The vision for a ship in the early '60s was definitely radical but, after little more than a decade of experience that proved not all was 'sorted', it was equally radical to commit to a second, larger vessel. When final negotiations began with the Costa family that owned the *Franca C* (later to become *Doulos*), it was unclear whether OM had the finance in hand. Yet a Costa representative remarked about OM, "When they pray, they pay!" This proved the principle seen throughout the movement: God is at His strongest

when we are at our weakest.

Looking back, George Verwer wrote, "When I was a young Christian, I had a tendency towards extremism and super-spirituality. If I had not learned to accept the human factor in myself and others, I would have been knocked out of the race very early on."

Yet OM is what it is today because of thousands of radical supporters: those who have faithfully prayed for decades, those who sacrificially help to finance teams and projects, and those who enthusiastically challenge others to join the movement.

Current International Director Lawrence Tong says there is still place for fanatics, for living radically for a cause: "God uses fanatics—intensely focused individuals—in our midst to challenge our presumptions and cause the kinds of changes we need to grow and develop. We need to create space for those who are different from us and who will push us toward excellence and new thinking. *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'* (Matt. 22:37). That is the best kind of fanaticism I know of!" •



Gerry Davey and others at one of the summer conferences at Lamorlaye, France, in the '60s.



Pioneers and icebreakers

in the Middle East and North Africa

AUTHOR: NICOLE JAMES • PHOTOGRAPHY: GARRETT NASRALLAH

OM's work in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a 21-country area, began in 1962 when a handful of workers circled the Mediterranean Sea in an old truck.

“From Madrid they drove to Gibraltar, took a ferry to Tangiers and then slowly drove through Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. They then went straight back to France for the first major OM summer campaign,” recalled Nancy*, a long-term OM worker. During their trip, the team distributed flyers for the then North Africa Mission (NAM), advertising its Tunis-based Bible Correspondence Course. The subsequent response—hundreds of letters poured into NAM—contributed to the NAM workers’ expulsion from Tunisia and relocation to southern Europe, where they continued their ministry.

When another couple in Jordan heard of the effects of the OM team’s distribution, they didn’t want the OM truck to come but, when it arrived, the couple invited the team to stay in their house. “A matter of damage limitation,” Nancy explained. The OMers welcomed the hospitality but spent all night praying on the roof. Shocked by the team’s dedication, the host couple subsequently joined OM. Three years later, the husband became the field leader of OM’s work in the Arab world.

Pioneers and icebreakers

“A very important aspect of OM’s work in Arab countries is that we were pioneers and icebreakers in many countries,” stated long-term worker Clara*, who has lived in the Arab world for 45 years. “We also had mixed teams of Arab believers and all kinds of nationalities!”

From 1963–1970, small teams served in Lebanon and Jordan; work in Israel began in 1964. In 1966, a men’s team based in Jordan distributed literature into Syria, Iraq and Kuwait.

On one Kuwait trip, they had to empty their vehicles because officials suspected drugs. When all the books were confiscated, the team drove to Kuwait City with their intended source of income for the month gone. That night, the men prayed for four specific things: a place to stay, that the books would be released, permission from the local church to do outreach and for the political situation in Kuwait to calm down. The next day nearly all their books were returned, and the church allowed them to stay and do ministry. “Because they didn’t have any money, some of them sold their blood and then went selling books,” recounted Clara, whose husband was on the team. Those books sold well and the men stayed for a month.

By 1975, most OMers had left Lebanon because of its civil war, while new teams sprouted in North Africa. In 1989, long-term worker Craig* pioneered OM’s work in Syria. Two years later, OM split the Arab World Team into

six fields, “but it was all really small,” Craig remembered. At that time, workers from the entire Near East Field could fit into one van.

During the ’90s, OM’s presence in the Arab world grew drastically. “One of the most exciting things we did ... were the Love Lebanon conferences and outreaches, which became Love Middle East. Conferences were held in Lebanon, and mixed different Arabic-speaking nationalities on teams—Lebanese, Egyptians, Sudanese, Syrians—were sent all over. Some later conferences were in Egypt, and Algerians joined in,” Clara said.

Sudan, Yemen and Syria all faced crippling challenges; teams started and stopped. OMers were kidnapped, imprisoned and killed. Through it all, “God is still working with His people,” Craig said. “We may not be seeing all the fruit we want, but we are seeing lives transformed. Then, just handfuls here and there. Now, it’s in the thousands.” Revival is sweeping Algeria’s Kabyle region. Thousands of Syrians have found Jesus. “What we see among the Somalis we couldn’t even dream of a few years ago. Among all these groups, the Lord is raising national leadership,” another long-term worker noted.

Continuing the call

Today, OM is one of the largest mission agencies working amongst Muslims. “We’re very diverse as a region in terms of nationalities. In some of our fields we have significant national leadership. We collaborate with local and international organisations

and churches,” described the OM MENA Area Leader.

Still, many Muslims do not know Christ and have no opportunity to hear the gospel. “We need to keep pushing on, keep pioneering, keep going to those places where others are not going,” he challenged.

Political and technological changes have impacted OM’s work in MENA. Some ministries still value printed books; others prefer multimedia. Teams send Scripture via SMS to local contacts and pass out phone chips instead of paper tracts. “At one time, you just hitch-hiked across North Africa,” the OM MENA Area Leader noted. However, “our context has changed; the world has changed and, therefore, we have to continue to be innovative ... but with those same underlying core values.”

“We still have the same passion: to reach the unreached [with the gospel],” Clara affirmed. “The pioneering character with which we started has continued,” the Area Leader agreed. “It’s challenging but very exciting times. I’m full of hope for the gospel.” •

“We still have the
same passion: to
reach the unreached
[with the gospel].”



Local woman shares a meal with visitors in the Middle East.

PHOTO BY GARRETT NASRALLAH



**Bedouin man extends
hospitality in the desert.**

PHOTO BY KATHRYN BERRY

OM's early days in India

AUTHOR: GREG KERNAGHAN • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Every day, millions of people meet strangers and discover common bonds, but few have had such an impact as when Thomas Samuel of India met George Verwer in Europe and prayed that God would put India on his heart.

As a result, a small team was formed in late '63 to travel overland to the sub-continent. When Greg Livingstone said that he didn't know where India was, George retorted, "Go east—you can't miss it!" And go they did, a literal '40 days and 40 nights' experience that built their faith to match their vision.

The overland trip

OM pioneer Frank Dietz recalls his first trip: "Gordon Magney and I were in Spain when Dale Rhoton made a survey trip to India to prepare for a team to reach its 50 million Muslims (at that time). Gordon and I wanted to be on that team. Others left first for India, while Gordon and I left in November, stopping along the way to share the gospel in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan."

In Bulgaria, believers not only gave the men money but also welcomed them into their homes and provided them with food and rest. In Turkey, they were stopped many times by the authorities for distributing literature.

"Upon leaving a small village, we were stuck in a snowdrift. Five men came to help, after which they wanted \$5 each, but we had started out with only \$35 to begin with from selling books in Switzerland," Frank remembers. "When they looked in the back of our truck, they saw 1930-style women's fur coats that we used for rugs."

Selling the rugs to them, the men travelled to Iran, where a businessman introduced them to two English brothers on their way to work in a Hindu ashram. "We were reluctant to take them, but told them that they would have to sit in on our morning devotions as a team," said Frank. "Eventually, these two brothers made a decision for the Lord and joined our teams in India. One eventually became a missionary and the other a pastor."

The group arrived in India on 1 January 1964, after driving in freezing weather with no heaters. "It was a wonder that we made it," said Frank.

"What did I learn from all of this? First, that God wants His children to take more risks and, secondly, that God is faithful. What started out with about a half-dozen Westerners and two broken-down trucks turned



In 1963, the first OM team travelled overland from Europe to India, sharing the gospel along the way and initiating a movement that would reach millions with the gospel.

into a movement that has reached millions with the gospel and brought into existence the ship movement. Problems that arise are often opportunities in disguise.”

Overland trips across Europe and Asia in outfitted vans continued for the next 15 years.

Team life in India

From the beginning, OM's every effort was directed to working alongside Indian churches—a radical departure from the normal practice of Western missionaries. All foreigners were equal team members with Indian brothers and sisters, whose leadership development was paramount. For Commonwealth citizens, there was an expectation that many would choose to serve in India, since they could obtain visas easily and import and then drive foreign vehicles, usually large lorries crammed with supplies and literature. But ‘foreign worker’ could have as easily been applied to Indian team members from the South who were sent to the North: It was an entirely cross-cultural experience requiring as much humility and sacrifice as for any Westerner.

There were trying times, as teams sharing the gospel in Muslim areas were often chased out of town. Yet one Muslim shopkeeper bought and read a gospel, began to

attend church and transformed his shop into an outlet for Bibles and literature that touched thousands of lives.

Another Muslim, Ghulam Rasool Bhatt, wrote, “They came as a whirlwind, held open-air preaching ... sold gospel literature while doing shop-to-shop visitation. One of my servants bought a packet of books. Out of curiosity I began reading. ... I was also in contact with a Western missionary; after several conversations I received Jesus Christ.”

Within three years, 30 million pieces of literature, much produced in India, had been distributed hand to hand. Teams had visited most states and Indians were leading the movement. By 1967, there were 50 OMs committed for the long term. Teams concentrated on personal witness, literature distribution and correspondence courses.

literature distribution and correspondence courses.

Teams with Westerners were often stopped by police in sensitive areas and were taught to be respectful yet confident, quoting Gandhi, who said, “I shall say to the Hindus, you are not complete until you have reverently studied the teachings of Jesus.” This, they would claim in all sincerity, was the driving force of their work.

In ensuing decades, the work of OM in India expanded steadily. In 1988, it became evident to Indian leadership that a response must be made to the teeming hundreds of millions of desperately poor and marginalised.

The Good Shepherd ministry, which sought to alleviate poverty through education and skills training among the lowest in society (the Dalits) spread quickly. In partnership with others, OMs set up medical clinics, primary schools in English, adult literacy classes, vocational and business training and more. All this was done in the name of Christ, and new Christian communities among the poorest of the poor flourished.

In time, it became apparent that decades of prayer for a nation-wide indigenous church was being answered, and the ministry restructured its activities and mandate accordingly, eventually becoming an independent, indigenous mission force for the coming century. •

No risk too great, no idea too crazy

AUTHOR: KRIS JOHNSTONE • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Few relics of OM's history are found in museums, so visitors to the Museum of Atheism and Religion in Albania were unlikely to fully appreciate the significance of a plastic bag stuffed with literature. However, for stalwart OMers serving during the Communist Era, it represents their crazy determination to take the gospel behind the Iron Curtain.

Caught in a wire mesh, this watertight bag included a gospel and Christian literature designed to be fished out downstream by the right person—perhaps not the most effective method, but it underlines the willingness of OM teams to go anywhere and do anything for the gospel.

No risk too great, no idea too crazy: Over 60 years, OM has witnessed how 'sold out for the gospel' OMers have been. During the Communist Era, OM conducted one of the largest smuggling operations of Bibles and Christian literature behind the Iron Curtain.

This was a task for believers completely and utterly dependent on God. Commit-

ted to support the oppressed and persecuted Underground Church in Eastern Europe, they were willing to pay the price.

Radical approaches

While some initiatives—such as throwing bags in rivers or distributing literature via weather balloons—didn't quite take off, the use of specially configured transit vans became the most common approach.

In his book, *Stones of Remembrance*, David Babcock, a former OM leader, recounts what crossing guards would regularly ask travellers to declare: "Guns, drugs or Bibles?"—an amazing grouping of 'dangerous' things to smuggle that re-

vealed how much the Communists realised the potential ‘danger’ of this book for their ideology. The Communists saw the Bible as a true threat to the control of their people, and systematically sought to collect and destroy them throughout the Soviet bloc.”

Using transit vans still presented immense risks and danger to those involved. Thorough border inspections and checkpoints posed the threat of capture, interrogation and even temporary imprisonment.

“I was trembling,” recounts Robert*, an OM worker telling his account of leaving Hungary after his first transit of literature. Even an empty van with hiding places posed a risk if discovered. “Arriving at the border, I was shaking and praying. I was close to breaking but, as I struggled to hand over my passport, an alarm went off! The passport was thrown back at me just as I was about to give it away.”

In another account in his book, David remembers a bold young man who took 15 suitcases of Bibles from Germany to Bulgaria, on the train, by himself. From dragging them on the platform to filling an entire carriage, he finally delivered them to a family in Sofia without being caught.

There are numerous testimonies like this. God performed miracles, from blinding border guards during inspections to breaking drill bits to avoid reaching hidden compartments full of literature.

Whilst the majority of OM workers survived border inspections unscathed, it was not in God’s plan for everyone to smuggle with success. Deportation and blacklisting from the country was the penalty for most who were caught; some were subjected to harsher treatment including several months’ imprisonment.

True teamwork

The mutual respect for OM’s smugglers and the Under-

ground Church continues today. “The amazing thing was that the Eastern European contacts put us on a pedestal, but the biggest lesson was knowing what it meant for them—what difficulties lay in store for them,” recognises Robert. “I remember how a pastor’s wife continually risked her personal freedom. Her husband had already been imprisoned for being an Underground Church contact. She knew her apartment was bugged, yet she was willing to go on!”

“We never lied,” insists Robert, demonstrating how OM teams conducted themselves with strict biblical integrity. “Actually, it was exciting to know that what we were doing was morally right. Of course, we answered questions with great care, but we never lied. We were well trained in what we could expect and what to do [if caught].”

“We were doing Bible studies and having great prayer meetings,” shares Robert. “We regularly prayed until midnight for a crossing and seeing God answer—real answers to prayer on a weekly basis.”

“We didn’t know what impact this ministry would have, but we knew we had to do it until God closed the door,” shares Sharon, another team member still with OM.

“There was risk, but there was even greater risk for the believers leading the Underground Church,” believes Gary Sloan, who became the first country leader of OM in Russia in the 1990s. “As bad as the treatment would be for any of us, far worse would be in store for local believers. The Eastern European churches were the real heroes.”

Go anywhere and do anything so every person can hear the gospel at least once. This value remains deeply engrained in OM teams today. Whether it’s through providing relief in war zones or delivering Bibles to believers in hard-to-reach places, if it brings the gospel, OM teams are determined to do it. •



Historical shot of the OM base in Zaventem, Belgium, with row of transit vans, when this was OM’s main vehicle base in the ’70s and ’80s.

God's loophole in the Iron Curtain

AUTHOR: INGER R.

Compelled by the need, Glenn*, Dale Rhoton and Stuart McAllister smuggled Bibles to persecuted believers and unreached people behind the Iron Curtain. In awe at God's intervention, they reflect on experiences that increased their faith, shaped OM's vision and impacted lives in difficult places.

Numbed fingers

Excited and scared, Glenn* and a friend followed God's prompting to take Christian literature into Soviet Russia in 1982. With 52 books taped to their bodies, they approached Russia's border.

"Five men pointed machine guns at me," Glenn said. "My heart was pounding." Beginning to sweat beneath bulky winter layers, Glenn felt the tape loosen. "I thought some of the Bibles would fall out of my trousers," Glenn explained. "But I kept instructing my soul: 'In Jesus' name, these Bibles cannot be found.'"

A guard searched the young American, squeezing every part of his body, starting at his ankles. "I felt the Bibles press into my skin," Glenn said. "Then the thought came to me: The Word became flesh." As the guard checked around his stomach, Glenn looked out the window, praying silently, not knowing what would hap-

pen; possibilities of a Siberian gulag entered his mind. Then, the guard reached Glenn's head and told him, "You can go". "It was the first miracle I experienced," Glenn emphasised. "It changed the course of my life and gave me a special love for people in the former Soviet Union."

Glenn's trip was the catalyst to join OM's Bible-smuggling team, Greater Europe, and later initiate work in Russia. Transporting tens of thousands of Christian publications, he saw miracle after miracle.

"When you experience this, you're ruined for life in a special way," Glenn declared, still with OM today. "Our God can do anything!"

Blinded eyes

The vision for smuggling Scriptures sparked when OM's co-founder, Dale Rhoton, met Pastor Richard Wurmbrand in Communist Romania, shortly after the pastor's release

from prison in 1964. Dale scanned the apartment, trying to identify the man who endured 14 years' imprisonment. Unable to pick him out, he asked his neighbour, who "pointed to a man whose face was shining," Dale said. "His excitement, dedication and willingness to risk his life again overwhelmed me."

Subsequently, he learnt that the pastor had suffered because of betrayal. Later that day, during another visit, a man greeted Richard warmly. "They hugged

and kissed in Romanian style," Dale recalled. Walking on, Dale commented, "That's interesting: He has the same name as the man who betrayed you."

"Rhoton! We all make mistakes!" Richard replied emphatically.

"That's how he dismissed the man who betrayed him!" Dale uttered, emotion welling up. "It wasn't a

nice warm cell, but a place of torture; he showed us holes in his back, where they had ripped out flesh."

Spurred by Wurmbrand's testimony and believers' desire to receive Scripture even at great cost, Dale started Greater Europe in 1968. They usually concealed books in altered vans, but once Dale simply loaded four suitcases aboard a train to Bucharest; while other passengers' bags were checked, nobody paid attention to his luggage. "When I delivered the Bibles, the local believer was amazed to see how much was in there." Dale said.

Changed heart

"Good literature is vital for a flourishing life," former OM leader Stuart McAllister stated, his conviction resulting in numerous imprisonments for distribution efforts with Greater Europe from 1978 onwards.

Stuart and three OM workers spent

40 days in prison in Yugoslavia. "We were amazed at how eager others were to know us," Stuart remembered. Friendships developed and they shared their faith. "We used symbols and stumbling words to convey Christ," Stuart said. "One man in particular showed signs that his heart was stirred."

Stuart's wife, Mary, joined one of OM's first outreaches in post-Communist Albania. On a mountain trek, their local guide, Burim*, translated as Mary spoke of attempts to spread God's truth in Communist Albania. When she told how they had sealed gospels in bags and floated them into the country downriver from Greece and Yugoslavia, Burim spoke up. Previously a secret policeman, Burim had collected and destroyed the gospels he found. Curious, he read it for himself, though not responding initially. Once Albania opened up, and he heard individuals preach, including OM workers, he chose to follow Jesus.

"His testimony made me praise the Lord!" shared Stuart, who met Burim later. "He was delighted to know that, even in that phase of his life, God was reaching out to him."

Twenty-five years after the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe, OM teams are based in many of these countries, using the opportunity of greater freedom.

An OM publishing ministry produces print and digital literature, including Wurmbrand's *Tortured for Christ*, to bring hope.

"There are so many places where we can help, give or work," Stuart concluded. "The big question for all is: Who or what has our heart?" •

"His excitement, dedication and willingness to risk his life again overwhelmed me."

"There are so many places where we can help, give or work. The big question for all is: **Who or what has our heart?**"



Turks turn to Christ:

THE STORY OF THE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

AUTHOR: AYLIN MARDIN • PHOTOGRAPHY: DILEEP R. / JULIE COLEMAN

There were no known believers from a Muslim background when the first two OM workers arrived in Turkey in 1961. Passionate to see Turks come to Christ, short-term teams joined them to sell Christian books door to door by day, while at night tracts were 'lost' on streets in hopes they would be discovered in the morning. During the 1960s, nearly half a million pieces of literature were distributed annually.

National newspapers took notice and the derogatory term 'Hristiyan propagandası' (Christian propaganda) was coined. Beneath banner headlines in the more scurrilous sections of the press, pictures of the offending printed items would often appear, complete with readable text and follow-up address. This unexpectedly expanded the outreach considerably.

To the surprise of the first OMers, Muslims didn't initially respond but Christian-background young people, hungry to know God, did. Within a few years, the OMers had a growing group but no biblical material to equip them or those who responded to literature distribution. So they translated a simple Bible correspondence course from Emmaus Bible School in the US, and the Bible Correspondence Course (BCC) was born.

The OMers realised they could use the course itself as a way to reach out. Short-termers and eager young Christians regularly posted invitations to the free course, often gleaning names from telephone directories. One holiday, some of the young people stuffed thousands of course invitations into envelopes and posted them as part of the deluge of holiday greetings. A few days later, the Turkish paper *Hürriyet's* headline read "Christian Propaganda Hits City!" When the team leader went to his post office box to collect the replies, he was arrested. Emotion was so high that the public prosecutor at his trial asked the judge for the death penalty.

Now nearly as old as OM, the Bible Correspondence Course continues a ministry that has grown and expanded over the decades. Dave W., director of the BCC for over two decades, remembers the dramatic change that came in the late 1980s:

"I'd been trying to get ads for the BCC into magazines and newspapers but was always rejected. Finally, a leftist magazine agreed to take the ad that still generates the most response, asking, 'Have you ever read the New Testament? If you'd like to know more about Jesus Christ and His life and teachings, write to us.' They designed the ad themselves: a large cross with a sun bursting out of the top of it."

Positive responses came rolling in; after seeing the precedent, a national newspaper agreed to publish the same

advertisement. Dave and his wife, who ran the BCC out of their home at that time, were shocked when more than 200 responses began arriving weekly.

The huge response continued for years, necessitating a change that has transformed the country. Dave could no longer travel to every person in the country who wanted a visit. So, he held meetings for church planters around the country who were faithfully sharing with friends and neighbours but seeing little fruit. He encouraged them to take on the ministry of following up those who wrote in from their cities.

The result has been dramatic: Surveys have shown that nearly half of the 7,000 believers in Turkey have traced their spiritual pilgrimage through the Bible Correspondence Course. This was the result of the partnership between the BCC's bold evangelism and the faithful follow-up of churches and church planting teams.

The potential of one person

Ahmet was a man in the south-east who wrote to the BCC and received a visit, but his motives weren't spiritual; he was looking for a way out of the country and thought that Christians could

help him. Feigning interest, he completed the first BCC and asked for a visit. Ahmet laughs as he remembers: "I was waiting for someone in a suit to step out of a Mercedes; instead, here comes this foreigner, in torn jeans, off a bus!"

Ahmet was disappointed when there was no offer of money or a ticket outside the country. So, he figured he would need to keep completing courses. Soon the message of the gospel pierced his heart, and he found himself eagerly waiting for new materials and the occasional visit from Dave. Finally, Ahmet surrendered his life to Christ and, with that, his plans to leave the country. Today, he is the pastor of the largest church in the southeast and is responsible for BCC follow-up in four neighbouring provinces.

Today, the BCC breaks new ground by using Internet ads, Facebook, Twitter and street evangelism to share the message of Christ, yet the vision remains unchanged: The BCC strives to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers established amongst the least reached in Turkey. •



Beginning of long-term ministry

AUTHOR: TATU KEKKONEN • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

After many successful summers, short-term evangelism campaigns established their place as the core ministry of Operation Mobilisation. Rather quickly, OM's work in countries like Turkey and India grew to continue year round. In the winter of 1963, when George Verwer asked if there would be anyone willing to work with OM for at least a year, a greater commitment to participate arose.

Preparation for the first year teams was organised in Atherton, England, and, after four weeks of intensive training, about 200 OMers headed to Europe, Turkey, Iran, Lebanon, Israel and India. OM's focus began to shift toward long-term ministry.

Since its beginning, OM has provided training based on need. For young OMers, the road to long-term commitment started with reading books and listening to hours of cassettes full of vibrant teaching. Books like *Calvary Road* by Roy Hession and *True Discipleship* by William MacDonald quickly became classics alongside early books by George Verwer, such as the *Literature Evangelism Manual* published in 1963.

Studying these materials was obligatory for everyone joining OM summer campaigns that started with a one-week conference followed by three weeks of evangelism. Training and preparation brought together spiritual and practical needs. "Memorising Scripture was central, but we also memorised

phrases in different languages," long-term OMer Asko Alajoki, from Finland, remembers. "I still know some Italian from those days."

Asko joined OM for the summer campaign in 1968 and kept coming back every summer until 1972, when he decided to join a year team. "Some people came for summer campaigns and went straight to a training conference for year teams," he says.

"Some people came for summer campaigns and went straight to a **training conference** for year teams."

Trained and equipped

Those wanting to join a year team were expected to have taken part in at least one summer campaign before hitting the road towards the unknown. Two to four weeks of training were provided in various locations in England and Belgium, until an old paper factory was

transformed into OM's European headquarters in Zaventem, Belgium.

Days were full: There was teaching about discipleship, leadership, teamwork, Bible study and prayer. "Teachers



Starting in 1963, OM's first year teams scattered around Europe and the Middle East.

were OMers and visiting pastors who were either specially invited or just passing by,” Asko tells. “We worked as small groups and gathered to discuss daily topics. Of course, we also did dishes and cleaned together with our leaders, who were responsible for our small teams. We took care of everything. There were no staff members.”

Besides spiritual preparation, teaching and training included skills for everyday life and hands-on work. “We even had internal OM driver’s licences. We had to test if people really could drive and take care of cars and trucks,” Asko says.

Trust in the Almighty

One feature of the conference was an exhibition of all the countries where people might go, coupled with personal interviews. “When people came to the training conference, they did not know where they would be going next. I was hoping to go to the Near East but, without proper language skills, I was sent to England where our team worked with immigrants,” Asko tells of his first year-team experience. It was all about coming to serve with a disciple’s attitude and trusting in God’s plan. After the interviews, leaders sent people to different year teams depending on their skill sets and needs.

Another trust test was finances. “After summer campaigns and buying literature, everyone was basically broke. We were asked to pray until we had the money to travel. Teams could not leave before the money had come in,” Asko explains. Because of this, the conference sometimes lasted a bit longer, but it certainly got people praying and relationships deepened.

The year teams became a pathway for those who stayed longer in OM. After his first year in England, followed by years in India, Asko has been part of OM for over 40 years. “This has been a good place for me spiritually, and I’ve always had good challenges,” Asko explains his long journey in ministry. “After finishing my studies in Finland, there were no further ties attached and God had put this ministry on my heart.”

Still today, OM equips newcomers with the same attitude. Most of the approximately 3,400 long-term OMers have gone through the Global Orientation Conference to ensure they are prepared spiritually and practically. Yet only by actual experience can anyone know what it takes to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers established among the least reached. •

From vision to reality

AUTHOR: ELAINE RHOTON • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

George Verwer lay atop boxes of books and supplies in the back of an old battered van, part of a convoy of OM vehicles heading to India from Europe. For George—brimming with energy and eager for ministry—the arduous two-month trip, composed almost solely of sitting or lying down, must have been pure agony.

As he tried to redeem the time mentally, an idea began to form. This two-month ordeal was a prodigious waste of time. Air travel? Think of how many tracts could be bought for the price of one airline ticket! There must be another way.

A few months later, when George was back in England, the idea of using a ship for evangelism came up. He launched into a spirited presentation about the money that could be saved in transporting people and goods between Britain and mainland Europe, or all the way to India. Other OM leaders in the room threw out all kinds of ideas, from the witty or ridiculous to serious possibilities. But the facts were that they were all in their 20s or 30s and none of them knew anything about ships. Nor was there any money for such a venture. Still, George could not let go of the idea. He talked about the vision as he preached in churches, constantly asking people to pray.

A year passed. Two years. Responses began to come in. Some were strongly worded and largely negative. One, however, came from a British captain, whose presence added weight to George's pleas as the two men presented their vision in various Christian meetings.

The search for a suitable ship for OM's unique ministry began. Steadily, professional crewmembers pledged to serve without pay on a vessel that did not yet exist: from an Australian chief engineer to a Norwegian first officer, who

had only been a believer for one year; and even a young Arab deck officer who hadn't been a Christian when prayer for the project began. By 1970, 15 professional crew from 10 countries were on board—figuratively!

Then came a shock: After much prayer, the British captain felt he should set a deadline if he was to serve at the helm. If God provided the ship by the end of August 1970, he would proceed; otherwise, he would withdraw.

In September 1970, the annual conference for all OM workers was held in a cold, draughty, disused factory in a London suburb. One morning, George came bounding out of his makeshift office shouting, "It's free! The *Umanak* is free!"

The *Umanak* was a Danish vessel OM leaders had settled on, but a Nigerian company had made a better offer. That deal had just fallen through and the ship had become available. God provided the money needed to complete the purchase.

After setting the end of August as his deadline, the British captain would not reconsider, believing it was God's will for him to bow out. He had played a significant role in the project, but he never sailed on the ship. The role of captain was given to the first officer from Norway.

OM named the new vessel *Logos*, which means 'written word' in Greek. It is used in the Bible to refer to Jesus Christ.



Painting the name Logos on the first OM ship after her purchase

Discovery follows faith

On 26 February 1971, *Logos* left London on her maiden voyage to India. Sailing down the west coast of Africa, she stopped in several ports to take on fuel, water and food supplies. This provided an opportunity to spend a week or two in each port so that OMers could go ashore to pass out tracts, go door to door, hold open-air evangelistic meetings or visit churches, schools or wherever appropriate for meetings. On board, there was a small book exhibition and a room to host gatherings of Christian leaders.

In Cape Town, South Africa, one Sunday morning, an OM team returning from a church meeting was surprised to see a long queue of people in the port area, feeding onto *Logos*. What was that all about? Local people had come to visit the ship after church. On that one day, the book exhibition recorded sales of over 600 British pounds.

Later, for the first time when *Logos* left a port, all her bills incurred there could be paid for by book sales.

A great realisation dawned: Ship people could go ashore for ministry, but the ship itself could be an attraction—a platform for ministry—offering books, tours, conferences and personal interaction with the crew.

And so it was. Long queues became a common sight in the months and years ahead. The original vision to transport OM volunteers and goods was swallowed up by a much greater vision: a ship sailing from port to port throughout the world, carrying the message of hope in Jesus Christ and copies of His Word to nations of every religious and political background.

OM's Ship Ministry had begun. •

Since 1970, OM's Ship Ministry has:

- operated four ships;
- welcomed over 45 million people on board;
- distributed over 70 million portions of Scripture;
- visited over 150 countries and 1,470 ports;
- trained more than 10,000 crew and staff for future life and service;
- partnered with over 60,000 churches;
- hosted more than six million people at onboard events;
- greeted an average of 250,000 children visiting the ship each year;
- distributed over 38.5 million books;
- worked with more than 40,000 local port volunteers; and
- seen countless numbers of people come to faith in God.



Reviving Korean passion for missions

AUTHOR: DR. BENJAMIN YONGKYU LEE • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Jesus once told the parable of the mustard seed: Within the hearts of men, God sows a seed. With God's power and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the germinated seed grows and flourishes.

South Korea in the early 1970s was a spiritually famished nation, hungry for the Word of God. Korean Christians, much like the early Church, were few in number and suffered both dire poverty and persecution. However, God was already preparing His Church and His servants.

Three Christian individuals would join OM, which was no easy feat since Koreans needed presidential permission to travel abroad. The *Logos* visit in 1975 marked the humble beginning of Koreans' involvement with OM; the ship visited three more times over the following decade, serving as a catalyst in the spiritual awakening of countless Koreans.

OM's approach to world missions—involving a lay missionary movement, teamwork, servant-focused training and leadership, and an inter-denominational and international community of believers—was very challenging to Korean Christians.

As freedom of worship increased and travel restrictions lifted, churches responded to God's call by sending missionaries to serve with OM to the ends of the Earth. That

most Koreans did not speak English showed that even language is not a barrier for God. Korean missionaries fervently prayed and God heard. These earliest Korean OMers shared what little they had with those less fortunate, modelling characteristics found in the first members of the Christian Church.

Coinciding with early ship visits, Korea itself began to emerge on the global scene. The Asian Games and the Olympics brought the world to Korea and allowed Koreans to see the world in a new light. The Christian mission movement saw many Korean Christians commit themselves to world missions. Korean young people had a strong desire to serve with OM, and the number

of Korean OMers increased rapidly. All this happened in conjunction with *Doulos'* and George Verwer's visits to Korea, during which the Lord challenged the Church to respond to His Great Commission. Many new missionaries went to serve the most unreached peoples of the world, particularly among Muslims in the Middle East and Central Asia.

By nature, Koreans are hardworking and carry a great sense of responsibility for their ministry, leading them to work seemingly tirelessly. Their desire to see vibrant communities of Jesus

followers among the least reached motivates them to serve in challenging places, and they are committed to obeying God's call. Koreans are known for passionately praying for others, including their leaders, the lost, and countries that are not open to the gospel. As they surrendered themselves to God, He used ordinary Korean Christians to accomplish extraordinary things.

Since 1990, when OM Korea officially started sending out missionaries, more than 1,500 short- and mid-term workers

have served with OM. Thousands more have served with OM summer outreach campaigns like Love Europe and Love Asia. As of 2016, there are 316 Koreans serving in OM ministries in 39 countries around the world. Throughout OM, Koreans have set a good example as leaders and long-term workers in various closed or difficult countries.

Though the latest visit of *Logos Hope* in 2014 saw a lessened response than in previous OM ship visits, OM still retains its importance to the Korean church. OM will continue to serve a crucial role in bringing Korean people to God. Our earnest prayer is that Koreans will obey His Great Commission and reach out to the unreached peoples for His kingdom and glory. •

That most
Koreans did not
speak English
showed that even
language is not a
barrier for God.
Korean missionaries
fervently prayed and
God heard.



The catalyst of two new believers

AUTHOR: OM BANGLADESH COMMUNICATIONS • PHOTOGRAPHY: JUSTIN LOVETT

In 1971, during Bangladesh's liberation war, millions of Hindus, Christians and Muslims took shelter in India. OM teams began relief work among those who fled. They also gathered Christians together to encourage, teach and disciple them. Many people came to a genuine personal faith in Jesus.

After the war, when people returned home to the newly birthed country of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan), leaders of the refugee work followed, bringing together young people who had become Christians to start the first OM teams. From the very beginning, OM in Bangladesh was made up largely of nationals.

Change in direction

In 1976, a well-known international mission, CIF*, had been working in the Jewelpur area for 17 years with very few results. At that time, Bangladesh was still a new country,

only five years old. During the war in 1971, the minority Hindu population suffered greatly. Many mission experts suggested it was time to concentrate on this Hindu minority to give them opportunity to respond to the liberating good news of Jesus. The international workers with CIF asked OM to provide a national team of co-workers for one year to reach the Hindu population; if there were no response, they would move to a new part of the country.

Four Bangladeshi OMers began work in Jewelpur District. As required, during the daytime they reached out to Hindus. However, on the team was a young man named Abel, a believer from a Muslim background. In the evening, in the area where the team was living, Abel began building relationships with Muslims, not only young people but older working men who had their own families.

Eventually two men, Tab, a farmer, and Yacob, a milk seller, declared that they wanted to follow Jesus. The OMers were, of course, thrilled, but those from CIF were amazed. "We were told we should be reaching Hindus," they said, "but really we came to Bangladesh to reach Muslims."

Over the next five years, the whole of CIF transitioned to a total focus on Bangladesh's 90 per cent-Muslim majority. OM also began to refine



all of its literature and its methods of outreach for effectiveness amongst the majority population and, in 1981, began its own local church planting teams.

A challenging beginning

When Yacob and Tab came to faith in Jesus, it was the start of a difficult journey. They understood who Jesus is, but the community around them was very unhappy. Eventually, they and other believers were brought together for a village judgment. The local people wanted to burn down their homes. At the height of the tension-filled meeting, a crazy man rushed into the middle and shouted, “Leave these men alone—they are God-people.”

The local people feared whatever spiritual power might be in this crazy man and immediately their attitude changed; Yacob and Tab were allowed to leave with only a fine.

Later on, Tab was elected as leader of a local group that practised a form of mysticism. In that position, he was able to share that Jesus filled all of the hopes and desires of human beings, including those who try to reach God through various mystical practices. Over the years, hundreds were baptised.

Tools for change

Abel, who had led Yacob and Tab to faith, was the first person to join the new OM team. A cutting-edge evangelist, Abel also needed coaching and discipleship. Mike (UK) spent hours with Abel, teaching him, challenging him, correcting him, being patient with him and fathering him.

Without Mike, there would have been no Abel. It is the same today: Young Bangladesh believers need those who will love them, care for them and teach them so that they can become God’s agents in society.

Harvest of fruit

Yacob died several years ago. Tab is now 85, a venerable old man in his community who has led several hundred other people to faith in Jesus. One of his sons is a Christian outreach worker. That key moment in 1976 in Jewelpur—when Tab and Yacob decided to follow Jesus—has cascaded in the training of dozens

of new outreach workers who have spread out to many parts of the country.

Today many congregations of Muslim-background believers in Bangladesh owe their existence to that moment in 1976, although few would know about it. •

When Yacob and
Tab **came to faith**
in Jesus, it was
the start of a
difficult journey.



People in Bangladesh face challenges of job scarcity and poverty. Millions also face spiritual poverty, having never heard once about Jesus. Since 1972, OM's relational ministry has empowered individuals through literacy and skills training, as they seek to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached.

PHOTO BY JUSTIN LOVETT



Pray, then act

AUTHOR: PETER HAWKINS • PHOTOGRAPHY: KATHRYN BERRY / ALISON RALPH

Discovering the depths of prayer has been central to OM over these past 60 years. From the beginning—when Dorothea Clapp prayed for the school opposite her house, asking the Lord to save and scatter students to the nations—prayer has been part of our DNA.

Dale Rhoton says of the early days, “The best ideas always came out of the prayer meeting.” The OM movement began in a prayer room in Chicago in the ’50s where OM Founder George Verwer, Dale and a small group of Bible college students met. George suddenly jolted during prayer, exclaiming that God was pointing them to Mexico. This was how Operation Mobilisation was formed in 1957.

After a tough leadership meeting, looking at what OM lacked in people and finances for a major summer outreach, George declared in a prayer meeting, “God has told me to go for a ship.” Six years later, *MV Logos* launched into service, forcing many of us into desperate seasons of prayer because of the seemingly impossible situations we faced: finance, people, permissions to visit countries and more. But it was in those seasons of prayer that we discovered wisdom from above, provision from His hand and doors swinging open as we prayed into the night and early morning.

Many of us were shaped by half nights of prayer,

crying out for nations and people. A recent email from leaders in a US church who were with us in the ’80s testified, “Probably the biggest impact on our lives was [that] we really learned how to pray in OM, and that foundation has caused us to lead tons of prayer meetings throughout the years.”

A long-term worker said, “The school of prayer that was India—monthly nights of prayer, monthly days of prayer, calling down heaven to touch India’s millions—this Englishman would not trade for all the tea in India. Listening to [OM workers] Alfy and Ray storming heaven, you knew India would not be the same the next day.” We saw God do extraordinary things as we

prayed. It was the adventure of a lifetime seeing God answer specific prayers.

A long-term pioneer in parts of Africa and the Middle East says, “I, for one, I’m exceedingly glad that the Lord has granted to my wife and me these 50 years working in a number of different countries long enough to see many answers to





prayers that we prayed 50 years earlier.”

God protected us through prayer. During the Cold War, the Greater Europe team smuggled Bibles across the Iron Curtain. Only years later did we learn that one contact was an informer for the East German Secret Police who, linked to the KGB, sought to stop the stream of Bibles and literature heading to the Underground Church. We were a handful of zealous youth against an oppressive state—and yet through our weekly half night of prayer, specially constructed vehicles and contacts in the East, God kept us hidden and effective.

One shall tell another

Prayer in OM was caught, not taught. For the Vienna team in the '70s and '80s, Thursday night was normally prayer night; worship would lead us into two hours of prayer for OM work around the world. After a short break, the focus until midnight was on our teams on the road, the church in the East, critical needs ... and for walls to come down, which they did in late 1989! No matter what time the meeting finished, it was work as normal the next day!

Over the last years, a new dimension has introduced creativity into the prayer model, along with a greater desire for intimacy through worship. Large prayer maps, Skype calls from around the world, dance, art and prayer walking all seek to encounter God through experiential and interactive prayer. It's more than just lists of things to pray for!

However, as we grow in experience and gifting, do our hearts burn still for His presence? Might the prayer meeting be more of a duty than a passion and heartbeat? Do we live on our reputation as radical followers, or do we again need to hear the 'call to prayer' with the best ideas coming from the prayer room, not the boardroom?

Dale Rhoton says, “I often think of weakness when I reflect on the beginning of OM. We had more questions than answers. So the prayer meetings, days of prayer, nights of prayer, were because of this great need, this desperation to see God work. There was no plan B; either God worked or there was no going forward, only failure.”

At the end of 2016 in Iraq, friends started 100 hours of prayer and worship. There are other prayer initiatives planned throughout 2017, gatherings of hundreds coming together to cry out for nations. Corporate prayer continues to increase! May we not get left behind with the new focus and passion for prayer, but take our place with ordinary and yet extravagant prayer.

It comes down to our personal lives and walk with the Lord—our hearts set ablaze as we encounter His love and heart for nations. From the very start of OM within the prayer room, vibrant communities of Christ followers await to be ignited through our prayer. •

Awakening Latin America

AUTHOR: NATHAN SCHMUTZ • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

For the first half of the 20th century, Latin America was an almost exclusively Catholic continent. Though the gospel had been preached in Latin countries for decades, the local evangelical church hadn't grown significantly. In 1970, only four per cent of the population identified as evangelical and the continent was still considered a mission field. But this was about to change.

Operation Mobilisation started with an outreach of a few young students in Mexico, but the focus soon shifted towards Europe, the Muslim World and India. *MV Logos*, OM's first ship, was already in ser-

vice in those parts of the world when the prospect of a second ship opened the possibility for OM to return to Latin America in an impactful way.

In 1977, OM purchased the ship *Doulos* (Greek for 'servant') in Genoa, Italy. After a period of repairs and alterations in Bremen, Germany, the ship began its service in Europe, visiting nine ports before crossing the Atlantic and docking in Portsmouth, USA, before arriving at Tampico, Mexico, on 4 December 1978—the first visit to Latin America for OM and its ship.

The director of *Doulos* at that time was Frank Dietz, an American who was part of the ship ministry from its beginning. "With the *Doulos*, we decided to make one trip to South America. Our impression was that there was a young church,



Doulos in Rosario, Argentina, on 26 May 1979

vibrant and waiting for the challenge of missions,” Frank shares.

Besides evangelism, the crew focused on creating mission awareness whenever opportunity arose. “We talked and preached missions in our conferences, through teams that moved out, in churches that our teams spoke in. Missions was a priority!” Frank explains.

One message for all

With the arrival of *Doulos*, many Christians were exposed for the first time to the need for the gospel in Africa, the Middle East and Asia ... and they responded. “We had many young people wanting to join the ship,” Frank continues. “Others said, ‘Just tell us what to do; we’re ready to go.’” It was the beginning of a new era for the Latin American church.

Federico Bertuzzi, an Argentine pastor, spent over two months on board *Doulos* in Latin America, together with his family, pastoring the crew, preaching to visitors and sharing about mission in churches. He would later become the executive director of COMIBAM, the Ibero-American Missions Cooperation, one of the most important mission networks in Latin America.

“The *Doulos* crew was the first to do missions conferences in Latin America,” Federico says. “They insisted on the needs of the least-reached people groups. For the vast majority of Latin evangelicals, this was completely new and exotic.”

The visit of *Doulos* had an immediate impact on the young and vibrant Latin American church, leading it to engage in missions locally and globally. But it is the long-term effect of *Doulos* that gets Federico’s attention. “A car engine needs a smaller starter engine to get working. The starter for the missions movement in Latin America was the *Doulos*!” he shares. “When the *Doulos* left Latin America [in 1983], it was COMIBAM that took leader-



Frank Dietz, pictured here with his family, served as the director of Doulos during its first visit in Latin America.

ship of this missions movement that was started through the impulse of the *Doulos*.”

In June 1983, after spending five years in and out of the region, *Doulos* departed from its final Latin American port in Vitoria, Brazil, having welcomed over 4.1 million visitors and distributing over 400,000 copies of Christian and educational literature.

In the following years, the mission effort in Latin America constantly grew in step with the local church. Today, 20 per cent of the population identifies as evangelical, and the continent is no longer considered a mission field, but rather a mission force. Due to the effort of other mission organisations such as COMIBAM, Latin America is sending out missionaries to make disciples among the least-reached people groups. And most of those Latin missions agencies trace their roots to *Doulos* and the OM teams that brought a mission mindset to the local church.

OM has continued serving in Latin America ever since, mobilising the local church and sending missionaries to all the nations. According to Frank Dietz, Latin America, together with Africa and Asia, will soon set the pace for world mission. *Doulos* had truly a transforming impact on Latin America and its church and will be remembered as the initiator of this movement. •



Finding God's purpose in Pakistan

AUTHORS: ADNAN & J. PAUL • PHOTOGRAPHY: ROLF VELEMA / OM INTERNATIONAL

The road that moves the church where it's never been is usually not the easiest path. This is the story of OM's work among the unreached people in Sindh province.

In 2003, OM recruited an indigenous leader to work among the unreached people groups in Sindh province. With a new strategic plan and four team members studying language and culture, OM's work in Sindh province was ready to move forward.

This team decided to start a grocery store in a central location that gave access to five other cities and villages. Leaders from other missions had never found success there. OMers heard that darkness prevailed due to the large number of religious shrines and tombs of mystic Islamists. They were told that this province was cursed.

Qasim, a Punjabi, recalls his early days in team ministry: "While learning the language and culture, I found Sindhis are loving and hospitable, but also fierce avengers; tribal wars can last many generations. But quickly I found Sindhis also have a thirst for the Word of God and are eager to learn about Christ. This helped me to continue."

The grocery store initially gained a lot of local patronage but soon fell under suspicion. Between the bookrack of contextualised material for an adult literacy course in the back of the store and their evangelistic tendencies, the OM team seemed atypical businessmen. The team hired local believers to work there, yet profits failed to increase and the store had to close. As a result, the team had more time to meet with people.

Nadeem said, "It was embarrassing that we ran into deficit but, as we had more time to reach the Sindhis, I found God's purpose. The closure helped us to focus on the work He wanted us to do. We saw amazing response from the people."

Try something else

The team developed its own correspondence course based on the *Jesus* film and advertised it in local newspapers. An overwhelming response led to new relationships with local seekers. The team also launched a health and hygiene initiative in remote villages, installing hand pumps to provide clean drinking water and toilets for less fortunate communities.

In one village, Nadeem met Ahmad who, during Na-

deem's next visit, indicated that he wanted to discuss a private matter—he had secretly completed a Bible correspondence course. This was a 'wow' moment for Nadeem. Together they started a series of secret meetings and, by 2010, Ahmad asked Nadeem to baptise him. Ahmad then volunteered in OM's relief response to flood-damaged villages. Serving with OMers deepened Ahmad's faith. One Sunday morning, Ahmad and another brother were baptised in the Indus River. Ahmad's face glowed. He said, "I am feeling amazing peace in my mind. I have rejected the curse of death from my life. I really want my family and tribesmen to have a similar experience."

Later, Ahmad revealed to his family that he followed Isa Masih (Jesus the Anointed). This ignited a firestorm. His father and brothers opposed his faith. Nadeem urged Ahmad not to leave his house. So, Ahmad stayed, though he was beaten many times.

Ahmad's mother was his only ally and protected him. On a winter evening in 2010, his father ordered him to leave; he could no longer tolerate an infidel in his home. Ahmad's mother intervened. After hours of arguing, they resolved that Ahmad could stay, but not inside the home. So, Ahmad was forced to sleep on the roof through all four seasons. Yet he continued loving his family.

In April 2011, Ahmad's father passed away and tensions at home subsided. OM helped Ahmad renovate his home later that year after more flooding. Through that, Ahmad got his own room. He was excited, relieved and motivated, starting a fellowship of his friends in this place.

In 2014, Ahmad went to the School of Mission, OM's initiative to develop a new generation of missionaries. Upon completion he said, "There is a great harvest among unreached people groups but many are fearful and less equipped. I am hopeful that my ministry among my own tribe will save many souls."

Qasim became the team leader in 2011 with the rise of the indigenous fellowships. Together Qasim and Ahmad are part of a team that have nine fellowships running in three cities. These fellowships have 100-plus believers and seekers involved. •



Opening a grocery store provided access to other cities and villages.

Close your eyes and listen

AUTHOR: MARCELL • PHOTOGRAPHY: BART BROEK



In late 1978, the OM team in Iran was on high alert due to the political tension and fighting happening while the Shah's military were strategically located throughout Teheran.

OM families would evacuate to the west by plane, while one couple and the singles (16 in total) prepared to leave with three vans and head through Afghanistan to Pakistan.

Leaving the country meant crossing the desert to Afghanistan, as danger on the roads was too intense. The mid-winter's bitter cold added to the complications. Many businesses were closed; food and especially fuel was scarce. Days passed as cars waited at fuel lines, including the OMers. One day, a tanker truck arrived. An OMer was second in line when unexpected fighting broke out in front of them. In a God-inspired moment, the OMer realised no one had hold of the diesel nozzle so she filled the 50-litre tank in the van and the 200-litre barrel in the back! The team left in January 1979 on the same day the Shah fled the oncoming destruction of the Kholmeni regime. Clearly, God got the team out.

OM had spent 17 years in Iran with the goal of taking the Word of God to every city, town and village, and had been largely successful. At times, our people were arrested and deported, yet we were also embraced and appreciated by churches and the missions community. But the ground was hard and missionaries laboured for decades without much fruit—few families from a Muslim background came to faith in Christ. As the missionary community left the country in 1979, and Christian leaders were arrested and sometimes killed, we wondered what God was doing. But He had a plan.

A door opens again

Twenty-four years later, on 26 December 2003, one of the worst earthquakes in Iran's history killed 30,000 people and injured 20,000 more in the city of Bam. OM quickly pioneered a new team to re-enter the country to begin ministry to earthquake victims. This work expanded to help the disabled community for several more years.

OM reconnected with churches and began to work together. We found that the general population was rejecting the extreme oppression of the Islamic government and were turning by the tens of thousands to faith in Jesus Christ! A main church in downtown Tehran was filled to standing room only with Muslim-background believers. One pastor remarked, "If you close your eyes and listen closely, you can hear the footsteps of Jesus walking all over Iran." Conservative estimates show there are now about 400,000 Muslims who have become disciples of the Lord Jesus inside Iran.

Paying the price

With the open door, God created a tenderness and receptivity to the gospel that earlier teams had not seen. But there has been a price to pay; the Iranian church lost many leaders who stood for their faith. Many others were imprisoned for years, while others were exiled. But the church has stood strong in the face of persecution and set an example to "love not their lives to the death" in following the Lord Jesus.

More recently, the former Ahmadinejad government demanded the names and addresses of all members of Tehran's Philadelphia church; the pastors declined to cooperate, but invited the congregation to give their names and addresses. Thinking that 50-100 would be willing, they were shocked when 670 members came forward to give their personal information to the government, knowing that for some of them it would mean imprisonment or worse.

The government placed the pastor in solitary confinement. Then they came to the church building with six trucks and cleared the building of furniture, Bibles and everything else that could be moved.

Six weeks later, the pastor was released on condition that he either leave the country or face five or more years in prison. He has since relocated to continue ministry.

OM currently helps the people of Iran through mercy ministries while coming alongside the growing church to strengthen and develop a new generation of young leaders who can take the church forward. Habakkuk 1:5 says, "*Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.*" Join us in prayer and partnership to raise up this new generation of Christian leaders and be a part of God's movement in Iran. •

Justice for refugees

AUTHOR: NICOLE JAMES • PHOTOGRAPHY: KATHRYN BERRY

Early OM outreaches focused on evangelism but, as workers spread throughout the world, they encountered situations requiring something more.

Today, in some areas, workers offer practical aid—to all people, regardless of religious background or affiliation—while ensuring that those receiving help have both the opportunity to hear about Jesus and a clear pathway to becoming part of a vibrant community of Jesus followers.

Rescuing Vietnamese refugees at sea

In 1980, whilst on watch aboard *Logos*, Tom Dyer spotted a boat carrying 52 Vietnamese refugees. When the ship's captain invited them on board, the Philippines-bound refugees had been at sea for 11 days, running out of supplies and most of their water. The next day, he spotted another boat with 41 Vietnamese refugees. Although *Logos*' maximum occupancy was 144 people, the captain again welcomed the refugees.

"By the time we had loaded these 93 extra passengers, we were over 200 people on board, including our crew and staff. Many of the boat people were exhausted and weak," Dyer described.

Logos docked in Thailand, where OM approached the British consul in Bangkok and the Foreign Office in London. The refugees stayed on board for eight weeks, sleeping in the dining room and spending days on deck. The UN provided food and, finally, the British government guaranteed their resettlement.



Responding to refugees in Western and Central Asia

The same year, a long-term worker sought to start a relief organisation within OM to help Afghan refugees in Pakistan. As OM was focused on evangelism and literature distribution, its leadership was not prepared to incorporate relief and development work. However, OM Founder George Verwer gave his blessing to start an independent NGO, which grew to around 35 adults, including several OMers, and up to 350 local staff, serving five to eight million Afghans fleeing Soviet oppression; it continues community development and disability work in that region today.

In 1991, Julyan Lidstone, ambassador for OM Muslim Ministries, visited a camp along Turkey's southern border, where Kurdish refugees had fled Saddam Hussein. Lidstone found desperate, unsanitary conditions and people with little hope of survival. He had received international aid offers and knew God wanted to help the Kurds by sending believers to serve them.

By then, OM's thinking had changed to allow relief and development work within the organisation. "God's response to the suffering of the world was first to send His Son, and now He wants to send us. When we allow His compassion to move us into action, we will see His glory in a new way," Lidstone said.

Meeting Mozambican refugees in South Africa

In the mid-'80s, tens of thousands of Mozambicans fled to South Africa to escape civil war. After a four-day journey crossing Kruger National Park, one of the largest game reserves in the world, 80,000 refugees settled near an OM team.

OM Associate International Director Peter Tarantal said, "Driven by compassion for these helpless people, and because we saw opportunity to get the wider church in South Africa involved, we began outreach programmes in a number of refugee camps. We soon realised that it was impossible to share the gospel meaningfully with someone who is hungry. Justice for refugees meant people caring for them, providing refuge and speaking up on their behalf. Through discipleship and training, we gave them a sense of dignity."

OM started a feeding programme that developed into full-scale relief and development. The team also planted 10 churches; some are still thriving, Tarantal said. "The justice experience with refugees had a major impact on our ministry throughout Africa. [Today] it is one of the key pillars of the ministry."

"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to **love mercy** and to walk humbly with your God."

- Micah 6:8

Serving Syrian refugees in the Near East and Europe

In context of the current Syrian refugee crisis resulting from ongoing civil war, one long-term worker suggested, "We as workers can't offer these precious people the hope of justice, but rather the free gift of mercy. We offer them what we received: the undeserved gift of God, the forgiveness and then the ability to forgive and be free forever from the need for getting a 'fair shake.'"



During the past five years, OM has partnered with more than 40 churches in the Near East with over 20 projects. "We were able to join what God was doing to redeem this awful situation in really significant ways," the OM Near East Field Leader said. Twenty-five to 30 OM workers directly serve refugees through income-generating projects, children's programmes, visits, Bible studies, education initiatives and follow-up through local churches. OM continues to fund partner churches that distribute food to those with the least access and greatest need.

Within OM Europe, more than 10 countries have ongoing projects serving refugees alongside churches. For eight years, OM has made bi-monthly visits to Bicske refugee camp in Hungary. Since 2013, OM has served alongside two churches in Athens, Greece, participating in feeding programmes for arriving refugees. Throughout summer 2015, when refugees began to overwhelm the Greek islands, OM stepped up its relief, recruiting a steady stream of short-term volunteers and partnering with additional churches to meet increasing needs. OM teams in Austria and Germany have developed teams reaching out to refugees, while others have visited them, taught language classes and assisted with practical tasks, like filling out official forms.

"Justice in OM is a critical issue," Tarantal stated. "Without standing for and living out justice in everything we do, there is a massive hole in our gospel." •

Syrian families find refuge in neighbouring countries during the crisis in their own land.

PHOTO BY KATHRYN BERRY



One generation plants the trees, another gets the shade

AUTHORS: OM EAST ASIA PACIFIC AND OM SHIPS • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Thirty-five years ago OM's ship, *MV Logos*, sailed into the heart of Shanghai, China. OM's founder, George Verwer, described it as "one of the most significant moments in OM's history". Veteran China missionary, David Adeney, on board for the entire visit, commented that for the church in China, this was probably their first glimpse of the international church for more than 30 years.



A special book exhibit was allowed in Beijing, where up to 1,000 visited every day.

When the idea of a ship visit to China was first suggested, ministry leaders on board and crewmembers began to pray. Exploratory trips were taken to assess the possibilities for the visit. In Beijing, two of the ship's senior line-up men met with a vice-minister of the Chinese government. After pouring tea, the minister quietly asked about the purpose of the proposed *Logos* visit. He was particularly interested in the 'simple lifestyle on board' and the tons of books, including the Bible. He commented that his government was now developing a more encouraging policy towards the Christian community who came under the category of 'minority groups'.

Finally, in April 1981, almost 30 years after the last Western missionaries had left China, *Logos* arrived in Shanghai for two unforgettable weeks. The onboard book fair surprisingly included such books as the *Living Bible* and the new *IVP Bible Dictionary*. Although the Shanghai visitors were mostly officially authorised personnel, all who came on board received a leaflet in Chinese and English explaining the purpose of *Logos*.

Many of these officials wandered the ship freely, listening in on ship morning devotions or prayer events, and marvelling at the harmony with which the small international community on board lived and worked together.

Permission had been granted to transfer the major part of the *Logos* book fair to the prestigious National Art Gallery in Beijing, where up to 1,000 people visited every day. After necessary registration, many happily sat at tables scattered around the hall to browse the books and chat with *Logos* personnel. Conversations quickly turned

to earnest enquiries about faith in a living God. The most popular books were the *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* and Walter Trosbisch's *I Married You*. People could be seen around the exhibition studiously taking notes.

This ground-breaking *Logos* visit laid a foundation for future OM's ship visits including *Doulos* to Shanghai in 1996 and again to Shanghai and Nanjing in 2000. During these visits thousands of educational books were donated to educational and medical institutions in both cities. Visits were arranged to a number of registered churches, which gave exciting and often moving opportunities for fellowship with Chinese Christians and for sharing what God is doing around the world. For many the a cappella "Amazing Grace" finale of the *Doulos* International Concert in Nanjing was a highlight. People were on their feet singing, clapping and even weeping.

Since the first ship visit in 1981, China has changed beyond imagination. Bibles are now being printed in Nanjing and sold around the world. The church in China has an estimated 103 million followers of Jesus¹. Prof Yang, a leading expert on religion in China, believes that number will swell to 160 million by 2025, making China the 'world's most Christian nation'². Yet this number represents only 12 per cent of China's 1.4 billion people.

In 2008, the first officially commissioned mainland Chinese person served on board *Doulos* and then *Logos Hope*. Hersey* grew up with atheist parents who taught her that truth and freedom were above all else. God used Hersey's questions about evolution, and two American missionaries in her city, to bring her to Himself. For nine years after graduating college, she worked as an English teacher and enjoyed her comfortable life. Then God called her into full-time missions; almost a year passed before she agreed.

"I totally surrendered and asked God where He wanted me to go," Hersey recalled. "Everything is part of His plan; I am just a pencil in His hands." Since her two years on board the OM ships, Hersey has served with OM in China to mobilise more Chinese believers for missions. She desires to "see Chinese Christians building God's kingdom with our brothers and sisters around the world."

OM has also expanded its work with the church in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The leader of this ministry,



A member of *Logos* interacts with people in Shanghai, China.

Ashley, from Singapore, reflecting on the earlier ministry of the ship, quotes a Chinese proverb: "One generation plants the trees, another gets the shade."

OM's vision is to see the Chinese-speaking churches across the East Asia Pacific, where 35 million diaspora Chinese live, mobilised for global mission. Ashley writes, "China always wins when it comes to numbers. Today God's Spirit is fueling a mission movement from within the fast-growing Chinese church, which will ultimately impact the world for His glory."

As the original *Logos* sailed from Shanghai, some asked if the visit had really been worth all the time, energy and money invested. It was David Adeney who replied, "Never underestimate the importance of all the contacts with individual people which were made. Seed was sown; what fruit it brings forth is in God's hands." •

¹ <http://www.operationworld.org/country/china/owtext.html>

² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/10776023/China-on-course-to-become-worlds-most-Christian-nation-within-15-years.html>



God loves Albania

AUTHOR: KATHERINE PORTER • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL / KATIE MORFORD

“God loves Albania.” The Dutch-tinged overtones of Brother Andrew rang out across the stadium in Tirana, most of us weeping as thousands of Albanians responded to his words with a huge roar of emotion.

For more than 45 years, Albania had been one of the most closed—and poorest—countries in Europe. Christians prayed for ways to share the gospel, but doors remained obstinately shut. One of OM’s creative projects involved floating parcels of tracts into Albania as an OM ship sailed up the coast. We later found some of these tracts in the Museum of Atheism and Religion in Tirana, as an example of the attempts by imperialist Western governments to corrupt Albanians.

But on this day in June 1991, a small team of us listened as, for the first time in generations, Brother Andrew openly shared the gospel. The response was incredible: All week, our team was surrounded by Albanians full of questions: “Does God love Albania? Does God remember Albania?

Does God really love us?” It was genuinely transformational: At the end of the week, on 7 July, 43 Albanians were baptised in Lake Tirana. What had been a lake at the heart of a country bathed in Communism and atheism, became the birthplace of the modern Albanian church. Men and women rose from the baptismal waters with faith in Christ—and little else. No church buildings awaited their worship, no songs existed in modern Albanian, few Bibles were available. Yet a new era dawned, full of promise and excitement.

First on the ground

Last year, OM celebrated 25 years of The Disciples Church in Durres, one of many churches borne out of the early years of openness. A South



African OM worker, Pranesh Anandlal, was the team leader and the first pastor of that church.

“Our team of five first went in-country in November 1991. Our excitement was rapidly followed by stunned silence: The extreme poverty was unbelievable. Durres then had a population of 60,000, and there were only eight cars in the whole city. People had nothing. There was so little food. We were the first group of foreigners to come and live in Durres, and they didn’t know how to respond to us.”

The team started with three goals: to learn the language, start Bible study groups and learn the culture. Within the first four weeks, the team had led four to five people to the Lord, says Pranesh, so on 25 December, they invited everyone they knew to their first Christmas meeting in Durres.

“We spoke very little Albanian, so we used a translator,” remembers Pranesh. “There were maybe 50 people there. I opened in prayer. Halfway through, the translator nudged me: ‘I think at first you should explain whom you are talking to. These people have no understanding of God.’ The Albanians then had literally no idea about God.”

During that first meeting, a girl named Oneida heard singing in English, walked in and sat at the back. At the end, the team gave everyone a gift—the only portion of the Bible in modern Albanian, the Gospel of John. Oneida took it, went home and read it. Later, she met Anthea, a team member; she had questions about what she had read.

“How can God be my father? My father is dead.” Anthea explained about her heavenly father and led her to the Lord.

From that time, the team and new believers met on Sundays, and the church grew from five believers to 150 within three years. “It is still going strong to this day,” reports Pranesh.

Sing praises of God to Albania

In spring 1992, Pranesh and the team were invited to an Albanian wedding. “The bride wanted the foreigners to join their celebration, so we carried our guitar in case they asked us to sing.” And they did; afterwards the mother of the bride began to cry, explaining, “When I was a young girl, I had a vision or a dream that one day a group of foreigners would come and sing the praises of God to Albania,” says Pranesh. “We led her to the Lord, along with her husband. While she has now gone to be with the Lord, her husband is still a deacon in the church in Albania.

“God gave us a unique window of opportunity in Albania. We had about five years until things changed,” continues Pranesh. “If we hadn’t taken it, we would have missed it. But because OM was creative, flexible and available, God used us. We were in the right place at the right time. There was no set plan to reach Albania, yet the churches we planted are still flourishing. Are we thus ready to be used by God today?” •

Something for everyone

AUTHOR: ANNE MARIT VILJOEN • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

“It all began in the summer of 1981,” shared Béatrice from Brittany, an area in France with very few Bible-believing Christians. “Two girls with blond hair, possibly Swedish, knocked on our door. My mother opened it, and these very young girls in broken French explained that they were spending their holidays in France to distribute Christian literature that explained the good news about Jesus Christ.”

Her mother gave them some money, took the book called *One Way, Jesus*, and put it on the table. “My mother never read the book, but I did,” related Béatrice, “and the arguments for discovering who Jesus Christ really is led me, at the age of 17, to find Christians who helped me to confess Jesus as my Lord and Saviour.”

The six-year ESPOIR pour les années 80 (Hope for the '80s) campaign (1981-86) was one of OM's largest distribution campaigns, covering the whole of France—over 35,000 cities, towns and villages—with Christian tracts and literature. All of France needed the gospel, but local churches were unable to reach every town and especially isolated villages. Mobilising OM teams was the way to help do it. ‘At least something for everyone’ was the watchword.



The Hope for the '80s campaign drew hundreds of young Christians to distribute gospel literature all over France.

Tract in every letterbox

Through June, July and August up to 700 young people on 79 teams were sent to a prescribed area to put a tract in every letterbox. If possible, they sold Bibles and Christian books and shared personal testimonies. Church teams of French speakers were more involved in local churches; distribution teams concentrated on tract distribution in villages while pioneering teams worked where there was no local church, trusting God day by day for His provision.

From September until Christmas, campaign leader Chris Short visited most evangelical churches where they wanted to evangelise the

next summer, presenting and explaining the ethos of OM and the campaign. From February through May, he visited churches every weekend for motivation and training, giving him a good understanding of the spiritual climate around the country.

Many teams had no accommodation simply because there was no evangelical church. One team member told of his “Christianity ... pushed to its limits”. Where churches did exist, teams received an overwhelming welcome; some had even organised a series of prayer meetings before the team arrived.

Team member Allister Fugill (UK) told of his first Sunday morning at Riom. “An old lady thanking God for our arrival broke down and wept ... because the Lord had at last sent people to her town with the time to reach everybody.” He continues, “This undoubtedly had an effect on the team. Before, many thought: ‘What can I get out of this?’ Now it is, ‘How and when will the Lord use me to bless the people in this place who have been praying for so long?’”

Almost uncanny

In some hamlets, people manifested their opposition by tearing up the literature; in others, they seemed extremely open. Despite difficulties, team reports mention decisions to follow Christ. Jean-Claude Tremblay from Québec, Canada, said that his greatest blessing over the summer was to see “God lead us to people that He had already prepared. Sometimes it seemed uncanny.”

The Saint-Junien team told of one Friday night when they had little money, food or petrol, and an emergency prayer evening was called. With great awe the next morning, they discovered a bag of eggs and cakes, as well as a monetary gift, on the stairs.

One lady from Lure was so impressed with the literature received that she asked for 10 more packets for her whole family. Another lady, living in the same street as the evangelical church at Lons-le-Saunier, received a tract from a July team. By the time the August team arrived, she had already trusted Jesus as her Saviour and was attending the church.

Vehicles in distress

Prayer and several travelling mechanics kept the teams and their vans on the road. Their visits proved a great encouragement, as well provided news from other teams. Mechanic Conrad Wiebe travelled over 15,000 kilometres one summer, seeking vehicles in distress. Fifty vehicles had been on the move in July and again in August.



Summarising Hope for the '80s, Chris Short wrote in the autumn of 1986: “Six summers have gone. Apart from some isolated areas, all 35,000 towns and villages in France have been visited. 85,000 books and Scripture portions have gone out and can now be found in even the most isolated hamlets. 15,000 people have written in asking for a Bible correspondence course or other information; a number have accepted Jesus as their Saviour and integrated into local churches. During the Hope for the '80s campaign, we have worked alongside about 450 evangelical churches, and behind every summer campaign, thousands have prayed and given so that all this could take place.”

Years later, in 2016, former OM France Field Leader Chris Lorimer wrote, “We have met over the years many evangelical church pastors/leaders who were involved in OM campaigns and trace their commitment to full-time ministry back to such times as Hope for the '80s.” •



On this rock (or from this dock) churches founded

AUTHOR: JULIE KNOX • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Partnering with the Christian community 'on the ground' is key in planning outreach and understanding an area. OM Ships has always worked to encourage and equip local fellowships—which often receive new believers to disciple, or see existing members' faith strengthened in the wake of a vessel's visit. But there may not have been an established local church to follow up the work. New Christians have started their own in some places; in others, believers have felt called to plant more—either in their own communities or further afield.

The Ship Ministry's impact is hard to quantify from a distance, over four decades. What is known is that the Holy Spirit has continued the ripple effect around the world after the ships have sailed on, and there are many encouraging stories of fellowships being founded as a result.

A *Logos* visit to India in 1979 led to a new church named in its honour. The port of Visakhapatnam and surrounding areas eventually saw more than 50 churches established through the momentum generated by both *Logos* and *Doulos* in the 1980s.

Northeast of Visakhapatnam, the gospel touched the slum village of Arilova when *Doulos*' evangelism director, Daniel Chae (South Korea), was involved in the birth of a fellowship in a tent, named Emmanuel Church, in January 1988. He made a return trip 14 years later, reuniting with the brother in Christ who had taken on the ministry.

"How I longed to see Pastor Vincent Edwin!" Daniel recalled. "When we hugged each other at the airport, we had tears in our eyes. Vincent gave up his well-paid job with the harbour authorities to carry on the evangelistic ministry we had started. Under his excellent leadership in Arilova, many more churches had been planted. I heard there were 3,000 believers and 65 churches in what was now a town of 10,000 people—and all were in good spirit and unity, despite their extreme poverty."

A pastor in South Korea was moved to form a mission board to support the work in Visakhapatnam province. Gloria Emmanuel Ministry has prayerfully and practically enabled the planting of many churches, and has helped pastors' children with scholarships.

During his trip in 2002, Daniel Chae also revisited Galle, Sri Lanka, where he had been with *Logos*. He was able to reconnect with those he'd trained on a leadership course and were now in full-time Christian ministries.

"We visited outpost churches in villages where I had led outreach teams 20 years previously. What a joy it was for me to preach in churches which had started soon after the ship left!"

Daniel thanked God for more than 30 fellowships that had sprung up in the city and hill country, under the Smyrna Church banner. "We did very small things, then the Lord has done marvellous things through the faithful brothers and sisters in these countries," he reported.

In West Africa, *Doulos* crewmembers saw a small gathering form within a month in an impoverished fishing village in Togo in 1986. After pointing two fishermen to Christ, the ship welcomed them to daily Bible studies. The fishermen started a prayer group and held outreach services for their neighbours. Before the ship visit ended, four new believers were baptised. The men refused to be thwarted when they tried to give their new friends on the ship a send-off. When the port guards denied them entry, the fishermen paddled alongside the departing *Doulos* in canoes to wave goodbye!

OM Ships has seen not just churches, but charities and other Christian initiatives launched as people have responded to God's call. In 2004, a *Doulos* team helped at a home for abandoned children in Tiranë, Albania, whose founder had been challenged to do something for the Lord at a meeting on board *Doulos* in Grangemouth, Scotland, 20 years earlier.

The ships have also been a lifeline in bringing believers together. During *Logos II*'s time in Montenegro in 2007, only two Christians were known of in Kotor, a town of 25,000 people. Within two weeks, the crew had encountered several others living in spiritual isolation, unaware of other local believers. *Logos II* connected nine followers of Christ and advised them how to start a congregation.

Those who have been spurred into action after exposure to the Ship Ministry aren't all external groups and individuals. Hundreds of OMers have discovered that their gap year or initial period of mission on board has served as foundational preparation for the lifetime God had planned for them in His service.

The full depths cannot be plumbed. *Logos Hope*'s crewmembers were reminded of that recently, by a Nigerian Christian leader who had volunteered on board when *Logos* called in his country in 1977. Pastor Ezekiel Odeyemi made a special journey across Cameroon with a financial gift for the Ship Ministry, which had inspired him to build up his own library and deepen his knowledge of God. He went on to start a church movement, which has spread to seven countries. Pastor Ezekiel encouraged the current *Logos Hope* crew that, while they may not be able to see the immediate results of their work for the Lord, from his own experience a long-term impact would be made for the kingdom. Only heaven holds the inventory. •

"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the **whole world** would not have room for the books that would be written."

- John 21:25

‘God is enlarging our dream’

The growth of the Algerian church

AUTHOR: NICOLE JAMES • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

When OM Field Leader Youssef and his wife Hie-Tee moved to his native Algeria in 1988 to establish OM ministry, a revival among the Kabyle people was already sweeping the northern region. “Before 1981, there were very few believers,” Youssef said. Today, he knows of believers in every one of the 2,400 Kabyle cities, villages and towns.

In July 1981, the early Kabyle church—40 to 50 believers—started a two-year process of praying and fasting, memorising 365 verses about fear. A new Kabyle radio ministry broadcast sermons and teaching across the region, and a church in Ouadiha, led by an Algerian-Swiss couple, began a wide literature distribution campaign in villages and showed the *Jesus* film in local cafés.

Simple faith spread among the Kabyle, sparked by miraculous signs and wonders and developed through prayer and fasting. Since Algeria was closed to most foreign missionaries, the Algerian church depended on God alone during its formative years. The Kabyle people’s lack of fear and their boldness contributed to the rapid revival. “They live their faith openly,” Youssef said. “The other thing that has helped is prayer from all over the world.”

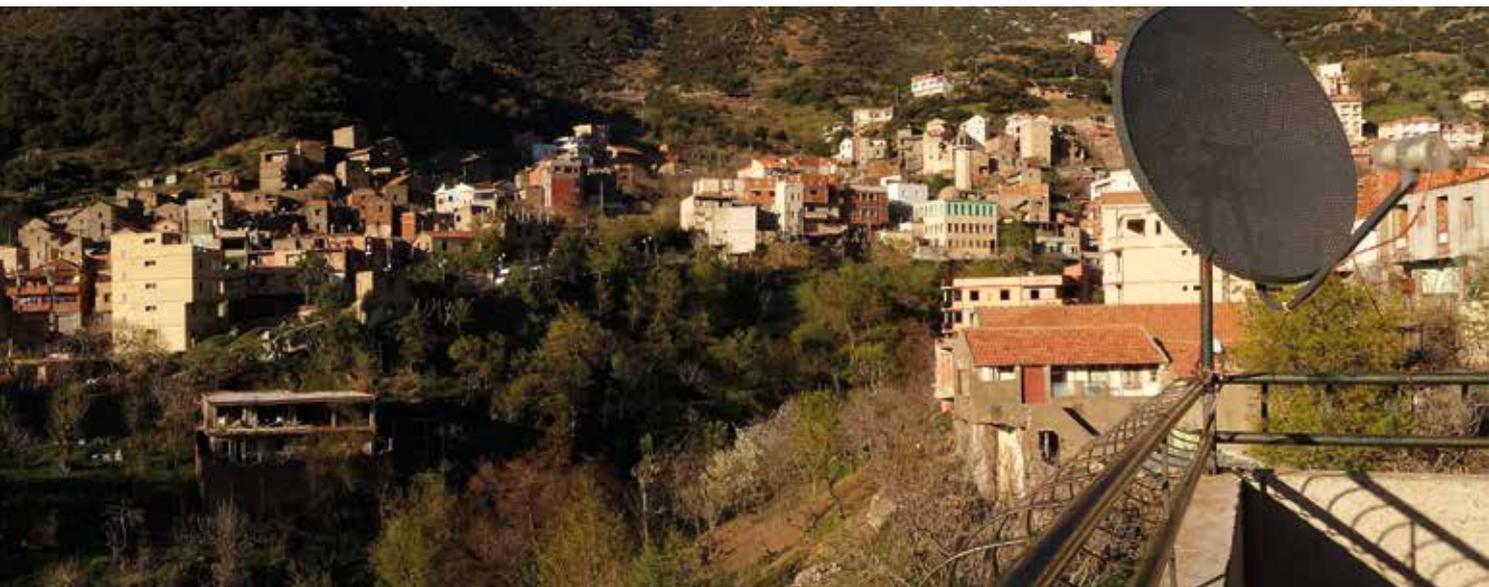
In 1962-63, a group of OMers drove across North Africa and the Levant, distributing flyers for the then North African Mission’s (NAM) Bible correspondence course. The follow-up—hundreds of letters pouring into a Tunis-based letterbox daily—led to the NAM workers’ expulsion from North Africa and the organisation’s re-creation in southern Europe, where it continues today as the Radio School of the Bible. “Long-term workers realised that media had a

vital role to play and that there were thousands interested to know about the Christians’ book,” a long-term Omer explained.

In the late ’70s, two truck teams drove from southern Spain to Mali, via Morocco and Algeria. Later, two long-term OMers also travelled across Algeria by bus, stopping to visit OM’s first long-term worker in Algeria—a woman volunteering at the Bible Society’s bookshop.

During their first years in-country, Youssef and Hie-Tee concentrated on pioneering efforts and helping the church in Oran. They often hosted believers from the Kabyle area, thrilled to hear what God was doing and recognising many needs. In 1996, they established the House of Hope as a platform for future ministry. They recruited four and then more Kabyle believers to join the team that facilitated ongoing summer camps and the Timothy School, a training programme for Algerian believers.

Every year, 10 to 12 outside teachers travel to Algeria to partner with the Timothy School. Many came from within OM; others arrived from seminaries and churches around the world. “The team of teachers ... had a huge impact on so many lives,” Youssef stated. “That was one of the biggest blessings OM [gave to] the Algerian church.”



At the Timothy School, students experience healing and learn biblical doctrine to supplement their existing faith and zeal, Youssef said. They also regularly receive visions from God for future ministry.

Mustapha, a Timothy School graduate, told Youssef about his dream to start a church in his village. Equipped through the teaching and having received modest financial support, Mustapha returned home after training and started a church. Today, a team of believers oversees both the church and a school.

Today the Algerian church is visible and viable, having received **official recognition** from the Algerian government.

Believers Mouloud and Ali attended a summer camp in the early 2000s, where they also received a vision to start a church. With no physical gathering place, they began meeting in the woods. Now their church owns land and a building, where believers gather weekly. At least 25 people have established ministries in the Kabyle area directly resulting from the Timothy School or camps, Youssef said. “It’s amazing what God has done.”

The House of Refuge, opened in 2009, receives Algerian

believers suffering for their faith. Over 400 people have passed through the house, with most staying for one to two weeks. One woman has lived there for eight years and currently works with a quail farming project.

Today the Algerian church is visible and viable, having received official recognition from the Algerian government on 17 July 2011. OM’s ministry, run by an 80-person team, includes the Timothy Schools, follow-up and church planting, media ministry, the House of Refuge, and, most recently, A4M (Algerians 4 Missions). “Our vision now as OM is to look beyond Algeria,” Youssef said. “This is why we have started A4M. The vision is to be able to send out 1,000 workers by 2025 within Algeria and outside Algeria. ... I believe there is a huge potential to bless other nations.”

When the A4M training centre, currently under construction in the Kabyle area, is finished, OM plans to open the Timothy Mission School. “Missions will be top priority,” Youssef explained. Already OM has sent out two couples and two singles into full-time ministry. Short term, Youssef estimated that between 60 and 80 Algerian believers have participated in one- to two-week outreaches in Algeria and abroad.

In July 2016, Youssef and Hie-Tee led a team of four Algerians to Malaysia, where they distributed over 500 gospels, New Testaments and *Jesus* films, and saw many people come to faith. “Among the refugees there and the Arabs, there’s huge openness now, especially among the Syrians, Iraqis and Omanis,” Youssef said. While there, they set up a committee within a Malaysian church to receive Algerians as missionaries in the future. “We believe that Malaysia is only the first step. We would like to go further,” he continued. “God is enlarging our dream.” •

Missions Discipleship Training in OM

AUTHORS: DEBORAH NGOBENI, WITH BELINDA LAMPRECHT
& MEGAN R. • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Since its beginning, OM has provided training based on need. For young OMers, the road to longer-term commitment started with reading books and listening to teaching cassettes.

Studying was obligatory for those joining OM summer campaigns that started with a one-week conference followed by three weeks of evangelism.

For those joining year teams, training from two to four weeks was provided in various locations in Europe. Days were full with teaching on discipleship, leadership, teamwork, Bible study and prayer. Participants worked in small groups and were expected to do daily household chores together.

OM still equips newcomers with the same attitude, but with a slightly updated model. And with the growth of OM teams around the world, training has expanded to meet needs in various locations.

In the late 1980s, OM in South Africa discovered that a few candidates sent into service with OM needed to return home shortly after, often simply because they were ill-prepared for the challenges they faced. In an attempt to rectify this, Francois Vosloo, former leader of OM South Africa, proposed a six-month intensive orientation as a means to prepare and equip local recruits before they were sent to other OM fields.

Trainees would receive instruction in evangelism, ministry tools and leadership development, as well as learn how to live in a multi-cultural community and work successfully as a member of a team.

Initially, the idea of this training, called Missions Discipleship Training (MDT), was met with reluctance by international leadership; however, the positive results were hard to ignore. South African OMers who joined international ministry teams after participating in MDT gained a reputation for being well-prepared for service and valuable team members. Over time, other OM fields, recognising the tremendous impact, began to send their own people to South Africa to benefit from the programme.

Something for the whole family

Colin Phelps, responsible for OM training in Africa, joined MDT in 1988. Six months later, he found himself a changed person: “I arrived as an undecided follower of Jesus. I knew He loved me and I was open to the possibility of following Him wherever He led. I just wasn’t certain I was up to it.”

Participating in practical outreaches with 26 other disciples was a catalyst for change in his life. He joined the

OM ship, *Doulos*, where he found himself a team leader after being on board for only a month.

Colin, his wife, Grietjie, who also participated in MDT, and his children later joined the MDT leadership team in Pretoria for six years. Having seen the impact that MDT had on their lives, they were thrilled when their daughter, Caroline, also chose to participate in the programme. “What I appreciate about my time on MDT is the complete honesty I found and the growth I experienced,” says Caroline.

Equipped to fulfil a God-given dream

Ever since becoming a follower of Jesus when she was 17, South African OMer Eden* felt called to take the good news to difficult places. Trained as a nurse and midwife, she wants to use those skills for the Lord in the Arabian Peninsula—one of the least-reached areas with the gospel.

At university, she heard a speaker from OM and decided to enroll in the MDT programme. She prayed about going to Jordan, but nothing came of it. Then she began praying about the Arabian Peninsula, asking God for confirmation. Within a day, she got three emails about that part of the world, and they talked about it in her MDT class.

“When I started talking about it, so many people from the [MDT] base knew connections or others who had worked as nurses in the Arabian Peninsula,” she explained.

Eden hopes to make lasting connections with women through her work. “If you touch the hearts of the woman, and she invites you into her house, then you can start to work with the family,” she explained. “I would like to build relationships and change lives like that ... in a long-term kind of way.”

Expanding the training internationally

Thirty years after it was initiated, more than 3,000 people have completed MDT in South Africa. Now, other OM fields around the world are replicating the programme. With established training schools in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Germany and Ireland, and other fields actively exploring the idea for their own region, the now-global initiative is collaborating on guidelines and a shared ethos for the MDT programme to maintain the life-changing impact that the experience has had on many lives over the years. •

Shipwrecked—yet full steam ahead

AUTHOR: JULIE KNOX • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

First floated as the stuff of dreams, by 1988, *Logos* had visited 408 ports in 108 countries. OM's pioneering vessel had hosted six and a half million people, and been joined by a sister ship—*Doulos*—which extended the ministry's reach. While *Doulos* visited Asia, *Logos* was making her first tour of Latin America.



Besides serving in the onboard book fair and evangelistic events, crewmembers went ashore to connect with churches and join relief efforts. A two-year experience matured young Christians, as they lived and worked in a confined space as part of a multicultural 'family'. They brought back a broader world view and inspiring stories of seeing God at work on their travels.

Key partners enabled the ships, through prayer and practical support. Faithful individuals sent sponsorship, maritime fees were waived as gestures of goodwill, and gifts came from churches the work had touched. OM Ships had a wake that rippled far and wide. That support proved to be the ministry's mainstay. On 4 January 1988, *Logos* struck a submerged rock shelf in the Beagle Channel, between Argentina and Chile.

The notoriously hazardous channel is littered with obstructions. Providing local knowledge as *Logos* weaved through in a storm was an Argentine pilot, but he chose to return to his own boat earlier than agreed. Transferring the pilot by rope ladder in the dark took time. *Logos* drifted off course and couldn't avoid the rocks.

A loud grinding noise and jarring movements woke the community. It was midnight. Assembling in the dining room, they were told not to panic. They prayed. The eight children were allowed back to bed, provided they slept in warm clothing with life jackets on hand. Attempts to reverse *Logos* off the rock shelf didn't succeed, nor did de-ballasting and waiting for the rising tide to refloat the ship.

That wait brought daylight—an undoubted lifesaver. But *Logos* had tipped dangerously to the port side. Sending everyone to stand on the starboard side didn't correct the list. Being pounded against the rocks with each wave, *Logos'* hull began to give way. Water flooded the book hold. At 5:00, Captain Jonathan Stewart (UK) gave the order to abandon ship.

"Although it was scary, I still had peace," said Kathy Coy (USA). "I know it was only God's grace that kept us calm." Testimonies reiterate that even the children, who included a six-week-old baby, were not fretful. Judith Fredricsen (New Zealand) was in the ship's clinic with one leg in a plaster cast. She remembered everyone working



together and caring for each other.

They slid along the deck in freezing rain and grappled with lifeboats hanging at perilous angles. Everything on board—uninsured cargo and personal possessions—was forsaken for what really mattered. *Logos'* community of 141 was clear of the vessel in 10 minutes, and all six lifeboats were rounded up in less than half an hour. Rescue teams from the Chilean Navy called it a miracle that all souls got to safety. One young man rejoiced that he hadn't even missed a meal.

OM Ships' coordinator, Dale Rhoton (US), wrote later, "The thought that kept me sane during those trying days after the shipwreck was: 'The valuables are safe!' Not one of the 141 valuables was hurt in the least. People familiar with evacuations under similar circumstances are amazed. We bow our heads and worship."

Looking back from the lifeboats, the stunned *Logos* family saw a rainbow streaming over the wreck.

Replacing a tool, not a ministry

News of the loss of the ship was broadcast across the world, and an outpouring of support surged back. Shipping agents and book publishers wrote in sympathy. Individuals, churches and charities offered whatever was needed. In Punta Arenas, Chile, the people *Logos* had ministered to two weeks earlier now fed, clothed and comforted her crew.

Money was donated to meet immediate needs and cover the cost of flying people home or to another OM ministry. No one expected \$1.4 million US to come in within

eight weeks. International partners clearly intended there to be a *Logos II*.

A letter accompanying one of the first contributions, \$13.17 US from young siblings in Georgia, USA, read: "It may not buy a ship, but it is a start."

On board Youth With A Mission's hospital ship, *Anastasis*, volunteers took up a solidarity offering. They faxed a note, drawing encouragement from a parallel shipwreck in Scripture, where the Apostle Paul's vessel runs aground: "Acts 27—no loss of life—used for good. With you all the way in Jesus' name."

Japanese Christians gave \$10,000 US and began searching dockyards for a replacement ship. Brazilians sold jewellery and a freezer, forwarding the proceeds. Venezuelans donated cows for a fundraising barbecue.

An American pastor marvelled, "Perhaps, for the first time, I have seen how God's people on every continent can rally to meet a common need."

Dale Rhoton wrote to supporters: "Our last video was entitled *Logos is People*. We really believe that! We have not lost a ministry. We have lost a tool. People are irreplaceable. Ministries are given only by God. Tools are to be used and then replaced. ... We commit ourselves to pray and work to replace the tool that was lost. The *Logos* was not lost through rusting in a port. She fell in battle! Our plans: FULL STEAM AHEAD!"

The time for a more capable tool was coming anyway. *Logos'* activities were outgrowing the space available, and refurbishment was needed. While 1988 brought a serious trial, God did indeed use it for good. OM saw how the Ship Ministry was valued, globally, and was enabled to launch a better vessel the following year.

To this day, the original *Logos* offers a service to seafarers. Still on the rocks at almost the end of the Earth, she acts a warning beacon. Her successor has since been scrapped and her sister ship has retired, but *Logos* continues her witness at sea, three decades on. •





Blessing borne out of persecution

AUTHOR: INGER R. • PHOTOGRAPHY: KATHRYN BERRY

Displaying His strength in their weakness, God used Julyan Lidstone, Tony Packer and Trevor* to carry His truth into least-reached areas of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Despite persecution and imprisonment, God's greater purpose prevailed, causing the church to grow.

Hard pressed, but not crushed

"We are going to make you dust!" the chief police officer threatened OM worker Julyan and other believers from a house church in Turkey. Taken into police custody twice in 1988, Julyan and his friends faced investigation and intimidation to deter the group.

"The second time was more sinister," said Julyan, recalling a week in a windowless basement. "There was no investigation, just harassment so we would give up." Kept in solitary confinement for three days, the Turkish friends, including Ahmet*—who was seized at his wedding party—were blindfolded and beaten. Similarly, officers blindfolded Leyla* and told her she was in front

of a swimming pool, threatening to throw her in (she couldn't swim).

"The big nightmare for local believers was being arrested," explained Julyan, who moved to Ankara in 1980 to plant a church. With only 50 known followers of Christ in a population of 50 million, Turkey was the world's largest unreached country. "God allowed the nightmare to happen," Julyan continued. "Although it wasn't easy, He proved bigger than it."

A court case against believers demonstrated their legal right to worship—a breakthrough that emboldened them. Similarly, their shared hardship resulted in significant steps forward. "The big effect for us was overcoming fear and building greater trust," Julyan emphasised.

During 11 years, Julyan saw the church in Ankara increase from three to 30 members. Around the country today there are 7,000 believers, gathering in small congregations.

"Seeing the church's growth in Turkey built my faith," said Julyan, now an ambassador for OM's worldwide ministries among Muslim peoples. "God is doing a wonderful thing among Muslims; we are living in a time of opportunity!"

Persecuted, but not abandoned

Thrown into a cell for smuggling Christian literature into communist Yugoslavia in 1966, Tony cried out, "Why, Lord?" "A few hours later, the cell lit up," Tony remembered. "I felt an arm around me and God saying: 'Whatever they do to you, I will be with you.'"

Enduring a two-month imprisonment with another OM worker, Tony was beaten, starved and interrogated. Guards warned that, if anyone came looking for him, they could move him where no one would find him. "I look back on it now and know it could only be done through the Lord's strength," Tony acknowledged.

However, in their cells the young Englishman spoke to prisoners about Jesus in the Serbian language, sharing memorised Scripture and praying together.

Forty years after Tony's release, an English pastor visiting believers in Albania phoned him with news of Bojan's* testimony. Bojan told them he heard about Christ in prison when two Westerners were locked up in Titograd, Yugoslavia. On his release, Bojan started a

Bible study in his home. "I was elated and rejoiced," Tony marvelled. "When you hear things like that, all the pain, all the suffering, is worth it."

Tony recently returned to former Yugoslavian countries. Fears of how he might react to soldiers dissolved on meeting Mirko*, an ex-soldier who later committed his life to Jesus. "We both broke down in tears and hugged each other," Tony described. "It's love for these people that drives me back."

Still compelled to give everything to spread the gospel, former OM worker Tony speaks in churches and joins teams to reach Eastern European and Balkan communities. "God is working!" declared Tony. "It doesn't matter what we go through; God has His plan."

Struck down, but not destroyed

OM worker Trevor* smuggled Bibles into Communist Romania from 1983 until the country opened, always delivering resources to local contacts Marcel* and his wife,

Corina*. Marcel repeatedly landed in prison for distributing literature.

Fourteen years ago, Trevor visited Corina with an interpreter from OM. She spoke of her husband's suffering. "He and other dissidents laboured in the corn fields," Corina told Trevor. "They had to do the weeding—with their teeth." Beaten and starved, Marcel was released once close to death. "He made it to our house and rang the doorbell," Corina had shared. "I found him collapsed; I thought he wouldn't make it." However, Corina nursed her husband back to health. "When he regained

strength," Trevor related, tears filling his eyes, "... he wanted more Bibles."

The couple never refused literature from OM's Bible-smuggling team. "Despite attempts to stamp out faith in Romania, God made a way to get His Word in," Trevor said. Willing to risk everything, Marcel and Corina leave a legacy that impacted many lives. Romania now has one of Europe's strongest evangelical churches. OM continues to support them to tell others about Jesus at home and abroad.

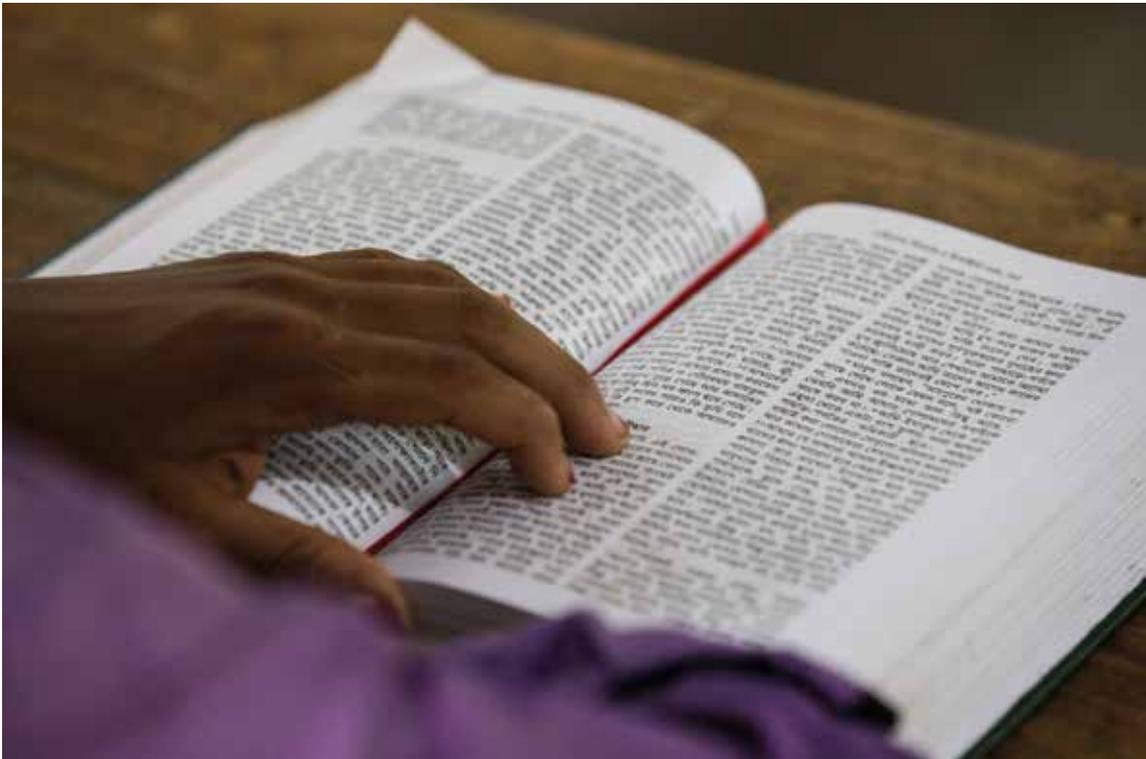
"When you live a life investing in people and transmitting hope, one day your reward will be seeing lives changed by the gospel," Trevor motivates. "Let's make our lives count!" •

"But we have this treasure in **jars of clay** to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."
- 2 Corinthians 4:8

BY BUS, BICYCLE OR BOAT:

OMers make Bengali New Testament #1 bestseller

AUTHOR: OM BANGLADESH COMMUNICATIONS • PHOTOGRAPHY: KATHRYN BERRY / OM INTERNATIONAL



“We used to claim we had the third OM ship,” said Andrew*, who served on board OM’s literature boat for 10 days and in Bangladesh since OM’s ministry began in 1972. These 5.6-metre fiberglass boats had a shelter on top and held four to five people. Below the wooden deck, there was a stowage area for supplies, clothes and as much Bengali gospel literature as possible. Teams would spend two months at a time on the water distributing literature before coming back to OM’s office for a study seminar.

“Prior to this, there was a bigger launch put into action by engineers from the ship *Logos*,” Andrew recalled. “However, it was big enough to legally require qualified seamen to operate it; since we could not come up with those, it had to be sold.” *Logos* visited Bangladesh more than once in the early 1970s, and OM officially began work in 1972, after the country’s independence from Pakistan.

Making the Bible accessible

Bangladesh has over 700 rivers, spanning over 24,000 kilometres in total. Thousands of rural villages are unreachable



Teams travelled across the 700 rivers to bring the good news of Jesus to millions of people.

and only accessible by boat. Having a gospel literature boat was a creative, practical means OM used to bring the message of Jesus to millions otherwise unreachable.

Book teams sold Christian literature in the marketplace and at doors. It was important that literature, though affordable, had monetary value lest it simply be sold to local paper merchants. “Local Christians had told them it was not possible to sell books,” Andrew recounts. When the OMers went with their first Bangladeshi team to a large shopping centre in Dhaka, “they sold out of everything they had! From then on, the OM teams travelled across the country by vehicle, boat and bicycle distributing masses of literature.”

A best seller

Initially much of OM’s ministry in Bangladesh focused on reaching Hindus. But in 1976, when two men from a Muslim background came to faith, and many more showed receptivity to the gospel, OM’s ministry changed. Outreach teams started a mass effort to distribute Bengali New Testaments and Christian literature among the Muslim-majority population.

Though there was keen interest in the books OM teams were selling, not all literature was suitable. “Muslims did not like pictures in religious books, and they had their own dialect of Bengali,” Andrew said. OM changed the literature to make it more attractive. “That widespread distribution of literature, followed up by Bible correspondence courses sowed the seed and opened people’s hearts. [Seeing this openness], we moved into having church planting teams,” explained Andrew.

When in 1980 the Bangladesh Bible Society produced the New Testament, or Injil, in its Muslim dialect, OM started large-scale distribution and sales of it. By 1987, five outreach teams had been distributing Christian literature and New Testaments non-stop by bus, bicycle and boat for 15 years, each year choosing a different area of Bangladesh to focus on.

“Whether by bus, bicycle or boat, we were motivated to get the Word of God to those who had never heard about Jesus, sharing the gospel in some of the most unreached regions,” said Paul*, who served on one of OM’s early outreach teams.

In 1988, the team stumbled across an article in a Kolkata, India, newspaper about best-selling Bengali books. At that time, best sellers sold about 200,000 copies. “We had made the Bengali New Testament a number-one best seller [well surpassing] 200,000 copies. We distributed more New Testaments and Scriptures in those years than ever before in Bengali,” stated Paul.

“Sometimes our teams were confronted by hostile groups, but usually people were excited and thankful to finally get a copy of the New Testament or whole Bible and read it themselves,” Paul reminisced. “Often religious leaders would take a copy of the New Testament then, out of respect, put it on their head and kiss it, thanking us for finally giving them a copy.”

It is clear that God protected OM’s teams along the way. “In those many years of travelling hundreds of thousands of kilometres around the country by road and river, we never experienced a single serious accident. The boat sank twice, but thankfully no one was hurt, and we were able to pull up and restore the boat and keep going,” said Andrew.

OM teams have seen God’s provision in the massive effort of sowing by outreach teams over many years in the local fellowships established in rural villages. Reports are that there are now more than 100,000 believers from a Muslim background.

These early efforts continue to shape OM’s ministry and are part of their vision to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached. •



OMers share the gospel and sell Christian literature from their van.

Love Europe: Revamping summer outreaches

AUTHOR: ANNE MARIT VILJOEN • PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER CONLAN

It was massive: The worship, the teaching, the sense of being part of prophetic history in the making, the sense of God doing something new—OM, Love Europe and hundreds of churches and organisations across Europe were ready.

“Thousands of people discussed the gospel eagerly and openly with Love Europe teams; many began a relationship with Christ. Teams experienced God’s power and blessing as they served Him gladly,” wrote Love Europe Director Stuart McAllister in October 1989, summing up the Love Europe conference and campaign.

For Katherine Porter (UK), arriving at Love Europe was utterly bewildering. It was her first OM campaign, and she had never been in a room with more than 200 Christians before. “There were people, languages, vans, red cups** and backpacks everywhere,” she recalls. “We slept in a hall with 500 others. The excitement was unbelievable. As the temperatures climbed, so did the numbers.”

Something bigger

OM Europe Area Leader Dennis Wright had prayed for God to give OM a task bigger than any field could do on their own. Traditional summer campaigns seemed tired. Even with 2,000 participants split between entry conferences in June, July and August, there was a sense of loss of momentum and passion in attracting new recruits and a great

desire to improve training and quality of outreaches.

There was energy, vision, momentum and zeal. A promotional video proved a major influence in the new approach. All OM fields in Europe had a high-quality brochure in multiple languages and printed in 85,000 copies. It caused a sensation. Around the world fields worked hard to recruit.

A lot of work went into changing structures, tooling up for new campaigns, ways of processing and target areas. “There were points of real tension and disagreement,” recalls Stuart. “Using outside speakers and well-known worship bands was controversial, but the momentum carried and the line-up of speakers—Floyd McClung, Luis Palau, Tony Campolo, Melody Green, Brother Andrew, Bob Hitching and more—proved to be a big attraction.”

Several other European missions partnered with OM and shared in the conference and outreach. Stuart continues, “OM prayed for 5,000 participants. The response was more than imagined and, by February, almost 5,000 had registered. By the time of the congress in Offenburg, it was 7,000. It went very well ... but behind the scenes there were huge challenges.”



From left to right: Luis Palau, George Verwer, Peter Conlan and Stuart McAllister at Love Europe in 1989



The first Love Europe conference gathered 7,000 people in Offenburg, Germany, in July 1989.

With 7,000 people from 76 nationalities converging on a small German town in a heat wave, the atmosphere was electric—a sense that God was on the move. “Seeing the vast sea of faces and touched lives was truly uplifting. But,” adds Stuart, “every team member and leader had to lean on extra resources, sleepless nights and much creativity and forgiveness to make it all work.”

The largest delegation came from Great Britain with 1,348, the US and Canada with 948, West Germany with 588, and the Netherlands with 362. A surprising 94 East Europeans came from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Hungary. Twenty young men and women were single ambassadors of love from developing nations in Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean.

Moving out

On 28 July, the mass exodus of 96 coaches and double-decker buses and a fleet of 204 minibuses leaving for all over Europe was a sight to behold—437 Love Europe teams targeting three main areas: Muslim, Eastern and Urban Europe. The campaigns were a mix of smaller teams in some locations to hundreds in Berlin, Barcelona, Krakow and many more. In Bristol, UK, 435 young people from 24 countries teamed up with 37 local churches; at least 300 people there professed newfound faith in Christ.

About a third of participants headed to Eastern Europe, praying and sharing the gospel where they could. Katherine Porter’s team was heading to Lake Balaton in still-Communist Hungary. “Stories from the OM Bible smugglers thrilled

and scared us in equal measure,” she wrote years later. “What would happen at the border?” They were 18 on the team and didn’t share a common language. She continues, “But the moment I remember most clearly was when Bob Hitching, still at the congress, stood on a chair and shouted an astounding truth: ‘Satan may be the prince of Eastern Europe.’ He paused—and then boomed out across the stadium, ‘But Jesus is King’. The huge crowd responded with an almighty roar that still stirs my heart today.”

The future, the '90s: Europe changing

How prophetic those words were as, just months later, the Berlin Wall was dismantled and the face of Europe changed forever. Soon after, the world witnessed the unravelling of Communism and the opening of borders.

Love Europe 1989 was possibly the most broadly organised evangelistic outreach to Europe ever attempted. “The feedback from the other organisations was very good, and we sensed that we could do more together. From 1989–1995 we kept a unified focus. Later, smaller and more diversified campaigns took over,” recalls Stuart McAllister. “Love Europe was significant in shifting boundaries within OM and opening up new ways of doing things. Mistakes were made but, overall, the outcomes were positive. God is good.” •

*** Each participant received a red cup upon arrival.*

Modelling how Jesus lived

AUTHOR: ELLYN S. • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL / ELLYN S.

When Nepal first opened to the outside world in 1951, there were only five known Christians. Today, there are an estimated one million believers. OM workers first visited Nepal in 1968 when they had truckloads of literature in India but, due to visa issues, had to cross into the small northern-bordering country. Initially they opened a bookshop in Kathmandu, but soon teams were sent throughout the country to rural villages where few books and resources were available.

In 1990, OM began a training programme for national leaders to serve their own countrymen. This three-month, and later one-year, training paired solid biblical teaching with hands-on outreach that taught students to care for the physical and spiritual needs of villagers. Through this, deep and trustworthy relationships with local churches all over Nepal were forged. “They knew that our heart’s desire was to equip believers to help their church and local communities,” shared Mike* a previous country leader.

Over 26 years, these programmes grew from 21 to upwards of 130 students annually, who received classroom teaching in Kathmandu and then were sent on several-week practical outreaches to needy villages. Although students were making disciples, many of these had no local church so, in 2010, Village Partnership Teams were formed, with teams of men and women living in pairs in villages, offering literacy classes, sanitation teaching, and basic discipleship.

They were later renamed Community Mobilisation Teams (CMT), and participants were given more training in discipling young believers to form

fellowships and grow in their faith. Through these, hundreds of thousands heard the good news, and hundreds made decisions for Christ annually.



To the least reached

A shift came in late 2012, when leadership realised the need to focus resources, manpower and outreaches on eight of the least-reached parts of the country with a combined population of over



1.5 million but less than .02 per cent known believers and few other organisations present.

“We are working where there is no church, but we are establishing local fellowships,” Bahadur*, an OM worker, said. By empowering local workers, using simple and reproducible training methods, and allowing national workers the freedom to determine what is best in their local context, the number of local fellowships has increased. Bahadur continued, “We’re seeing entire communities, where there were no believers before, transformed by the truth.”

For six months in 2014, two CMT workers served a village with very few believers and the nearest pastor a several-hour walk away. One class offered uses 40 key Old and New Testament stories to disciple believers and share God’s plan with the unreached.

Weekly, 20-25 people gathered to study a new story; after one about the baptism of Jesus and His temptation in the desert, 11 expressed an interest to follow Christ and be baptised. The team called the local pastor to visit, and together they talked through key aspects of their decision with those interested. After questioning the locals, the pastor turned to the CMT staff in surprise and said, “These people are able to answer my questions better than some Christians who have been attending church for years.”

In late 2015, OM partnered with several other agencies in a project titled A New Testament in Every Home. OM teams were sent to focus districts to distribute literature door to door. This involved a several-day bus ride and dangerous hike along narrow rocky paths. Team members carried boxes and bags over the rough terrain and gave away mini-SD cards with audio files for the illiterate.

“We continue to encounter believers in remote areas who came to faith through a piece of our literature,” Mike stated. “A local pastor, whose number is on our material, receives seven or eight calls every day from people wanting to know more!”

OM in Nepal continues to evaluate and change its style of disciple-making. Rather than students from all over Nepal attending classroom teaching in Kathmandu and being sent to the least-reached parts, students will be recruited from those parts that have the fewest believers, and teachers will travel to where the students live.

“We want to model how Jesus lived and served alongside his disciples,” Bill*, another OM leader, said. “So our workers will live in the least-reached villages, training local people and establishing new fellowships where there are none.” This new model will be put into effect from early 2017. •



In Nepal many women work difficult manual labour jobs, like farming and construction, to provide for their families. They carry heavy loads and ultimately damage their necks and backs.

PHOTOS BY GARRETT NASRALLAH



Reflecting diversity in leadership

AUTHOR: OM INTERNATIONAL • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL / JUSTIN LOVETT

Recognising and supporting national leadership has been an important part of OM's international development around the world since 1958, when Baldemar Aguilar, a young Mexican working alongside George Verwer, became the first director of OM ministry in the country.

OM's core value of reflecting the diversity of the Body of Christ can be seen across OM's work, even in the diversity of ethnic backgrounds of leadership. Currently, 83 men and women lead OM's country-specific work, and 42 of these hold the passport of the country in which they lead. The following are a few of many testimonies of those God has placed to lead OM's work around the world.

Ecuador: Commissioned to the ends of the Earth

In 1987, Shura Façanha followed in her sister's footsteps and boarded *MV Logos* as the second Ecuadorian to join OM—her sister being the first. "Life on the ship turned my worldview upside down, expanded my vision and equipped me in many ways," said Shura. "[During prayer nights], I remember crying out to God for other Ecuadorians to serve God beyond their borders. I felt so privileged to be enrolled in His service."

Shura returned home in 1991 and challenged others to join missions. "I could not get over the fact that for decades Ecuadorians, and many in Latin America, thought missions was a unique privilege for the West. Western missionaries had given us the gospel but hadn't commissioned us to go to the ends of the Earth."

She began a weekly prayer meeting in her home and, in January 1992, 16 went on an outreach to Brazil.

Later that year, Shura began the work of OM in Ecuador. "I had a great challenge, as missions was a foreign word for most churches, and I was a young woman. But I had a deep desire to mobilise Ecuadorians," she said. "It was not easy—not every church was ready or willing to engage in the task—but God was faithful."

A few years later, Shura married Roberto, a businessman who joined OM; they now lead the work of OM in Latin America. "Twenty-four years later, I can say it was worth it all," said Shura. "God answered prayer for Ecuadorians to be mobilised. To this day, when an Ecuadorian—or any Latino—goes to missions, I feel the same thrill I had when I was on *Logos*. I count it a privilege to be part of what He is doing in Latin America."



Roberto and Shura Façanha, leaders of OM Ecuador, Andean Region and Latin America

Singapore: Mobilising local churches

After serving on *MV Logos* for four years, Rodney Hui, at 24, became OM's first director in Singapore in 1979 after visa problems prevented two foreigners from staying. "The lack of visa problems and fewer cultural,

language and other barriers for nationals are great benefits," Rodney said.

Local workers have started and expanded OM's work in Asia since the early days. "It was mostly nationals who approached me about mobilising workers in their own

countries,” Rodney said. “Many who had served on the ships wanted to be a part of mobilising the church in their own country.”

Earlier on, serving on an OM ship was the only possibility for Asians but, in 1976, Asians started serving with OM in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, and later in Europe and the Middle East. “God’s call to go into all the world was for the whole church,” Rodney explained. “Not just for the West, but for all of us.”

Rodney focused on transitioning Singapore from a receiving field to a sending field, mobilising local churches. Involving Asians in the Great Commission diversified OM’s approach to missions and raised up thousands of workers who have since started new work, gone into leadership and joined or started other mission organisations. “I’ve worked hard to give ownership of projects to nationals,” Rodney said, “empowering them for what they were passionate about in their own country.”

Czech Republic: Preparing mission workers for service

In 1987, Pavel Zoul and his family spent a summer at Lake Balaton in Hungary. A double-decker bus arrived at the campsite and, in the evenings, crowds gathered round the bus, which was a base for OM’s summer outreach. Young people used music and a sketchboard to present the gospel. After the programme, discussion groups in German, Hungarian and English formed. “Nobody was communicating in Czech, so we spontaneously joined in,” remembered Pavel.

The leader of the team noticed the family and, after learning that they were believers, invited them to join the outreach. “It was a great challenge to be part of an adventure that we had never experienced before,” said Pavel. “My wife and I agreed that this was our best and most adventurous holiday.”

The Zouls became a contact for OM in Communist Czechoslovakia. In the ensuing years, they served with teams reaching out around Lake Balaton. After the fall of Communism, the family managed a rented building complex for OM’s Missionary Training School near České Budějovice,



Rodney Hui with his wife, Irene

during which they helped prepare mission workers for service in Central and Eastern Europe. Pavel soon became an OM board member and joined OM full time in 2000.

“After prayer and family consultation, we saw God’s clear leading into full-time OM ministry,” said Pavel. In 2003, he became the leader of OM in Czech

Republic. “Looking back, I see that this was God’s will for my life and, though it wasn’t always easy, it was and is God’s great adventure and I am grateful to the Lord for it.”

South Sudan and Algeria: A local expression of ministry

From an early stage, OM in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) incorporated local leadership into ministry teams in Sudan, Algeria, Israel, Egypt and the Near East (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Iraq). Currently, OM teams in Algeria and South Sudan are comprised completely of national workers.

In South Sudan, national leadership is necessary because “it’s a local ministry that comes from the community,” said Richard*, the 2015-2016 MENA leader. “If it’s seen as a largely international ministry, there are certain expectations; when it’s seen as a local ministry, there are certain expectations. OM South Sudan is local in character and expression.”

OM’s involvement in Algeria—led and championed for 28 years by Youssef, an Algerian Muslim-background believer—shifted in 2016 to a second generation of national interim leaders.

Rafik* first joined a short-term outreach in 1997, and Lina* caught the vision in 2003 after marrying Rafik. They joined the local ministry established by Youssef and his wife and were responsible for church planting and follow-up before accepting the interim leadership role.

Regarding local leadership, Lina noted, “If you’re a local, you know the language, you know the culture and you know how things work. When you come from that country, you have more of an idea [of how to relate] to people from that country.” •



English Justin, leader of OM's work in South Sudan

‘Train our young people!’

AUTHOR: KATHERINE PORTER • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

“When I arrived in Russia on Victory Day, 9 May 1993, it snowed—an appropriate welcome to Siberia, even in spring!” recalls Australian Lloyd Porter, who was the Field Leader of OM Russia for 10 years.

From the beginning, students crowded into the OM team’s tiny flat each week, eager to hear about Christ. “They often had no idea who God really was, but they were desperate to learn more,” says Lloyd. They were full of excitement about their new faith. On Saturdays, they gathered with the leaders for ‘church’; on Sundays, they attended regular church services; on Mondays, they attended OM evangelism training; on Wednesdays, they had Bible study and, on Fridays, they joined in outreach in train stations and shopping areas. “They wanted to grow in and share their faith,” remembers Lloyd, “but they desperately needed training to do so.”

Around that time, a Russian pastor, who had remained faithful during the years of communism, said to the team, “The best thing you could do is train our young

people in their faith and instil in them a desire for reaching people in remote parts of Siberia.”

This resonated deeply with OM leaders and took root when Colin and Bron joined the team in the late ’90s. Soon after, a Russian called Vitali attended an OM prayer meeting. He brought a large map of the area. When he pointed out each town on the

map, the group prayed for that town. Vitali prayed that God would use OM to train missionaries to move into these places and extend God’s kingdom. “God had begun something inside us,” says Colin. “Sometime later, the wisdom of training others in ministry, instead of continuing to serve on the ‘frontline’ ourselves, became clearer.”

Serving through training

Over the next two years, the OM team put together a six-month residential programme for Russians, bought a four-room flat and invited students to study there. “It was a great day in 2006 when we opened the doors to the first eight men and women,” remembers Colin.

The team was worried about the sparseness of the accommodation and apologised to three of the young men. The men laughed out loud, though; two

of them had recently been released from prison, where they had shared a room that size with 18 others! “This was, and still is, a hallmark of the discipleship programme,” says Colin, “God entrusting us with former drug addicts, alcoholics and criminals, whom He had already begun to transform into His ambassadors for the gospel.”

About 25 per cent of male graduates have gone on to seminary to become pastors, and a large percentage of the graduates serve in **full-time** ministry.

In May 2016, the OM team celebrated 10 years of the Discipleship Centre. “What a joy it was to reconnect with over 100 former students, now spread out right across Siberia, Russia and the ends of the Earth,” says Colin. “An incredible answer to that prayer on our living room floor 12 years earlier.”

In 2013, Tim and Jo joined to train new Russian disciples. OM has trained 138 people over

centage of the graduates serve in full-time ministry. Some have even gone into overseas missions.

Many of the Russians who participate in OM’s training programme have memorable stories. Yury, who graduated early in 2016, was 12 when he first went to prison; at 13 he learnt how to steal cars. By 20, Yury was a heavy drug user and had contracted tuberculosis. He learnt about Jesus from a local believer, Aleksey, who now serves with OM.



10 years; another 22 students are currently studying. Past students are now involved in various ministries, such as planting churches among ethnic minorities like the Tatars in Northern Siberia. Alumni also visit local prisons weekly and lead Bible studies among interested inmates, a number of whom have come to faith. Graduates of the Discipleship Centre are also serving on board OM’s ship, *Logos Hope*. One graduate, Alena, is in charge of the cleaning crew, who are known on board as the ‘angels’. “In Russia, we joke that she’s the archangel!” laughs Tim.

About 25 per cent of male graduates have gone on to seminary to become pastors, and a large per-

centage of the graduates serve in full-time ministry. Released from prison six months later, his first priority was to be baptised. Soon after, he began studying at the OM Discipleship Centre, learning about the Bible, preaching, serving in various ways and sharing the gospel with others.

Today OM continues to offer Russian believers six months of intensive Bible study and ministry training. After students graduate, OM offers them opportunity to live among unreached people groups to share the gospel and help plant churches, fulfilling the vision to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers established all over Siberia and beyond. •

Broadcasting the gospel to Afghans

AUTHOR: GREG KERNAGHAN • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL



When doors shut for sharing the gospel, OMers look for open windows. During the first few decades of OM, special prayer was promoted for nine countries with no known believers. Today, there is no country without followers of Jesus, although there hasn't been a viable church in Afghanistan for centuries.

Gordon Magney was obsessed with changing that, first going to Afghanistan in the 1960s. When Mel Warden*—who joined the work among Afghan refugees in Pakistan in 1981—was returning to Canada to study in 1989, Gordon asked him to re-launch radio programmes for Afghan audiences after a month of training. Mel and his wife met with a number of Afghans in Toronto who had come to faith as refugees, but not one had continued with the Lord. When they met Karim* in 1991, they formed Pamir Productions (named after a major mountain range in Afghanistan) in the Warden house, producing four 15-minute programmes each week in the majority language of Dari. Within a year, they increased to seven half-hour programmes.

Mel remembers the first letter they received from a listener. “We could hardly believe it. This person’s appreciation—and courage to write—was a huge boost for us. We started to answer letters (this was pre-Internet in Afghanistan) and eventually created a programme called *Answers to Letters*, reading listeners’ questions and answering them on air,” he said. This programme continued through the end of the 1990s.

Different course, same destination

9/11 changed everything: Though over five million refugees poured back into the country, responses to the radio programmes plummeted. Was there justification to continue? Or were there new technologies that would attract more listeners’ feedback?

Then, in October 2008, linking callers to a Western phone number made it possible to engage with Afghans in live conversation. Phone calls from Afghanistan had massive impact on the team as they quickly built an effective means of follow-up.

“We track every call, and follow up every lead. Today, more than 4,500 Afghans are in our database, at different points in their spiritual journey; many are sincerely interested in Christ but feel isolated. Some callers criticise the ministry and defend Islam. Others have come to faith and are eager to be discipled. Four to five Afghans call every day to talk. Television programmes, launched in 2010, are appreciated by a different segment of society,” notes Mel.

Pamir Productions has always been passionate in using all media to spread the gospel. The team, in conjunction with other groups, was instrumental in producing a new translation of the Bible in

the Dari language in 2008. Despite the near impossibility of importing and distributing materials, a good deal of material, including the Scriptures, is now available online and in apps through the Pamir website, both directly for seekers and for Christians to pass to Afghan friends worldwide.

In order to help new believers in their walk with God, a Virtual Bible School (VBS) was launched in 2016. Different team members call Afghans weekly using Internet and mobile phone, to study God’s Word. Ten ‘classes’ are running this way as of late 2016. Because Afghan culture is built upon social networks that distrust outsiders, trying to plant a church by uprooting individuals from their networks to join an unknown one simply is not effective. Pamir envisions that these VBSs will bridge that gap. It’s more organic as well: These contacts can draw other family members and friends into that study time, which resonates with Pamir’s vision of Afghans discipling Afghans.

While security concerns have made in-country visits impractical, Afghans continue to spread across the world. In 2015 alone, 150,000 arrived in Germany to join tens of thousands already settled there. This has shaken the whole Church there, and many are reaching out to Afghan neighbours. Pamir sees unprecedented opportunity in Europe for training and equipping Afghans to reach their own social networks back in Afghanistan.

Looking ahead, Pamir wants to grow in two areas. One is the production of more creative media at street level (not just studio programmes), involving a wider range of Afghans in daily life. Coupled with cutting-edge social media, Pamir seeks to engage a wider group of believers to challenge the status quo. The second area is in discipleship such as the Virtual Bible Schools, digital smart phone Bible courses and specialised training for Afghan seekers and young believers in Europe. Pamir is exploring ways to partner with Iranian ministries who already have well-established discipleship programmes. One dream is a Christian training center for Afghans in Europe.

Only God knows what Afghanistan’s future will be like. As Pamir Productions continues engaging with Afghans day in, day out, there is hope that it will be better than ever before. One listener said it best: “I love how you talk about love and peace. We are tired of war and warlords. I give out your frequency. I want all our people to listen to these programmes.” •

Loving in word and deed

AUTHOR: NICOLE JAMES • PHOTOGRAPHY: JUSTIN LOVETT

From Albania to Zambia, more than one-third of all OM fields are directly engaged in relief and/or development projects.

Beginning relief and development work

In 1980, when OM workers wanted to help Afghan refugees fleeing Soviet oppression, George Verwer gave a long-term OM worker his blessing to start an independent NGO.

During the '80s in South Africa, as Mozambican refugees were escaping their country's devastating civil war, OM starting a feeding programme followed by relief and development projects.

By 1991, when Julyan Lidstone, ambassador for OM Muslim Ministries, visited Kurdish refugees living in dire conditions along Turkey's southern border, OM responded on an organisational level. "We demonstrated that relief and development can work together with gospel ministry to the unreached," Julyan explained.

In the 25 years following initial relief and development efforts, OM has responded to situations caused by both conflict and natural disaster. During 1997 in Mexico, *Logos II* crewmembers provided practical help to a community devastated by Hurricane Pauline. OMers responded to the 2011 tsunami in Japan, Pakistan floods in 2013, earthquakes in Chile and Ecuador in 2015 and 2016, respectively, and many more crises.

Developing disaster response

"Relief and development is important to OM, because there continues to be hurting and needy people," Julyan said. However, OM does not respond to every global crisis. "We don't have the capacity, and it doesn't always

align with our core calling: We want to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached," explained Theodore Burns*, former OM MENA Area Leader.

Projects often begin where OM workers have already established ministries and relationships, frequently in response to local partners' requests. OM extends aid to all people, regardless of ethic or religious background.

"If we, as followers of Jesus Christ, are ignoring the reality of their needs and only preaching the Word, then we are not loving them or serving them as Jesus calls us to. In the same way, if we're only trying to meet their physical or emotional needs, but not bringing them the opportunity to hear about the person and the work of Jesus Christ, then we are doing them a grave disservice," Theodore said.

Walking with people in need

In 2013 and 2014, OM in the Philippines cared for communities decimated by a typhoon. Continued work with local churches in both relief and development projects has empowered the OM team to engage in church planting, noted OM Disaster Response and Development Coordinator Jason Puck*.

"While we have become known because of our relief work, it's just one of the many OM ministries," stated Philippines Field Leader Sally Ababa. "It's important that we are equipped [to help] churches to be salt and light in the communities. OM wants to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers, so we should be involved where people are in greatest need."



“In Greece, relief ministries are carried out through local churches as they co-operate with refugees and local believers and are supported by OM teams,” Jason explained. “One Filipino church is now a multi-ethnic congregation with Filipinos, Greeks, Afghans, Iranians, as well as Arab and Kurdish Syrian—a direct result of this church’s ongoing involvement in relief work.”

Following Nepal’s 2015 earthquake, OM also provided aid. “In the face of so much devastation, death and need, it was impossible not to get involved. We were surrounded by people, and requests from people, who had lost everything,” said long-term worker Mary*. “Relationships are so important in Nepal, so a lot of what we did stemmed from pre-existing relationships with people throughout Nepal. It was our way of demonstrating that we loved them and that God loves them too.”

Mary continued, “In one of the communities, there are no believers and no church. We continue to partner with them through relief and development because we want to see their lives transformed by the saving grace of knowing Christ. Our teams are not only rebuilding homes and providing safer building methods, we are modelling what a life of peace and hope looks like.”

Throughout the Near East Field, OM supports local churches’ work among refugees and internally displaced people. In 2016, OM’s Syrian and Iraqi Relief fund sponsored over 26 projects in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and North Africa—on average reaching 35,000 people per month.

Since the Syrian conflict began in 2011, “we’ve continued to be involved. Muslims have come to faith through our local partners, and we’ve seen these partners gain broader vision,” the OM Near East Field Leader explained.

“In the long term, we desire to see Christ-centred, effective and contextually appropriate relief and development projects implemented through local churches in partnership with OM,” Jason shared.

To strengthen the capacity of fields at high risk of experiencing disasters, OM has developed a relief training course for responders. More than 100 Christian workers have received this training. Over 50 per cent of those have participated in short-term disaster response

with OM, and over 33 per cent have committed to serving in disaster-prone fields in OM for six months or longer, Jason shared. OM in the Philippines has replicated this training for local workers. •

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Counting the cost

AUTHOR: REBECCA BARNHART • PHOTOGRAPHY: MEGAN R.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” – John 15:13 (NKJV).

In OM’s 60-year history, a few brothers and sisters in the OM family experienced this first hand: David Goodman, shot in his home in Turkey in 1979; Bonnie Witherall, killed while serving local women at a women’s clinic in Sidon, Lebanon, in 2002; Karen Goldsworthy and Sophia Sigfridsson, who died during an explosion at a public ministry event in the Philippines in 1991, and Gayle Williams, killed in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2008. These folks are honoured as OM’s modern-day martyrs.

David Goodman – Turkey, 1979

After reading a pamphlet, “Turkey, the Forgotten Land,” David and Jenni Goodman moved to Adana, Turkey, in 1977, where David taught English as a second language. David’s widow, Jenni, recalled the morning in their second year when everything changed. “Someone came to the door, and I could hear David ask, ‘Who’s there?’ Then I heard the door open ... followed by gunshots.” Frantic, Jenni found a neighbour who took David to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival. No arrests were ever made.

Jenni returned to the US, pregnant with the couple’s first child, and gave birth to a son, David Yener, whose middle name means “He will overcome.” A year later, she married Bill Perry, and the couple had six more children.

In 2015, Jenni and Bill travelled to Turkey to visit their daughter, who was there on a short-term trip; it was Jenni’s first trip to Turkey since David was martyred. They attended a church and sang a Turkish worship song that David wrote shortly before he died—a song still sung nearly 40 years after David’s death. “Many believers still remember the sacrifice the writer made,” Jenni noted.

Karen Goldsworthy & Sophia Sigfridsson – Doulos in the Philippines, 1991

Hand grenades thrown during the *Doulos* International Night presentation on shore in Zamboanga in September 1991 left two women dead and many injured. But it did not hinder the ship’s commitment to bringing knowledge, help and hope to all peoples of the world.

Joe Parker, then book exhibition manager aboard *Doulos* and now serving with the Ship Ministry in South Carolina (USA), recalled the event. “Two grenades were thrown onto the stage area. One detonated in front of a bench and some chairs; the other did not explode. Sophia, sitting on one of the chairs, and Karen, sitting on the bench, were both killed. About 30 others were injured by shrapnel.”

What good came from that evil? Karen’s sister joined *Doulos* to finish the second half of her sister’s two-year commitment. Joe remembers reports of local people committing themselves to follow Jesus the day after the bombing, which was a Sunday. And the impact of that tragedy is still felt today. When *Logos Hope* was commissioned in 2009, two meeting rooms on board were named after Sophia and Karen; their story is told on ship tours.



Bonnie Witherall – Lebanon, 2002

While it's hard to measure the true impact of any of OM's martyrs, the tragic death of Bonnie Witherall in 2002 in Lebanon has had a ripple effect on OM's ministries throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. Bonnie worked at a church-run prenatal clinic that focused on Palestinian women from a nearby refugee camp in Sidon. On a November morning in 2002, Bonnie answered the door at the clinic where she worked and was shot and killed.

In the aftermath of Bonnie's death, the Lord gave her husband, Gary, the vision for Transform, a ministry reaching out to the people and nations around the Mediterranean—a region that was dear to Bonnie's heart. "The vision for Transform was birthed out of great sacrifice," Gary said during one of the early Transform conferences. "The desire was to see hundreds go out into the Mediterranean nations and tell people about the hope they can have in Jesus."

At Transform's first conference in July 2010 in Rome, nearly 430 people gathered for a week of prayer and preparation, followed by 35 teams going to 21 Mediterranean nations. Since then, almost 2,000 people have attended the Transform conferences in Italy and Spain, with short-term teams going into countries, such as Lebanon, Turkey, Bulgaria, Jordan, Egypt, Albania, Kosovo, Greece, Israel, as well as France, Spain, Portugal and North African nations. Many participants have joined OM in longer-term capacities and, seven years on, Transform is still going strong.

Gayle Williams – Afghanistan, 2008

A few months before her death, Gayle Williams, a 34-year-old British/South African national serving in Kabul, had a dream: A fruitful tree was cut down and a shoot grew out of the stump. When she prayed about what that dream meant for her, friends recall that God answered Gayle: "You are the fruitful tree."

Gayle Williams was committed to the Afghan people, especially those with disabilities. She had only been serving in Afghanistan for two years when she was gunned down while walking to work in Kabul in October 2008. Two men on a motorcycle attempted to seize her, but when she fought back, they shot her multiple times and fled. Gayle died at the scene.

Earlier that month, Gayle attended the funeral of Gordon Magney, one of the longest-term workers in Afghanistan, who died of natural causes at age 70 and was buried in Kabul in the foreigners' cemetery. A few weeks later, her body was lying next to Gordon's tomb.

Gayle's death was a devastating blow to the in-county ministry and the Afghan people. But, with thousands of Afghan asylum seekers fleeing to Europe, there is new fruit amongst Afghans. According to Thomas*, an Afghan ministry leader, "throughout the Afghan diaspora many have opened up to God's grace and become followers. Quite a few (Afghans) have been grafted into the tree Gayle saw."

A family to children at risk

AUTHOR: REBECCA REMPEL • PHOTOGRAPHY: JORDAN ARMSTRONG

From using art to reach street kids in North Africa, to offering education to Syrian refugees in the Near East, to setting up daycare centres in Moldova, God is using OM to care for and empower the next generation.



Education for everyone

In 2016, OM in the Philippines celebrated 15 years of reaching out to marginalised children. The ministry began when *MV Doulos* visited in 2001; crewmembers connected with children living on the streets of Cebu and shared the Word of God. Five young people, led by Sally Ababa, formerly on *Doulos* and now the Field Leader in the Philippines, ministered weekly to the children after the ship left. The ministry expanded to other areas of the city and island.

In 2009, the team started the Alterna-

tive Learning System (ALS) in response to the high number of out-of-school youth they met. OM today is the only NGO to offer ALS in Cebu. Most students are from dysfunctional, poor or disinterested families who, without the additional input and support of OM staff, would not pass their final exams.

Four days a week, classes are offered in maths, English, science and Filipino; every Friday, they hold a Bible study. Teachers make weekend visits to their students and build relationships with the families.

Genevieve dropped out of high school

when her family was unable to pay the fees. Happily, people encouraged her to continue her education through ALS. In 2011, Genevieve received her high school diploma. OM continued to pay her college tuition fees as she pursued a degree in hotel and restaurant management. She dreams of owning and managing a business of her own. “I am blessed in my education, but I am even more blessed with people who continue to support my growth as a woman,” said Genevieve.

Called to Africa

Called to work with homeless children in Africa yet initially turned down by a missions organisation and told she would never be sent to Africa because of chronic illness, Christine moved from England to Africa to work with OM.

In 1996, she and volunteers began construction of a centre for street boys in Sudan that grew to include four live-in centres, a drop-in programme and a halfway house—all to prepare boys, both in remedial work and appropriate behaviour, to re-join local schools. One centre was a vocational training school.

The goal was to rehabilitate boys from the streets and return them to their families or stay with them until they become adults. More than 300 boys were rescued and found hope in Christ through the centres.

“The greatest joy was seeing boys transformed from addictions and many problems to be happy, healthy boys who loved God and became wonderful members of the community,” said Christine.

When Sudan split into two countries in 2011, all foreign Christians had to leave, including Christine. Two centres continued despite this; one under the care of a partner mission and the other by some of the older boys with a local businessman sponsoring them. Boys from the two closed centres went to live with families.

Before the facilities were built, the team held drop-in afternoons every Friday where they met Karl*, a sick teenager with a cane. One day, the team took Karl to the hospital where he remained for six months in a TB ward. Upon discharge, Karl moved into the centre. He graduated at 21 and lived with three other graduates who worked at a factory.

One day, Karl disappeared. Six weeks later, the team discovered he was in prison and very sick. The police released Karl into the care of the centre. Diagnosed with multiple serious medical conditions, the doctors gave Karl three months to live. Sixteen years later, Karl is still at the centre.

When foreigners had to leave, Karl and another man who had grown up at the centre continued looking after the boys. Wheelchair bound and still struggling with health issues, Karl continues reaching out to street boys.

In 2013, Christine moved to Zambia to form Africa Area Hope on the Streets for Children, an OM ministry training people to make the African church aware of street children. “Our vision is that the African church will become a good family to street children and youth,” explained Christine. Projects springing from this training will be run by churches, giving ownership to locals and bringing transformation to communities.

Strong spiritual foundation

Mercy Teams International (MTI), established in 2002, is OM’s integral missions arm in South East Asia, partnering with other Christian entities and individuals to reach those living in poverty and oppression. Along the Thailand-

Myanmar border, MTI operates the School of Mercy for 130 children from Mon and Karen people groups, mostly internally displaced. Due to ongoing unrest, education in the village and surrounding jungle region is difficult to access. Children at the school are given a nutritious meal once a week. More than 30 children live in a dormitory, receiving daily meals and a safe place to live.

In December 2016, OM worker Kalene Lua visited the school with a volunteer team, who packed 300 gift bags for children in the community at the Christmas party. “When Phaw Phaw Dar walked in, her radiant smile drew my attention,” said Kalene of the former School of Mercy student who came to know Christ there.

Phaw Phaw Dar was 12 years old when she first realised that Christmas is not merely a time of partying and receiving gifts. “Before I knew Jesus, my life was filled with worries,” Phaw Phaw Dar told Kalene. “After understanding what Christmas really stands for, I now have reason to stand firm in Christ and hope for the future.”

The Christmas programme that evening started with worship that rang out into the village. Elijah Sim, an OM MTI board member, shared a message of hope in Jesus. “The message is poignant for many parents in the community living in abject poverty but desiring a better future for their children,” said Kalene. “Phaw Phaw Dar’s story is an encouragement to the school’s team, as they serve the children and community by providing quality education that gives the children a better future and strong spiritual foundation.” •

“The greatest joy was seeing boys transformed from addictions and many problems to be happy, **healthy boys** who loved God.”

Reflecting Him in their world

AUTHOR: TEENSTREET EUROPE COMMUNICATIONS • PHOTOGRAPHY: TEENSTREET EUROPE PHOTOGRAPHY TEAM

“Je-sus! Je-sus! Jesus!” The main hall erupts as 2,500 teenagers chant the Lord’s name in rhythm. Worship echoes in the ceiling panels and vibrates through the floor. When you close your eyes, you can almost imagine the angels joining in overhead.

Welcome to Throne Room, the evening worship sessions at TeenStreet (TS) Europe, where about 4,000 people from over 20 countries gather for one week every year in Germany to worship the Lord and grow in relationship with Him and each other.

The TS event, in its 23rd year in 2016, offers teenagers opportunities to meet the Lord in new ways and spend time with other Christian teenagers. Each element is designed to give opportunities to encounter God, whether in the Art Zone, during an outreach into the city, at a seminar or workshop, on the sports field or during Shhh-time, a 30-minute period of silence across the site.

When the teenagers come to TS, “some have a relationship with Jesus, some know about Him but don’t have a relationship with Him, some are somewhere in between,” says Ger van Veen, director of TeenStreet Europe. “Our desire is that by the time TeenStreet ends, each person has a living and true relationship with Jesus and reflects Him in the world—that’s the vision statement of TeenStreet.”

A street to travel upon

TeenStreet began in the minds of four people in a pizza restaurant in the Netherlands in 1992,

who dreamt about an international conference for teenagers. Founders Dan and Suzie Potter explained, “We gave it the name ‘TeenStreet’ because the whole purpose was to give teens a street to travel upon—a way to go or live.”

After prayer and planning, the first TeenStreet took place in 1993 when 56 people gathered in Offenburg, Germany. The theme was ‘Living in an upside down world’.

Ali van Oosten, the daughter of OM workers, participated when she was 15 and recalls, “I was touched when hearing stories of people not much older than myself and how God was using them. It was a turning point in my relationship with God and my decision to live more fully for Him.”

As a movement, TeenStreet works with churches and youth groups to support their year-round ministry to teenagers. The focus of TeenStreet is less on the event itself and more on discipleship that happens afterward, says Ger. “There is no point in creating a one-week ‘retreat’ for teens without a positive community to be part of throughout the year,” he says. “We are especially concerned with smaller, under-resourced churches and youth groups that will benefit from the training, resourcing and connecting that happens



at TeenStreet. It's not just for teens but also for their leaders, equipping them to serve their teens well after the event has finished."

Every day during the event, the teens gather in small groups with five other teens of the same gender, age and language, and one adult, to pray and discuss what they learn. The purpose, says Ger, is to give the teenagers a safe community to be open with one another.

"Many young people leave the church when they leave school," he says. "One key reason is that they do not have a faith of their own; in fact, many young people have been carrying someone else's relationship with Jesus. They have been told that 'this' is how to live and 'that' is what Christ means to you. We seek to create an environment and communicate with teens in such a way as to help them make decisions based on convictions they have reached themselves."

From teen to student to pastor

Ruwen Braun, from Germany, attended TeenStreet for the fifth time in 2016. The first time, he was just another teenager looking for adventure with his peers. He didn't know that this path would transform his life.

After his first TS experience, Ruwen attended twice more before participating in OM training in South Africa. Once again, he went just looking for adventure in Africa. However, what was planted in Ruwen's heart at TS continued to resonate, so much so that he sought a new direction previously unthinkable.

"I didn't always want to be a pastor, but being at TeenStreet changed my life," he recalls. "I was later exposed to theology at the OM disciple training in South Africa, [and] I decided to study further."

Now a youth pastor at his church and a coach at TS, Ruwen remembered the event that brought a turning point to his life. In 2015, he encouraged 10 teenagers from his youth group to attend TS. In 2016, Ruwen brought 16 teens.

"I strongly believe that TeenStreet is an inspiring community where teens, in a small-group setting with a coach, are discipled, not just into faith, but also into the mission or cause that God has for each of them," concludes Ger.

Since the first TeenStreet in 1993, OM has hosted TeenStreet events around the world, including in Brazil, Uruguay, South Africa, Nepal, Malaysia, Egypt, India and Australia. •



Using your professional skills in missions

AUTHOR: KATIE M. STOUT • PHOTOGRAPHY: MEINDERT KRAMER

Since OM's inception 60 years ago, the emphasis has been on using ordinary people to share the gospel around the world. That's still true today but, in this time of modern missions, OM has evolved. While the organisation is still passionate about evangelism and church planting, there's also a growing awareness of how God has equipped every individual with different gifts and skills—and no matter what those gifts are, they can be used in global missions.

Mark (USA) first became interested in missions while working in the corporate world but, when he examined his own skill set and passions, he didn't see how he could fit into God's plan for the nations. "I was always under the impression that missionaries ... had to be pastors or evangelists," he said.

It wasn't until he was on a short-term mission trip and heard many full-time missionaries explaining that their greatest need was administrative staff that he realised that perhaps he could find a place as a missionary, after all. Mark joined OM Middle East and North Africa in personnel, using the skills he'd learnt working in the business world to enable evangelists, relief workers, and other ministry team members to serve in their own callings.

In fact, many support team members within OM who left their professional jobs to serve as full-time missionaries are passionate about freeing up other team members so everyone can serve in their appropriate giftings.

"We're here to drive the processes of the departments and ... enable the organisation," said Jamie Bell of Ireland, who works for OM International in IT.

Jamie was called to missions as a child and was ready to leave everything behind to serve God full time, including school. But God spoke to him through a woman at church, telling Jamie, "The Lord knows the plans of your heart, but you have to get a good education first."

After finishing university, Jamie was led into IT at a multi-million-dollar company. For years, he assumed God had called him to that job, where he would financially support missionaries, but God told him his time was finished—and he joined OM.

"I've always felt like God has a handle on my life, and has been training me for [a specific job]. He put me on a course that led me to have the perfect experience for the job [in OM]," he explained. "I've got a specific skill God's given me and ... my job is making a difference."

Mark's wife, Julie, experienced a similar childhood call to missions, eventually abandoning her professional photography business in the USA to move overseas. When she observed that OM communications was asking preachers, evangelists and team leaders to write stories and take photos about their ministries, which pulled them away from the ministries themselves, she saw the opportunity to use her gifts.

Julie now heads up OM's new International Communications Internship programme, which connects young professionals with OM teams worldwide and trains them to "use

"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ **we, though many, form one body,** and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us."

- Romans 12:4-6

their skills as advocacy for the ministry." Julie envisions the programme as helping these young people see themselves as part of the Body of Christ.

When someone is serving God in their gifting, "it creates the most joy in the individual and most effectiveness in the ministry," Julie asserted. "The idea that we're the Body of Christ on the mission field, making disciples among the nations, and able to recognise how God has gifted us and to do it diligently is a privilege."

This passion for equipping the Body of Christ is leading OM to recruit professionals to help grow more vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached. While these roles have gone unseen for years, OM is moving forward with greater emphasis on professionals taking part in the larger vision of reaching the nations.

This talent, undergirded with a heart and attitude of service, is what OM hopes will push the organisation into the future. From keeping teams in Zambia connected to the Internet or finding the right role in the right country for a new OM recruit, to interviewing church planters in Brazil, professionals play a significant role not only in the mechanisms of the organisation but also in the kingdom of God. More than cogs in a giant machine, they act as the hands and feet—or ears and elbows—of Jesus to bring glory to the Father and carry the hope of the gospel to the least reached of the world. •



Doulos: a platform for peace in Papua New Guinea

AUTHOR: JULIE KNOX • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

As *Doulos* sailed towards the Papua New Guinean island of Bougainville in September 1999, her crewmembers felt undercurrents of trepidation for a place where a ceasefire had only recently been declared after a decade-long civil war.

Destruction was widespread with burnt-out villages swallowed by jungle and previously-thriving businesses now rubble. Issues that led the Bougainville Revolutionary Army to fight for independence had not been fully resolved, but there was a delicate peace, a governing structure, and an invitation for OM's Ship Ministry to return.

Captain Graeme Bird (New Zealand) charted his course warily. The harbour was a minefield of hazards. No international vessel had moored in the port of Kieta since *Doulos* departed nine and a half years earlier. Every navigation light was broken. The wharf had not been serviced and the water had become a dumping ground for all manner of debris, including vehicles.

The ship had, in fact, been there as the conflict began. In January 1990, a day before *Doulos* was due alongside, permission for all ministry activities was revoked as violence escalated. An exceptional solution was found, with the vessel's lifeboats acting as water taxis to ferry Bougainvilleans to the ship at anchor. Many people gave their lives to Christ as they heard the gospel on board.

David Short (UK), a Ship Ministry stalwart who'd previously worked in Papua New Guinea, was helping the advance preparation team. In a café in Kieta, he noticed a smart-looking gentleman eating his evening meal. When David told the diner about *Doulos*, the man introduced himself as Joseph Kabui, president of the Bougainville People's Congress and interim leader of the island. He invited the ship's representatives to his office the following morning.

The next day, President Kabui presented two requests. First,

would *Doulos* hold a seminar on prayer for Bougainville's new leaders; and second, could its politicians have training in good governing principles?

"I couldn't believe it!" recalls David. "Of course, this has happened many times—meeting the right person at the right time. God was very much guiding and directing, ... a leader doesn't normally ask those sorts of questions!"

Doulos Director Lloyd Nicholas (Australia) flexed the programme as the Lord led. He and the chief engineer were the main speakers at a three-day leadership seminar and recalls, "The leaders of the two factions each came with about 30 of their senior people. They sat separately from one another and did not interact much. Then on the third day, delegates who'd been rivals—even enemies in combat—publicly released their bitterness and sought forgiveness from one another."

A former commercial pilot had disembarked from the ship the previous day to find a man waiting for him. He recognised him immediately as the person who, during the crisis, had dragged him from his plane and forced him to watch it burn. Now, a decade later, that man had waited all day to find the pilot and apologise for his actions.



The vice president of the Bougainville People's Congress felt God speak to him on the ship, as he observed those on board. As a new believer, he recommitted to his responsibilities to be a faithful husband and leader of his family first, before leading the population effectively.

More people were moved to share their hearts. President Joseph Kabui repented of things said and done. The leader of the opposing faction responded with his own sincere apologies. Men rose from their chairs to stand behind their respective leader. The two lines approached each oth-

er in turn, shaking hands, shedding tears and embracing as they expressed sorrow over what had come between them.

"The UN ambassador to Bougainville and the Australian Army commander who led the Peace Monitoring Group were watching from the back of the room, speechless and amazed when that happened!" remembers Lloyd.

The ship's final day in port was 21 September, the United Nations' International Day of Peace. That afternoon, a traditional ceremony was held on the quayside to publicly mark the progress made on board. Hundreds gathered in the shadow of the ship to witness former enemies participate in cultural expressions of togetherness and seal a symbolic pledge.

The UN ambassador, His Excellency Mr. Noel Sinclair, gave a stirring speech at the reconciliation ceremony, holding up *Doulos'* community as an example for the world.

"Your floating missionary group of more than 30 nationalities is a demonstration of the reality and effectiveness of unity and reconciliation among people," declared the ambassador. He found it fitting that the vessel had become the platform on which the island's leaders recommitted to their responsibilities "in a serious manner, seeking the wisdom, blessing and guidance of the Prince of Peace."

The international community had deployed an Australian-led force to oversee the truce. These military men asked for copies of the *Jesus* film in Pidgin English to take the message of restoration to village communities. Teams from *Doulos* brought huge donations of books to rebuild destroyed libraries and help a generation of unschooled children to make a fresh start.

"The *Doulos* leadership is still a bit stunned and humbled at being a part of the peace and reconciliation process, feeling that they were merely a witness to what God is doing in this province," said a report from the ship, as she sailed away.

In her wake, word got around that the island was 'open for business' once more, and international vessels resumed trade there. *Doulos* had brought New Testaments in the East Papuan language of Naasioi, which was a great boost to the work of Wycliffe Bible Translators and encouraged local pastors. Many churches were challenged by the political unity the ship's visit had fostered, leading them to set aside their denominational isolationism.

OM's Ship Ministry first formed a bond with Papua New Guinea when the original *Logos* called there in 1979, and continues to enjoy strong links with the nation. Many believers have been inspired into ministry or missions. In 2017, six Papua New Guineans are serving the Lord on board *Logos Hope*. •

Freeing the Dalits

AUTHOR: JANET WEBER • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

In 1963, the first OM team travelled overland from Europe to India, sharing the good news along the way. Over the next 30 years, OM teams, through personal witness, literature distribution and correspondence courses, reflected God's love across all of India.

In 1988, it became evident to Indian leadership that it was no longer enough to address the spiritual state of an individual apart from the physical, economic, social and political state of the culture. OM needed to respond to the hundreds of millions of poor and marginalised in the country, specifically the lowest caste of Indian society: the Dalit-Bahujan people, or 'untouchables'.

"The cry of the Dalits and other poor, marginalised people of India is for freedom," said Joseph D'souza, Moderator Bishop of Good Shepherd Church of India.

"This earnest plea is an appeal for massive social, moral and spiritual change. It is a call to rid their world of the oppression of caste ideology. It is a demand for simple human dignity in response to the current realities of modern slavery, the oppression of women, economic discrimination and rampant poverty."

In 2001, in partnership with others, the OM Good Shepherd ministry took steps to make transformational changes in communities through medical clinics, primary schools in English, adult literacy classes, vocational and business training and more, with the goal to alleviate poverty amongst the Dalit people. Everything was done in the name of Christ, and new Christian communities reproduced quickly.

Education is key

It was obvious early on that education for Dalit children was the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and oppression that kept an entire people group from rising above the lowest rung of Indian society. Good Shepherd Schools are run by believers, students are from a Dalit background, and lessons are held in English.

Ruth is in grade four in a Good Shepherd School. Although bigamy is illegal in India, Ruth and her family suffered from her father's poor marital choices. Poverty and illiteracy only worsened the situation for Ruth, her mother, and her two siblings. When Ruth's father finally abandoned them a few years ago, it left them nearly destitute, though her mother earned a small income as a maid in neighbours' homes.

Though recently diagnosed with tuberculosis, Ruth is receiving life-saving medication—free from government hospitals—and is steadily recovering. She is a good student and, through education, she and her mother have hope in a future otherwise unimaginable.

Today, over 90 per cent of graduates from Good Shepherd Schools go on to take professional or university courses. Over 100 schools teach about 26,000 students, all from the Dalit background.

"It is truly of God that we have been able to free this

"The cry of the Dalits and other poor, marginalised people of India is for **freedom.**"



many children, and the impact it has had on communities across the nation is amazing,” said D’souza. “The large size of this preventative effort against various forms of slavery such as bonded labour and sexual trafficking, as well as the various forms of caste discrimination, is having a visible impact on Dalit communities and their leaders.”

Far from the red-light district

Bhindy* grew up in the red-light district of Mumbai, the economic hub of India. Her mother was gone frequently, and she was cared for by other ladies in her mother’s absence. But these women also disappeared for days at a time, leaving their own children and Bhindya to be cared for by other women. At the time, Bhindya didn’t question why the lane on which she lived, and the entire colony in the notorious downtown district, was home to only women and girls, while men usually only visited for short periods of time.

Five years ago, at age 10, Bhindya was taken into Prati-gya Shelter in Hyderabad, one of two Good Shepherd Healthcare Initiative rehabilitation centres that help women and girls leave a life of prostitution and break the cycle of human trafficking. Here, she received nutritious meals and maintained a daily routine of study, play and devotions.

Today, Bhindya is in grade 10 in a Good Shepherd School and at the top of her class. Unlike her mother, whom she lost to HIV, Bhindya has hope of a meaningful future far from the red-light district. The rehabilitation centres are just one facet of the Good Shepherd Healthcare Initiative, a reputable healthcare system operating in over 80 loca-

tions to help some of the nearly 250 million people with little or no access to proper healthcare. In addition, the programme raises awareness and combats HIV and AIDS, human trafficking and sexual slavery, which affects hundreds of thousands of women in the country.

Growing church movement

In 2003, OM began an indigenous church movement, Good Shepherd Church of India (GSCI), to disciple believers, engage in holistic ministry, and reproduce fellowships around the country.

“We are known today as a fast-growing, transforming church movement, fully engaged in justice and advocacy, in freeing children through English medium schools, in health initiatives and anti-human trafficking, in economic empowerment, and in the training of leaders,” D’souza said.

After nearly five decades, the church movement has 4,000 churches, led by 1,300 pastors. While transformational activities include feeding programmes, educational courses and economic development initiatives, the main focus is discipling individuals in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

With the growth of the movement, it became apparent that decades of prayer for a nation-wide indigenous church was being answered. In March 2012, OM India withdrew from OM’s international legal governance structure and formed a new external organisation, Good Shepherd/OM India. They continue the work started in 1964, with a few individual OM fields partnering in ministry. •

Bringing Christ to the youth of Hungary

AUTHOR: JILL HITCHCOCK • PHOTOGRAPHY: JULIE COLEMAN

The impact of baseball as an outreach tool has grown far beyond a one-week camp that OM worker Terry Lingenhoel, from the USA, began in the summer of 2002 in Érd, Hungary. Today, with over 120 players on eight teams, the Érd Baseball and Softball Club is the largest in the country.



Although only a small percentage of the population plays baseball in Érd, a town of 75,000, most residents know that it is played there, and most city officials and hundreds of parents and former players know that the coaches are followers of Christ who coach differently.

Terry has found sports ministry to be the best tool in reaching non-churched youth and forming long-term relationships. The response of players testifies to its influence. During a recent summer camp, one player said that his best expe-

rience was when his coach encouraged his hitting during his very first practice years ago, despite the way he had played. Another player said that the spiritual input received from coaches was “the icing on the cake”.

“Making contact with players is the most important thing,” says Terry. Often Christians have trouble making contact with teens and men, as many do not readily respond to an invitation to come to a church event—but they’ll accept an invitation to play baseball.

The coaches interact with players two or more times weekly during practice, giving ample opportunity to demonstrate and share their faith. Summer camps give extended times to hold Bible studies in small groups; during such a time, one young boy, Máté, was challenged to ask God to reveal Himself. Asked why he did not believe in God, he responded that he didn't know how a God who knew his past could love him.

During the study, the group discussed how God used Paul, who was the worst of the worst, and made him into a most effective preacher of the gospel. One week after the camp, Máté accepted Christ. The team rejoiced at the news of one new life given to the Lord. Two other boys who had already accepted Christ were baptised a few months later in front of many of their baseball team.

Transforming communities around the country

God is using baseball to transform other communities in Hungary. Only 2,500 people live in the village of Mikepércs in the northeast, yet baseball recently produced the village's first championship team in any sport. Several years ago, fellow Christian worker Russell Chun took up the challenge to use baseball to transform this community. Several players have since come to know Christ, and the entire village identifies baseball as a 'Christian' sport.

In Budapest's 11th District, several young leaders of a Baptist church caught the vision for the potential of baseball to draw young men into their fellowship and to disciple young believers. They now have a men's baseball team composed of believers and unbelievers and are looking for a Christian coach to develop the programme to increase their community impact.

Lajos, a 60-year-old living in Hódmezővásárhely in the south, decided that baseball would be the best way to reach the youth in his community. Within a few months, an adult team started playing in Hungary's NBIII League, and baseball

practice for children began.

"There is no doubt in my mind that we are transforming the baseball community in Hungary," says Terry. "The success of these 'mission clubs' and the integrity and service of our Christian coaches displayed is proof thereof."

Sports reaching out to the world

Sports in missions are not just limited to Hungary's baseball programme. Christian sports enthusiasts around the globe are using sports to meet people and share the good news of the gospel creatively.

OM's SportsLink is part of OM's wider vision to reach specific people groups by making the gospel relevant to all. It serves the Body of Christ by mobilising, empowering and equipping people with a passion for sports to also share their passion for Jesus Christ.

SportsLink leader Chris Welman shares the wider vision of Christians in sports going beyond those involved in the sports to the surrounding community. "Our (Christian) coaches are role models and trendsetters for players and their families to follow Christ and embrace right values. If we reach a few coaches and their players, we have the potential to reach and influence a small community," he states.

"With many of the sports we are involved in being played on Sundays, the playing field for many of us becomes 'church'," he continues. "Many of us spend more time with our players than their fathers do—imagine the impact we can have."

He also shares the dream of SportsLink International to establish sport academies to sustain the ministry and to train new leaders alongside mentors in the field. "This is a very practical way to establish ministry but also raise the next generation of sports leaders. Our dream is to have sport academies in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe in the next two years." •





OM SportsLink in Hungary seeks to use baseball and softball to build relationships, teach biblical values and share the gospel of Jesus with Hungarians.

PHOTO BY JULIE COLEMAN





OM Founder George Verwer and his 2005 go-fer Nathan Smith in the Bahamas

Being a go-fer for George Verwer

AUTHOR: MEGAN R. • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Most people recognise OM Founder George Verwer from his world map windbreaker and the giant globe he throws around at speaking engagements. Those closer to him know that he is the king of correspondence, always in touch via email, letters and calls. But one group of men have spent the most hours with George and likely been the most impacted—his ‘go-fers’.

Travelling with him for a year, they help keep up with emails, sell books and act as chauffeur, bodyguard, errand boy and whatever else George needs. In return, his go-fers go everywhere with him. George told his 2005 go-fer Nathan Smith, “I will take you all over the world. I will give you meaningful opportunities to serve. I will offer you the ability to do some incredible things.”

One of those meaningful opportunities for Nigel Paul, go-fer in 2006, was preaching at a house

church in Al-Qaeda territory in Pakistan.

The lessons go-fers have learnt from George will never be forgotten.

Becoming a go-fer

The first time Nathan heard George speak, he was a student at Moody Bible Institute. “The place was electrified by him being there,” remembers Nathan. “He talked openly about his struggle with sin. And yet he grew this amazing organisa-

tion that reached over a billion people with the gospel.”

Nathan recalls him putting his hand on the outline of Iraq on the globe and praying for his friends there. Nathan was blown away imagining having friends in Iraq and all over the world. He thought, “It would be the coolest thing to travel with George ... but that would never happen to me.” Yet two years later, Nathan was boarding a plane to meet George in London and remembers thinking, “Lord, you heard me and gave me this opportunity.” With George, Nathan travelled to 39 countries. The last country was Iraq, where Nathan could now say he had friends too.

George’s legacy

Nathan learnt two major things. The first was that God uses broken people, and that was how George operated within OM: He never said no to someone who wanted to serve, even if they disagreed with him theologically.

“There was safe space to be a human being who wanted to serve God with everything he had,” Nathan shares. “No one had ever shaped a narrative like that before—it was always: You have to be perfect or holy or really good to do great things in God’s kingdom. George told me that wasn’t true.”

The second thing Nathan learnt was that a good leader not only recognises his own brokenness, but absorbs other people’s brokenness as well. One example was George’s willingness to go to someone who had a problem with him. “He has had enemy after enemy over the years that attacked him, derided him and critiqued him, and he would go directly to those people to try to build a bridge,” Nathan shares. “Some of the people that were his harshest critics became his most ardent supporters as a result.”

George would also apologise to people, often in tears, for a wrong he was not even responsible for. He always felt that relationship was more important than being right.

Nigel shared that George taught him, “to be big-hearted or risk becoming judgmental and disillusioned. I saw how much God could use the combination of big-picture thinking, realistic strategies and simple obedience.”

A light shining in the darkness

Once George was riding the bus in London when something hit the back of his head. A few teenagers had

thrown a balled-up piece of paper at him. George ignored it at first, and then it happened again. He took out a few Bible tracts and walked back to them. “I know what it’s like to be young,” he said. “I led a gang in New Jersey when I was a boy, but now I love Jesus and I want to give these tracts to you.”

He went back to his seat, but soon felt another piece of paper hit his head. This time, it was a wadded-up tract. However, one of the boys left the group to sit next to him. George shared about what Christ had done for him and what He could do for the boy as well.

“It has been said that the greatest leaders are those who submit themselves to the greatest abuse, especially from within their own circle, and still give away love and dignity free of expectations,” wrote Nathan about the incident. “I believe that the Christ-likeness that George shared with these young men will forever imprint grace and love in their hearts that only see a world that offers judgment, retribution and a lust for what is deserved. This is the gospel light shining in the darkness before men.”

A lasting impression

Through his time with George, Nigel was inspired to start his own ministry, MoveIn, which mobilises Christians to ‘move in’ among the unreached urban poor. The organisation includes 39 teams in 14 cities in England, Germany and Canada. Nigel also started a discipleship centre (DC) for

young men where they live, eat, pray and have devotions together, in hope of impacting their neighbourhood for Christ. Twenty-nine men from countries like Kazakhstan, Iran, Kenya and Mexico have lived at DC.

Nathan and his wife, Abby, have made their own home a ‘safe space’ for others. He is a youth pastor and practices the patience, love and forbearance learnt from George.

“When I left, after two years with OM, I said, ‘George, you were like a father to me,’” he says. “There are few men on the planet that walk closer to what Jesus looked like than George Verwer.” When Nathan got married, George was a groomsman in his wedding. “There’s nobody else like him and there never will be,” he says. •

“It has been said that the greatest leaders are those who submit themselves to the greatest abuse, especially from within their own circle, and still give away **love and dignity** free of expectations.”

Peter Maiden: Bringing structure to a pioneering movement

AUTHOR: REBECCA BARNHART • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Throughout OM's 60-year history, three men have led the movement: Founder George Verwer, Peter Maiden, and Lawrence Tong, the current leader. George's 'heir apparent' for 20+ years, Peter Maiden became International Director in 2003, a role he held until 2013. OM talked with Peter and his wife, Win, about their 40+ years in OM, visiting nearly 100 countries, and the 10 years Peter served as OM's International Director. Peter joined OM in 1973 as the United Kingdom director. "George asked me to come initially for a year," Peter said, "and it's certainly been a long year!"

At what point did you know you would succeed George as the International Director?

Peter: I'd been the Associate International Director for close to 20 years. It was almost taken for granted because I had been working so closely with George. Still, there was a robust process to formalise my appointment, so I wasn't sure until the final vote at the International Leaders Meetings (ILM) in 2002.

What were your primary goals when taking over in August 2003? Did you feel you accomplished them?

Peter: It was a strange transition because, in my role as Associate, I'd been leading the ILM, the International Executive Committee (IEC) and the strategic planning process. I'd been part of forming those goals so, when I took over from George, it wasn't an abrupt, 'Let me pray and think through the goals.' I was already doing it.

We were looking at integrated mission. We had been very strong on proclamation and wanted to keep that, but realised that in many parts of the world our ministry had

to be to the whole person and community. As part of holistic mission, we were also looking at how a person's gifting could be used in mission; we were looking at the use of sport, business, dance and more in our mission strategy. OM's leadership had been very Western-dominated, and we were seeking to make the movement more comfortable for non-Western people to move into significant responsibility. We only took the first steps in this transition; Lawrence has carried that forward much further.

Another goal was developing the next generation of leaders. The Joshua Journey came out of that, as well as Leadership Matters and Leader as a Person training. We were also progressing from the pioneer movement—where George carried everything around in a bag—to developing the first International Director's Accountability Group and having the first discussions on an international board. We became more decentralised as a field-led movement, with the areas having more involvement in decisions for their fields. We also focused on fund raising as a ministry and not as a painful necessity!

The key relationship for me was with George, and so it

was incredibly important to maintain a good relationship with him and ensure that he felt honoured as the founder of the movement. I'm delighted with the way George is still comfortable in OM, and the movement feels comfortable with him.

Many people probably felt they knew you well, since you were OM's leader for a decade. What would surprise people most about your time as International Director?

Peter: To some degree, I always felt a little unqualified in the role because I never lived long term in a cross-cultural situation. I stayed in Carlisle, UK, where Win and I are from. It provided incredible stability for the family, but also provided some shortcomings: When we talked about the integration of the Global South into mission, which was dominated by the West, I felt vulnerable because I hadn't lived outside of my culture.



What was the hardest trip you had to take?

Peter: After the *Doulos* bombing in the Philippines in 1991, I flew out with Dale Rhoton, visited the surviving victims and then went to the ship. I had to lead devotions and speak about suffering and God's purpose in it. That was very challenging, very emotional.

Win: For me, it was going to an old Anglican church in Peshawar, Pakistan, and seeing plaques of the names of missionaries and their children who had died. It was humbling to see the reality of the sacrifices people had made.

Nearly four years since handing the reigns to Lawrence Tong, what do you miss most and least about being OM's International Director?

Peter: I definitely miss the depth of fellowship, particularly with the IEC and the senior team in Carlisle. But I don't miss saying goodbye to the family and the constant travelling.

Win: All the separations and goodbyes when Peter had to leave for trips were hard on the family. I wasn't part of a team and didn't understand what OM was or why Peter was travelling. I went to a conference in Belgium [in the late '70s] and then understood the big picture of OM and the purpose for Peter's travel. As the years went by and I got to know OM, I loved OM and admired what everyone was doing. Now I miss friends all over the world.

[When asked what they're enjoying the most about post-International Director life, they both agreed it was having more time together. "We love being together, after all these years," Win said. "We revel in it."]

Win, what advice do you have for wives of mission leaders?

Win: Speaking as a wife and mother: Do the parenting, because you only get one shot at it. It's not the 'second best' in ministry; parenting is the biggest job you'll get to do.

Are you in contact with George or Lawrence much? Is there some secret Three Musketeers group that only you, George and Lawrence can attend?

Peter: I'm in touch with George via email and see him at Special Projects meetings. Lawrence has been incredibly respectful in keeping in touch with me since he's taken over, and I saw him in December 2016. The three of us will be together in Bangkok at the ILM in 2017.

How do you spend your time now?

Peter: I have a heavy load of teaching and preaching. My latest book, *Building on the Rock*, was published in summer 2016 and focuses on our identity in Christ as His sons and daughters. I'm also in a mentoring relationship with a few men, and I advise a number of Christian organisations.

What is your prayer for OM as we mark this 60th anniversary?

Peter: I'm very encouraged with the direction that OM is taking. My prayer is that it will stay united, and the clear cutting edge that the Global Planning Process has brought to OM will be maintained. •



The next ship project

AUTHOR: TATU KEKKONEN • PHOTOGRAPHY: JOSHUA BUHRMANN / LINCOLN BACCHUS

Logos Hope is the fourth OM ship, and plans began to take shape for her in 2003 when previous ships *Doulos* and *Logos II* were still in service. “We had a mission statement in mind: ‘every one in a million,’” shares Myles Toews, director of financial development for OM Ships.

“The annual average of visitors to OM’s ships was one million, but there were limitations to impact all of them,” he shares, explaining the mission statement. “There was an idea of better stewardship that we should offer more for these people who visit our ship.”

With that in mind, the future ship would need a special design: A whole deck for visitors to experience the greatness of God. There would be a proper introduction, exhibitions, a theatre and a book fair. While walking through that deck, every visitor would have opportunity to take at least one step closer to Jesus.

So strong was this vision that the ship was named before it was even found. From nearly 200 suggested names, *Logos Hope* was chosen after prayer and discussion. “The name embraces the purpose and vision of the Ship Ministry,” wrote former OM Ships Managing Director Bernd Guelker in a 2003 newsletter.

Before determining the right vessel, information on 180 potentially suitable ships was gathered from all over the world. On a narrowed list of 38 ships, one rose above others—an ocean ferry, *Norröna I*, from the Faroe Islands. “It was perfect, but the price was too high and there were many other buyers,” Myles says. “It was all in God’s hands. Even though two other companies tried to buy *Norröna I*, something always came up to end negotiations.”

After the ship came back on the market for a second time, OM Ships held an international day of prayer on 29 March 2004 and then confirmed the proposal to buy. On 19 April, the ship was purchased for 3.6 million euros. The vessel was then sailed south from Denmark to a shipyard in Croatia to be transformed for ministry use.

Funding *Logos Hope* was a great learning experience. “The Lord used many supporters to give us the courage to move forwards. Later, He even slowed the work at the shipyard when we didn’t have enough money to pay for renovations,” Myles shared.

From empowerment to commitment

For the previous 20 years, this 12,000-tonne ferry sailed between the Faroe Islands and Denmark, Iceland, Norway and the Shetland Islands—basically every Faroese had sailed on it. Many people in the Faroe Islands with a strong Christian faith supported the purchase and were happy that their ship would be now bringing good news to people around the world.

“Christians on the Faroe Islands took an enormous responsibility for the ship. They said that they will take care of the refurbishment of the ship’s bridge. They sent workers, purchased a lot of equipment and raised money,” Myles says.

This empowering influence of the Faroese didn’t end with the purchase and refurbishment of *Logos Hope*. Initially, there had been only one OM representative on the islands; since then, a Faroese OM team has established its place and hosted annual *Logos Hope*-themed mission weeks. Recently, they sent one

of the largest groups to the TeenStreet youth conference in Germany.

In 2016, the mission week in October was filled with church events, *Logos Hope* alumni meetings and visits to partnering companies. The local Christian radio station featured *Logos Hope* Week in its programming every day, morning and evening, for the whole week. Many partnering companies in the Faroe Islands are fishing companies and, for them, OM gave a unique opportunity to participate in ministry. Companies and individuals signed a contract with a local fuel company to be invoiced directly for an amount of fuel they want to put in *Logos Hope*’s tanks.

Support for the Ship Ministry from this small country is empowering for others. “What is accomplished here is remarkable,” says Myles. “There is no other country where everybody knows what it takes to sail the seas.” •



YeSol Lee (South Korea) welcomes guests to the official opening of Logos Hope in Las Palmas, Spain.



Jesus' hands and feet to those affected by HIV and AIDS

AUTHOR: DEBORAH NGOBENI, WITH JANET WEBER • PHOTOGRAPHY: KOEUN JUNG

Katlego, a young South African, lives with HIV. Far smaller than anyone in her class, she tired easily and struggled in school. Her mother also suffered from HIV and struggled to find work. In 2014, Katlego started attending OM's Meetse a Bophelo centre in Mamelodi Township, near Pretoria. Workers have seen many changes in Katlego over the last two years. She has gained weight, and now lights up the room with her smile and sense of humour. She has a positive attitude toward school and asks for help if she struggles with homework.

An estimated seven million South Africans live with HIV, and over two million children have been orphaned as a result¹. In 2005, OM began AIDS Hope which reaches out to churches, schools and communities with a preventative message about HIV and AIDS, appealing to groups to care for those affected. In 2009, Nico and Alma Leonard started Meetse a Bophelo (Fountain of Life) as a safe environment for the local community. Children affected by HIV, like Katlego, take part in afternoon programmes and are provided a balanced meal, vitamins and a nutrient-rich milkshake every day.

The children also learn about Jesus and how to share their faith. Recently, they went to the surrounding neighbourhood for a simple outreach. They split into small groups, accompanied by a teacher, and were given a list of things they could do, such as thank a police officer, pray with someone or share their faith.

One woman they met said, “I will sleep with peace in my heart tonight because I have heard the Word of God and am encouraged.” Some asked what the children wanted in return and were shocked by the response, “We don’t want anything. We love God and want you to see God’s love and love Him too.”

In April 2016, Katlego’s mother passed away. The AIDS Hope team surrounded Katlego with love and care, offering support to her family.

Restoring lost hope

According to UNAIDS, 36.7 million people worldwide are HIV positive, and HIV and AIDS affect millions more friends, relatives and children devastated by the illness or death of a loved one.

AIDS Hope in South Africa is one of many OM ministries making a difference in such lives. OM partners with AIDS-Link International to holistically prevent the disease, as well as restore the lives of individuals and communities.

“Jesus showed a bias towards those who were suffering—society’s outcasts,” says Rosemary Hack, director of AIDSLink International, who became passionate about reaching out to those living with HIV and AIDS when she saw the huge need for people of faith to get involved. “For believers, it is a great opportunity to be Jesus to them. We can impart hope—something that people living with HIV have often lost.”

Nineteen years ago, David and Judy Schmidt’s domestic worker, Alice, became sick. A hospital confirmed she

was HIV positive and in the AIDS stage of the disease. Judy spent many hours by Alice’s bedside, nursing and feeding her until she passed away. This experience led them to begin a ministry to people living with HIV, in memory of Alice.

Started in 2003, Alto Refugio in Asunción, Paraguay, became a well-respected drop-in centre for HIV patients. Now the couple ministers with OM in Ciudad del Este, a city in the tri-border area where Paraguay meets Brazil and Argentina, known for being a hub of the sex-trafficking industry.

In partnership with AIDSLink International, the Schmidts work with the local hospital’s HIV department to provide social and spiritual care for patients. “People living with HIV may be able to access medical help—though not all can—but often the hospitals tell us that they can’t give the psycho/social/spiritual help that is needed and rely on us to do that,” said Rosemary.

Recently, the director of the local hospital asked David to meet a young man just diagnosed. “I saw him crying, with his mother at his side,” said David. After being introduced, the young man told them of his dream to study psychology, “but he had given up all hope for the future,” recalled David. “We invited him to the support group meeting.”

David asked if he could pray with them. “I soon noticed that my young friend was following me in prayer, with tears running down his face,” said David. “As I led him in a prayer of repentance and receiving Jesus as Saviour and Lord, he repeated the prayer with conviction.”

For a while, the couple lost contact until David saw him at the hospital again. “His condition had deteriorated; he was thin and very weak, and had sores all over his face. I prayed with him for the Lord’s healing touch.”

Offering rest to him and his mother in their home, Judy encouraged him to trust Jesus with his life. Not long after, he passed away.

This man’s and Katlego’s story are two in a million. Though these situations are fraught with difficulty, OM workers know that God’s ultimate plan is good, and they continue to bring hope in the name of Jesus Christ. •

“We can
impart hope
—something
that people
living with
HIV have
often lost.”

¹ <http://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/sub-saharan-africa/south-africa>

A people rising to reach their nation and beyond

AUTHOR: ESTHER HIPPEL • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

Where is Moldova? Many Europeans know nothing of this small former Soviet country that borders the European Union—a country where many suffer poverty, hunger and deprivation, dying of cold inside their houses. Moldova is crippled by corruption and political instability, forcing parents to leave children and elderly behind to work abroad—a country devastatingly vulnerable to alcoholism, human trafficking and suicide.

However, it's also where OM has experienced God in amazing ways. Starting with a young British couple moving to the country in 1998, over the following 10-15 years, outreaches grew into a variety of relief and development projects, several missions training programmes, business, literature, church planting, arts and sports ministries. By 2010, responsibility for most ministries had passed into the hands of Moldovans and, in 2015, a Moldovan was appointed as director.



God's love reaching the forgotten

Churches running OM's elderly projects help the old lady who can't afford bread, receiving a pension of 50 euros but needing 80 euros for medication; the old man who lost his house because his alcoholic son used it as security for a loan he couldn't repay; and many other poor, helpless and utterly lonely elderly.

Most of them believe in an unapproachable God who has no personal interest in them and whose favour must be earned. If they want a priest to pray for them, they need to pay. They have never heard the gospel, never held a Bible. Many are bedridden, so God has to enter into their old, damaged, foul-smelling houses and stand at their bedsides. And He does ... in His children who bring food and physical help, as well as His Word.

Many turn to this God who has not forgotten them—people like Pavel*, who admits to having considered suicide but, through OM's project, became interested in God. He was the first of several elderly in his village that came to faith and were baptised.

OM's projects reach out to those with disa-



bilities—completely ignored by society, hidden away by their families and attributed no worth—or the countless children living with alcoholic parents who suffer severe neglect and abuse and are left open to exploitation.

OM helps hundreds of local churches transform their communities by caring for those forgotten by others, as well as fuelling change, for example, through business training. Believers who started businesses have offered jobs to others in their community or pass on their knowledge, like Andrei*, who, within two years, grew a bee-keeping business of 120 hives and then gave away equipment and bees to three other men, whom he continues to instruct. One has already come to faith through Andrei's friendship, example and investment.

Churches multiplying to transform their nation

This partnership with local churches and the training of national believers has always been central to OM ministry. Churches used to being receivers of foreign aid are becoming providers of hope and relief to their communities. OM encourages them to extend their vision beyond their own communities to unreached areas and beyond.

Several areas in Moldova have not a single believer within a radius of 100 kilometres. One of these is visited annually by OM's River Adventure teams. People eagerly await the teams every summer, local authorities are supportive, children remember songs and messages they hear, and the elderly are hungry to talk about God and read the Bible.

OM cooperates with churches that have a vision to plant churches in unreached areas. Supporting such initiatives is the main purpose of OM's small Local Ministry Teams, teams of OM workers who live in a community alongside church planters, until the new communities are able to live unaided and themselves go out and multiply.

Moldovans sharing God's heart for the world

A central pillar of OM affecting all other ministries is the training of Moldovan believers in the Challenge into Missions (CiM) course. Hundreds of Moldovans have gone through this training and returned to their churches with new vision, skills and passion. Some have planted new churches. Many joined OM to reach their own country and the world.

"Who will go to them?" Catea* felt God ask her when she heard about the world's unreached during the CiM training. "I will go," was her response; recently she joined OM to receive further direction and preparation. Catea had worked in Italy for 10 years and could have simply stayed abroad; instead, she joined those who have become an embodiment of the passion and vision of Moldovan followers of Jesus who, unlike many of their fellow citizens, refuse to give up on their country or seek a more comfortable way. Instead, with a passionate witness for Jesus they are determined to bring hope and transformation to their own communities, to their nation and to the ends of the earth. •

The transformational power of the arts

AUTHOR: JANET WEBER, WITH LAUREN O'SHEA, SHARAYAH FONYAD & BILL DRAKE • PHOTOGRAPHY: GARRETT NASRALLAH

While on tour in 2008 with his band in Azerbaijan, Bill Drake knelt after a successful concert, broken before the Lord. He laid his career as an international recording and performing artist at God's feet, sacrificing it to see God's kingdom furthered in other ways. Bill knew that God would take this sacrifice and birth a movement far greater than he could have imagined.

Four months later, Bill and artists with a similar vision to use the arts in missions drafted the founding charter of OM Arts International. What started in 2009 as a handful of artists has grown into a team of 73 artists in 23 fields in 2016, working in a variety of capacities full and part time.

In the past four years, OM Arts has sent 517 artists on 95 short-term mission trips in 30 countries, trained 118 artists to be missionaries, and presented the gospel to 110,000 people.

Equipping artists for short- and long-term missions

The OM Arts Incarnate programme, brainchild of Mat Carson, then OM Arts Director of Training, started in 2012 from a desire to equip artists with discipleship training before sending them out. In this 16-week holistic programme, participants engage in artistic and spiritual mentorship, academic courses to learn more about God, what

role they have in His story and how they, as artists, interact with the stories of others. The first 12 weeks are spent in residence, and the last four in a practical placement.

"Incarnate isn't an arts training programme; it's an artist-transforming programme," said Bill. "We want to see transformed artists transforming lives and communities. The academics provide biblical, spiritual and creative structure to what we do."

In its short existence, Incarnate has produced incredible fruit. A number of participants have become professionals in their disciplines, a full-time visual artist was sent as a missionary to Belgium, and arts ministry began in Italy and Costa Rica.

Costa Rican Susanna Rodriguez participated in Incarnate 2014, during which God re-birthed her long-time vision to open a dance school to glorify God in her home country. Upon returning to Costa Rica, she called 20 creative friends and former co-workers and shared what she had learnt. She was going to work with OM Arts and added, "I want you to be a part of it."

Ten of the 20 committed to helping her start the dance Academia Sabik**, with the support of OM Arts. She and her little team currently serve 70 students a week, ranging from children to adults, in 10 different dance classes, from Zumba to hip-hop to ballet. They witness, perform together and invite students to join in Bible studies. "I want to have multiple studios with music, dance, theatre and visual art. I imagine a place where people from all over Latin America can get Christian training and discipleship using the arts. I imagine something big, because I serve a big God!" Susanna said.

Bridging cultural gaps

OM Arts teams worldwide touch audiences in various ways. Live street music draws a crowd; dancers provide wholesome entertainment; painters pique public curiosity. Once artists have touched a seeker's heart, a door opens to share about what they are doing, what lyrics to a song mean, why dancers want to glorify God, and what a painting represents.

"Art is broadly powerful because people are used to communicating through art. They respect art and admire art; when an artist brings art overseas, he or she gains an

two peoples," said Kelly*, who led the team. "We used music as a tool to build relationships."

The ethnomusicologists worked with the Nubian believer, the North African singers and secular Nubian musicians to create a first draft of a worship song in the Nubian language and traditional music style.

"This project was a great encouragement to the Nubian believer," Kelly said. "The possibility of seeing how God can work in your own people group is exciting." Through the project, the North Africans and the Sudanese Nubians developed strong relationships that would last.



audience. Bridging the cultural gap is absolutely critical to sharing the gospel, and one of the most effective, strategic ways to accomplish this is through the arts," said Bill.

Heart Sounds International (HSI), an OM Arts ministry started by Frank Fortunato, seeks to bridge cultural gaps by working with communities to develop indigenous expressions of authentic Christian worship through song writing and music recording. In February 2016, HSI sent a team of ethnomusicologists (those who study music in its cultural context) to help a group of North African singers and one of only a few-known Sudanese Nubian believers to write a worship song in the Nubian language. Before this project, many of the North Africans had never interacted with Nubians. "As outsiders, we built a bridge between

Our creative God

"The arts can be transformational," said Bill, "causing us to see things differently and therefore think and behave differently. Our creative God has bestowed transformational power on the arts in His Word to express His heart, His truth, and His redemptive purpose for mankind. The arts reflect the full range and beauty of abundant life in the here and now. Let's enthusiastically embrace that! We will be better prepared to gaze one day straight into His magnificence and see the Divine Artist face to face." •

** *Sabik* is a Tagalog word meaning to earnestly desire, to pursue, and to be greatly enthusiastic.



**Mixed media on wood. Neuron Series,
“The Inception of Wings”, “A Bird’s Simple Song”**

ARTWORK BY GEINENE CARSON

“Artists who go into the community as learners not only create informed art, but also naturally initiate genuine relationships,” states OM artist Geinene Carson. “The Neuron Series began as prayers for our daughter with a rare genetic disorder. I grew intrigued by the beautiful complexity of our minds: neurons and the transformative power of neurogenesis. If songbirds create neural pathways with each season’s new song, there must be hope for the places in our minds yet untapped or in need of restoration.”

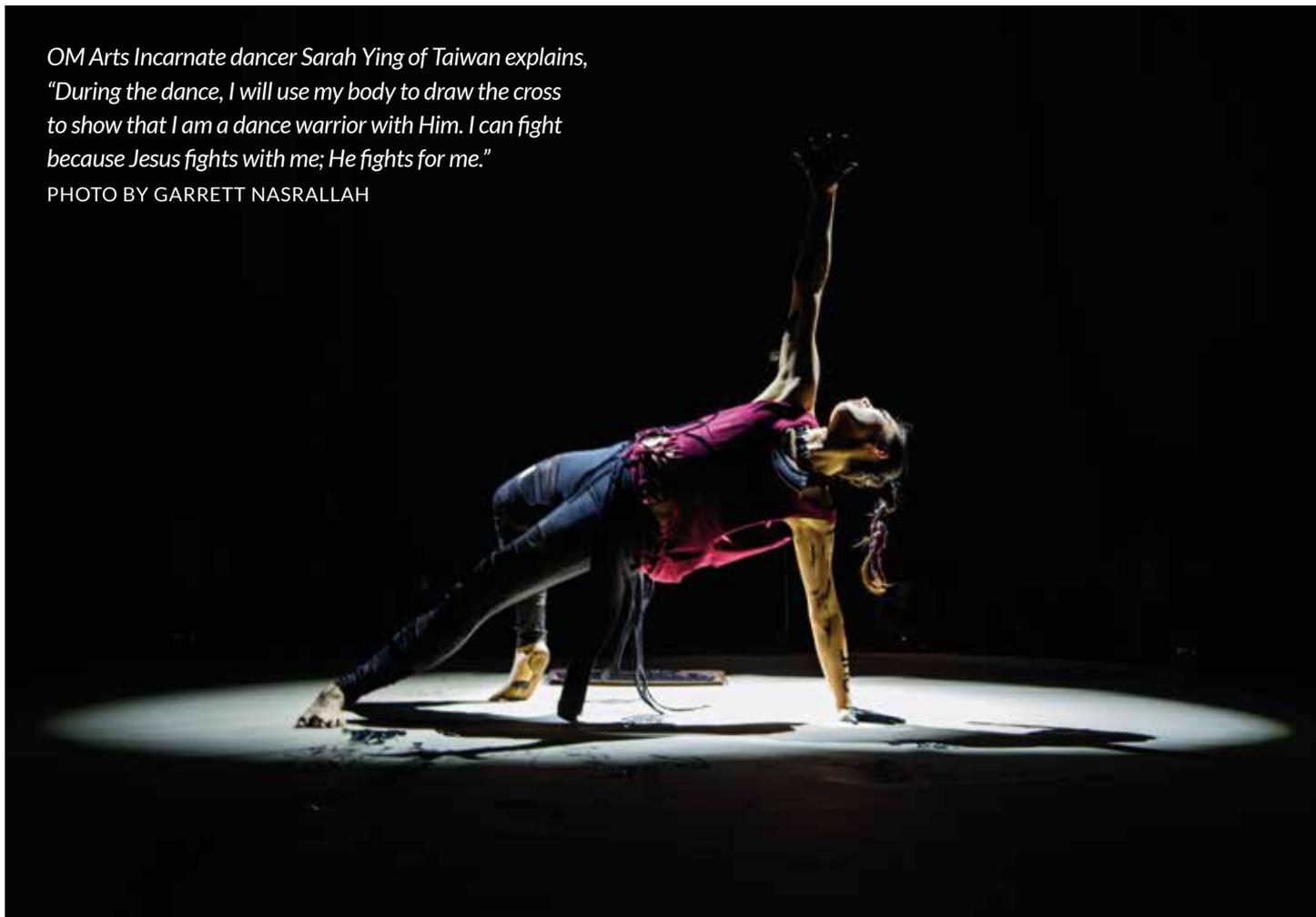
Larissa finds inspiration among fellow musicians at Incarnate, the training and discipleship programme of OM Arts.

PHOTO BY JULIE COLEMAN



OM Arts Incarnate dancer Sarah Ying of Taiwan explains, "During the dance, I will use my body to draw the cross to show that I am a dance warrior with Him. I can fight because Jesus fights with me; He fights for me."

PHOTO BY GARRETT NASRALLAH





A new wave of missionaries

AUTHOR: SIMON MARIJANI • PHOTOGRAPHY: REBECCA REMPEL

Mission work in the Global South¹ has both historical and biblical foundations. While a post-colonial historical narrative has long overshadowed the biblical understanding of the Great Commission by churches in the Global South, a new movement in Africa, Asia and Latin America has introduced a new era in missions.

No longer unreached

OM's ministry started in 1957 with a few young students in Mexico. The focus soon shifted towards Europe, the Middle East and India. Yet OM would later make a comeback in 1978 to Catholic Latin America, where only four per cent of the population identified as evangelicals.

OM's ships expended great effort reaching people in Latin America while creating missions awareness. The first mission conference in Latin America was conducted by OM on board *Doulos*;

a former OM leader would later become director of COMIBAM, one of the most important regional mission networks. Today, Latin America is a significant mission force, with 20 per cent of the population identifying as evangelical.

For 10 years, OM has worked in Talamanca, Costa Rica, to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to its indigenous people afflicted by witchcraft, alcoholism, abuse and violence. Linda Villanueva, daughter of a partnering church's pastor, is the first missionary sent out from Talamanca.

In March 2016, Linda and 33 OM staff and volunteers ministered in Ahuachapán, El Salvador. “To be a missionary isn’t easy,” said Linda, “but if God calls you to it, He will give you the strength to continue. I would like to work with youth in my community ... to see them come to Jesus. I will be ready to serve and support the Lord’s work wherever He wants.”

Relaunching the canoes

The church in Papua New Guinea (PNG) was planted by Western missionaries arriving by canoes in the early 1800s and slowly spread from the coast inland. At that time, Christians there believed that “they were the last to receive the good news,” said Kepo Kure, OM’s country leader. They referred to themselves as “the end of the world”, meaning that everyone else knew about Christ.

OM’s work in PNG began in 1991 with the vision to mobilise churches for missions, and to train and send Papua New Guineans in partnership with churches to the unreached. “We are working to change their worldview,” Kepo explained. “[We need] to relaunch the canoes from PNG out again!

“The gospel influenced my culture,” he continued. “Missionaries helped change our cultural cruelties to what we are now”—a Christian nation, where 50 per cent of the 7.5 million inhabitants are believers. “PNG received missionaries—and we still do today—and through them the church grew and matured,” Kepo said. “It’s our turn to take the gospel to other places that have not heard.”

OM trains and equips people for ministry, partnering with almost 30 churches to prayerfully and financially support workers sent out all over the world.

Stepping out in faith

OM in Africa aspires to transform 350 communities amongst least-reached people groups by 2025. To do this, OM seeks to motivate, prepare and send 5,000+ new workers to and from the African continent. Already, a wave of young passionate Africans has stepped out in faith, overcoming stereotypes and challenges.

Where the church in most areas previously understood missions to be a Western idea involving expensive mission centers, schools and hospitals, it now understands that missions is about building people’s lives and influencing change in the community. “It took us two years to convince pastors in Mozambique that they can be missionaries,” recalled Francois Vosloo, former leader of OM’s work in

Africa. “Two things that the missionaries to Africa did not teach were to give and to go—largely because of poverty.”

OM has sent six young Zimbabweans to serve on board *Logos Hope*, in addition to several other Zimbabweans sent to Central Asia and North Africa; a dozen more serve in Zimbabwe, mobilising churches and sharing hope amongst least-reached communities.

Peter*, from Ghana, leads the work of OM there. Along with a dozen fellow Ghanaian missionaries, they rescue trafficked women and reach out to Muslims and university students. Michael* and his wife from South Africa lead a regional ministry, while Bupe*, a survivor of slavery as a young woman, now teaches sewing to at-risk women and girls. Her work has influenced her church to join in missions.

Overcoming challenges

A number of obstacles to fully unlocking the missions potential from the Global South remain. “We need an alternative, self-sustainable, entrepreneurial mission model that will revolutionise missions in this century,” said OM International Associate Director Peter Tarantal. “We need models relevant to the Global South Church.”

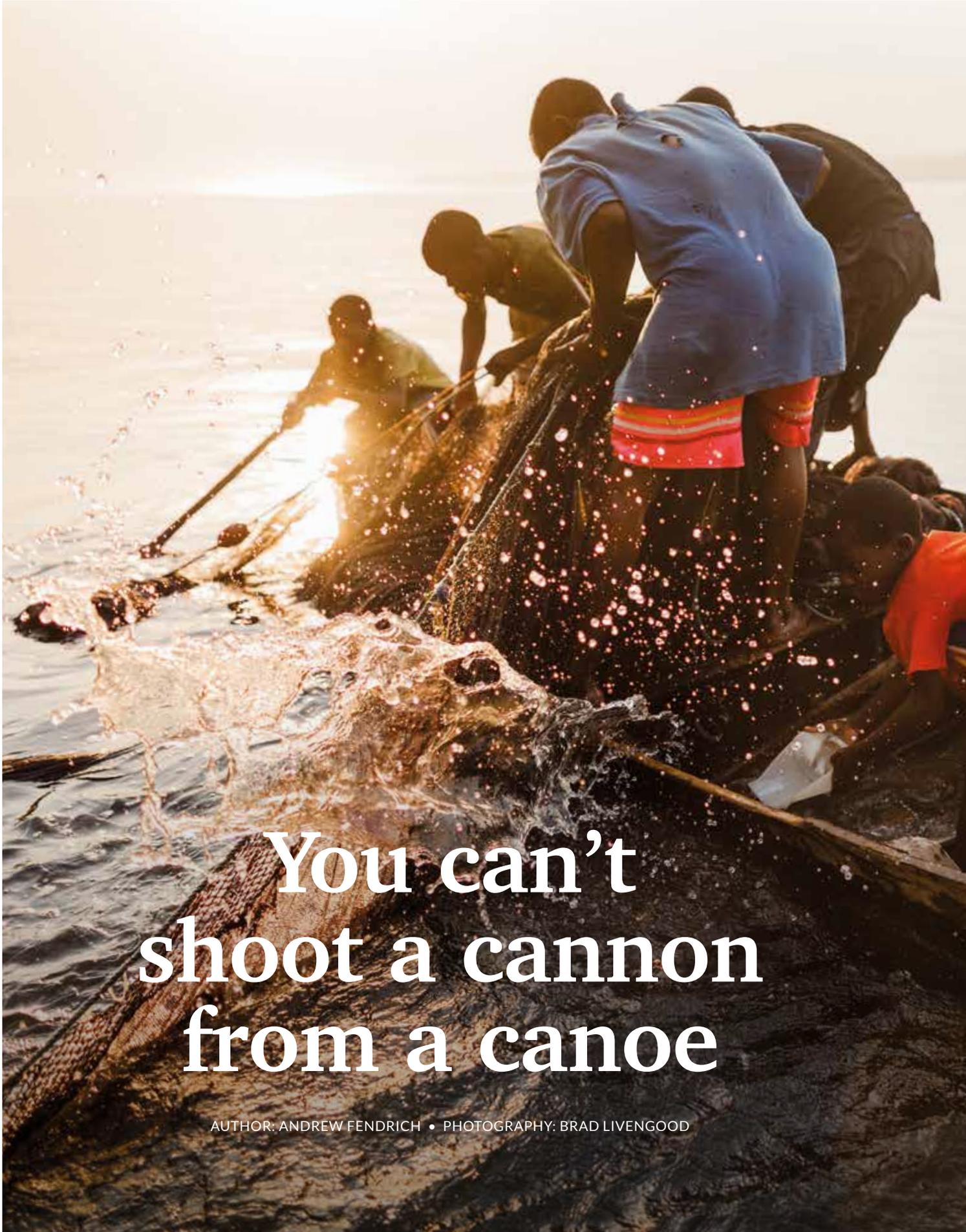
OM East Asia Pacific Area Leader Mike Hey underlined, “It is important for OM to discover fresh ways to help the church in China, Nepal, the Philippines and elsewhere in the region to see vibrant communities of Christ followers.”

A significant catalyst for the missionary movement is the distinctive international character of OM teams, comprised of national workers with a strong knowledge of local context, and foreign workers with a missional heritage that allows for cross pollination of ideas and experience.

In 2013, OM also established the Global South Initiative, a five-year project to reach the least-reached through resourcing the Global South Church to achieve financial sustainability in business models. Since 2014, GSI has been involved in 38 projects with a direct impact on 60 OM fields and ministries. By 2025, GSI aims to see 7,000 new missionaries from the Global South impacting 500 communities among the least reached. •

“Through them
[missionaries]
the church grew
and matured.
It’s our turn to
take the gospel
to other places
that have not
heard.”

¹The Global South includes Central and Latin America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Middle East and Near East, all of Africa, Central Asia and all of Asia except Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea.



You can't shoot a cannon from a canoe

AUTHOR: ANDREW FENDRICH • PHOTOGRAPHY: BRAD LIVENGOD

Five thousand missionaries in 350 communities by the year 2025: A lofty ambition for OM in Africa, saturated in prayer and God's grace.

But that goal presented today wouldn't have been possible before 2009—a year that saw the culmination of years of partnership between OM Africa and Pro Christo. What most people don't know, former OM Africa Area Leader Francois Vosloo says, is that the relationship between the two organisations runs deeper, with former Pro Christo leadership working closely with OM from Pro Christo's conception in 1991.

Though the two organisations worked closely together, OM Africa Area Leader Melvin Chiombe, at the time in leadership with Pro Christo, says that the idea of a merger was not in the picture. "Pro Christo from its inception had connections with OM South Africa, through Francois," he says. "In 1997, when we had a mission conference, Francois was a speaker. At that time, we didn't [foresee] a merger; we were just in partnership."

When Coen Schultz began Pro Christo in Zambia in 1999, he fell into step with the partnership; in 2004, OM Books and Pro Christo joined to distribute Christian literature throughout central Africa.

Early in 2008, the idea of a merger surfaced not only as a natural fit, but as a key component in the expansion of missions in Africa. Coen, who had moved to South Africa to disciple and mobilise university students for missions, contacted Melvin to make sure it was beneficial for everyone.

"I told him that it's about the kingdom, not the name of an organisation," Melvin says. "But ... I had some reservations. The values and vision were the same, but I was concerned about policies and governance. Since Pro Christo was a small organisation, it was easier to make decisions than for a bigger organisation like OM."

In an effort to promote the advantages for both groups, Melvin suggested the partnership be looked at as a marriage union, where two unique individuals find a way to join together despite differences.

"It was crucial that Pro Christo maintained its DNA,"

Melvin says. "A passion for the lost, the least reached, an emphasis on practical discipleship, and a pioneer spirit of risk-taking."

Seeking a win-win

OM willingly accommodated Pro Christo, Francois says, given their passion for equipping indigenous Africans for missions and looking for unreached people groups. "Pro Christo had a clear vision: Minus 30," Francois says. "They wanted to take 30 people groups off the 'unreached people' list." OM shared the vision and the two groups merged.

Since, the Minus 30 goal has been exceeded. According to Coen, the merger has directly brought "holistic impact" to some 30-50 least-reached people groups and more than 150 communities, including such as the Yao, a Muslim people group living primarily in Malawi.

In turn, Malawi has produced its own missionaries, like Samson, from the Yao people group, who now works with OM after being led to Christ by a Malawian OM church planter.

In addition to Pro Christo's added value for OM, Melvin says that the merger has proved a great positive for what was a small mission effort. "OM opened Pro Christo to the wider body of Christ, and to good systems that were in place," he says. "Also, Pro Christo has added value to the work of OM in Africa. Today we have 13 fields in Africa, the majority coming from Pro Christo, which has contributed many of the leaders in those fields."

No longer is OM's ministry in Africa a funnel for international missionaries to come to the continent. OM Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe facilitate missions discipleship training for rising

local missionaries. More than that, Melvin's passion for training up and sending out African missionaries, which fueled the dream Francois and OM already had, has resulted in hundreds of indigenous missionaries currently serving on the field.

For Melvin, the merger is a picture of how the Body of Christ worked in the early church. "God and His kingdom is not about individuals or a specific organisation; it's about unity," he says. "When you look at the early church, one of their strengths which made them more effective was when they came together. There is power in unity."

"This is what I've seen: Today, the work in Africa and beyond is growing because of the unity. It may have challenges, but we have demonstrated to the world that two organisations can come together and extend God's kingdom." •

"When you look at the early church, one of **their strengths** which made them more effective was when they came together."

Sustainable solutions for missions

AUTHOR: REBECCA REMPEL • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

For years, the Global North has provided the majority of resources—funding and people—and the Global South¹ has been the recipient. But now, as the church in the Global South rises up, places once mission destinations are becoming starting points.

Having a missional mindset doesn't send out missionaries instantaneously. Because a lack of funding prevents many Global South churches from sending out missionaries, a new way of funding missions is needed. OM's Global South Initiative (GSI) is a five-year project started in 2013 that seeks to reach the least reached through resourcing the Global South Church to achieve financial sustainability through 'turn-key' business models at both field and individual missionary levels. A turn-key business has already been tested for success and pre-assembled—essentially needing only to 'turn the key' to start.

Since 2014, GSI has been involved in 38 projects with a direct impact on 60 OM fields and ministries. Projects currently running include organic farming in Asia, selling electricity in the Near East, leasing harvesters in Moldova, building townhouses in Zambia and developing a Global Food Garden in Germany. By 2025, GSI aims to see 7,000 new missionaries from the Global South impacting 500 communities among the least reached.

Planting without soil

The Global Food Garden (GFG), also re-

ferred to as 'the bubble', was designed in Germany to produce vegetables with a minimum of water and no soil, made possible by suspending the plants' roots in the air and delivering nutrients through mist. As many places around the world lack water, rich soil, or both, the GFG provides a unique solution, allowing more plants to grow in a smaller space.

The first bubble was created in China as a response to the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. The system soon proved too technical and expensive to be easily replicated, so OM teams developed and tested smaller systems. Cindy Shinabarger leads the Hydroponics Sustainability project for the team in the USA that works with off-the-grid, low-tech, hydroponic technology to aid areas where consistent electricity is a concern.

"The system allows produce to be grown in places where soil will not support traditional farming and where there is a lack of suitable water," explained Cindy. "The simplicity of the system has universal appeal: The same technology can be used in a small-scale system to help feed an individual family all the way to a commercial greenhouse, which could provide revenue for a field."



Currently, the project is partnering with OM in Ghana and the Aguri School of Horticulture to pilot the system there. The school will build a test bed where the hydroponic technology can be given a trial run, and adjustments can be made accordingly. Once the school has successfully grown plants, they will train people selected by OM to replicate the system.

Language: the problem and the solution

OM in Chile noticed that not only a lack of funds prevents Latinos from joining missions; there's also a language barrier. Therefore, OM began offering English classes during its annual intensive Missions Training School.

"As the team gathered pricing quotes from outside providers it became clear that there was a high level of demand for basic and intermediate courses, and that offering classes could be financially lucrative," said Roshani Morton, financial developer for OM in Latin America.

By starting a language school, OM addressed both the financial and language barriers. The language and culture school officially opened in March 2016 at the OM base in close proximity to universities and bus routes. Offering both Spanish and English programmes taught by qualified instructors, the school is open to students, churches and the general public. The courses teach every aspect of language learning: speaking, reading, writing and comprehension, with a particular emphasis on oral communication.

Still in its first year as a start-up business, the school is not self-sustaining. As it starts generating profit, the school will contribute towards OM's ministries, overhead costs, financial reserves and missionary sponsorships.

The school seeks to glorify God through quality service and the practical demonstration of Christ's love to students. "Reaching non-believers with the message of Jesus through the language school is [done] indirectly," said Anny Vierling, project manager of the school. "Missionary teachers, whilst having the goal to teach a language, create student-teacher friendships. Through these genuine friendships, it is possible to speak of their convictions and beliefs."

Currently, three English classes are running: one in the morning and two in the evening. More teachers are needed to join the team, particularly two more English teachers and someone to teach a language such as Mandarin or Arabic, which would support OM's overall vision to train missionaries to go to the least reached. •

¹ *The Global South includes Central and Latin America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Middle East and Near East, all of Africa, Central Asia, and all of Asia, except Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea.*

Microbusiness is ministry

AUTHOR: PATRICK WOOD • PHOTOGRAPHY: REBECCA REMPEL / OM INTERNATIONAL

As a former Soviet state, the small and beaten-down country of Moldova was forbidden private enterprise for 70 years, resulting in unemployment as high as 80 per cent in some towns, an epidemic of alcoholism, child abandonment and orphan exploitation. (The nation ranks sixth in the world on the human trafficking index). But God has not forgotten its people—and neither has OM.



In 2006, OM launched Business for Transformation (B4T), an intensive business course for Moldavians, involving a business plan proposal from each student and a start-up loan for those that met investor approval.

Mihael, a farmer, used his loan to establish several greenhouses. As one of the few in the country who can harvest certain crops during winter, Mihael has expanded his business, hired additional staff, and invested back into the cause that made it all possible.

“As a Christian, my goal is to work for God,” he says. “I believe you can do this through your normal work and your money. My dream is that, with part of what I am making in my business, I will be able to invest in the spread of the gospel.”

Elsewhere in the world, OM positions poor and forgotten people to pursue a productive life in other ways. In the Talamanca region of Costa Rica, OM developed a housing project for the Cabacare people, one of Central America’s few remaining indigenous groups speaking a pre-Columbian language.

Because Talamanca is an indigenous reserve in the country’s remote mountains, the Cabacare are commonly overlooked and have limited access to water, food and healthcare. Each wooden house OM builds invests \$12,000 US locally over its four-month construction, with four completed to date. One is now home to Angela and her four disabled children, empowering them to pursue life from a solid foundation. Theirs was supplemented with features for handicap access and a wheelchair for her children, who no longer live day to day looking up at people from a dirty floor.

In Zambia, supported by funds from OM’s Freedom Challenge ministry, the Tabitha Initiative endows at-risk women with entrepreneurial skills. Participants receive initial training in a given craft, such as handmade jewelry or clothing, and then move on to the second phase, called Business Expense Savings Training, on the fundamentals of running a business. In the final stage, each participant is given a small loan of 40 kwacha (\$4.14 US) and asked to come up with a creative business idea for making profit based on this small amount. Those who show diligence in their project, like Monica, are asked to prepare business proposals requiring a larger loan. She successfully opened a business for raising chickens and can now pay for her daughter’s education.

Monica’s advice to aspiring entrepreneurs? “You cannot start a business without preparation!” Basic though the principle may be, the diligence of practising it completely reshapes these women’s lives and sense of value. One OM worker observed, “There’s a certain confidence in their self-image and attitude that wasn’t there before entering the programme. And seeing this internal transformation in them is as rewarding as seeing their circumstances change.”



The same could be said of participants in OM’s computer literacy programmes. In Bangladesh, 47 per cent of university graduates battle the discouragement of being unemployed. One, a young man named Gopal, worked hard to earn his degree but couldn’t find a decent-paying job to match his credentials—at least, not one that didn’t also require computer proficiency. After completing OM’s three-month training course, he was hired by a garment company for a completely computer-based position.

“I am so grateful,” says Gopal. “I can now help my family and no longer be a burden to them. Thank you, OM, for a wonderful three months of training.” •

Embracing kingdom impact

AUTHOR: TATU KEKKONEN • PHOTOGRAPHY: KELSEY CHURCH

Throughout the history of the movement, OM has encouraged the formation of many new organisations. Whether a local ministry, missional business or a whole new movement, OM has embraced visionary and national leadership in bold trailblazing.

Since the early '60s, OM has been active in India; eventually, all that hard work, sacrifice and prayer have yielded a massive movement of churches and ministries. OM in India grew to become an independent church-based movement, with ministries from church planting to education and economic development. Since 2012, this organisation has been known as GS/OM India, Good Shepherd Church of India.

One internationally recognised OM ministry in India has served among the Dalit people, considered as 'untouchables' in India's modern-day caste system. Before its independence, OM India leader Joseph D'souza founded the Dalit Freedom Network (DFN), an organisation dedicated to give a voice to the voiceless. DFN's mission is to end atrocities against and help the Dalit people achieve fundamental rights through a foundation of education, healthcare and economic empowerment.

Rise of national leadership

During the mid-'60s KP Yohannan, then 16, met OMers at his home church in Kerala, southern In-

dia. Stories about the needs around India encouraged him to join OM summer campaigns for the next seven years. Traveling around India, Yohannan was struck with the impact and importance of national leadership in ministry.

"My urgent, overpowering love for the village people of India and the poor masses grew over the years. People began to nickname me 'Gandhi Man' after the father of modern India, Mahatma Gandhi. Like him, I realised that if the village people of India were ever to be won [for Christ], it would have to be by brown-skinned nationals who loved them," he writes in his book, *Revolution in World Missions*, about the eye-opening experience of working with OM gospel teams.

In 1974, Yohannan moved to the US, where he studied theology, but he couldn't forget the countless millions in Asia who had no possibility to hear the gospel. He resigned from his pastorate after four years and, with his German wife, Gisela, started an organisation known today as Gospel for Asia, supporting national workers and vibrant congregations all around South Asia.



Since its beginning, KP Yohannan has challenged Western churches and their picture of missionaries by raising awareness about ministry in Asia and funds for national missionaries. Today, Gospel for Asia has trained thousands of national missionaries in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh to be part of transforming communities through Christ's love.

Specialists by heart and skills

Greg Livingstone organised the first American group to join OM for a summer campaign in 1963. Since then, he served in many countries, from India to Lebanon and all the way to Canada. His passion has been to bring the gospel to the Muslims, recruiting more people to join that task.

After travelling the globe for 20 years, first with Operation Mobilisation and then North Africa Mission (NAM), Livingstone had an urge to start something new. In May 1983, he prayed to God: "Why do we need yet another mission agency?" He got an answer: There was no agency that was focused completely on reaching Muslims by living and

testifying among them. A new mission agency to bring Jesus to Muslims, Frontiers was established in 1983 under Greg's leadership and has earned its place as a specialist in ministry among Muslims.

"More than anyone else in my life, [George Verwer] had always demonstrated how much he believed in me. Giving me assignments that were way over my head, he had simply expected that, by God's grace, I would manage to carry out the plan. It was an operating principle I would take with me into Frontiers, as I released team leaders to carry out the impossible," Livingstone writes in his book, *You've got Libya*, about his relationship and shared history with OM's founder.

Today, Frontiers is a movement of 1,300 field workers in Africa and Asia. Their mission is to, with love and respect, invite all Muslim peoples to follow Jesus. Frontiers is a movement of people sharing the love of Jesus among the least reached. •

For a list of ministries founded by OM workers, visit page 146.



Planting churches through sports

AUTHOR: REBECCA REMPEL • PHOTOGRAPHY: BRAD LIVENGOOD / DUSTIN WATERS

Sports creatively and actively open doors to people otherwise unreached. Enjoyed by young and old, men and women, player and spectator, sports are a language spoken by billions around the world.

Whether through cheering on a favourite team or battling it out on the field, sports provide occasions for people to come together, test their limits and build relationships.

OM SportsLink recognises the opportunity sports present. In 2016, OM led sports ministries in 32 countries. Thousands of people attended these outreaches and, in addition to growing in athletic skills, they grew in knowledge of the Lord. Hundreds were trained to use sports to share the gospel in their own communities.

SportsLink reaches people in numerous ways, from starting football teams along the shores of Lake Tanganyika to leading sports camps across Europe to helping coaches in Pakistan to share their faith.

“With sports we can move into any community, speak any language, bridge any culture; the door is wide open to families,” said Chris Welman, director of SportsLink International. “Once we share the gospel and people gather on the sports field, why would we not be able to plant a church?”

Surf Church

“We do what we love, for the One we love.” And what Americans Troy and Michelle Pitney love to do is surf. Called to Portugal to start a church, surfing was the catalyst. “Surfing is a strategy to meet people where they are; it’s a tool, not the goal. We hold onto it loosely,” explained Michelle. When meeting people, the members of Surf Church describe themselves as “a bunch of believers who love Jesus and love to surf.”

At 14:00, the group gathers to surf, meet people and share the gospel. “Sports do more than connect people; they build accessible bridges into families beyond the sports grounds,” said Chris.

In late afternoon, Surf Church members head to the Pitney’s home for supper, often bringing people they just met. After fellowship and food, the group worships and studies the Word of God together. Some nights they don’t finish until well past midnight.



“People were immediately interested [when Surf Church first started],” Michelle remembered. “We quickly became a core group of 30, and now, 15 months later, a core group of 70-80.”

Dennis came to Surf Church with a knowledge of the Bible and has since devoted his life to Jesus. He brought his best friend, Filipe, a self-proclaimed atheist; after about seven months, Filipe began acting differently. He brought his girlfriend one week, telling her he had discovered the best thing in life.

“When we asked who he thought Jesus was, the words of Jesus Himself were ringing in my ears: ‘But who do you

say that I am?’” said Michelle. “Peter says, ‘You are the Son of God.’ Filipe’s response was the same: ‘He is my Saviour.’” Filipe and his girlfriend were baptised in spring 2016.

What FIFA left behind

Many in Africa anticipated the opportunities the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa would bring. Christopher Kasale, with SportsLink, heard interviews with business owners preparing for the event. When a group of pastors were interviewed, however, none had plans to seize the opportunity.

“So we started to mobilise the church,” Christopher said. In Kabwe, Zambia, Christopher and a group of missionaries and students began preparing for the World Cup. Five locations were selected to show the matches on big screens; one was Makwati.

On the edge of Kabwe, most of Makwati’s inhabitants are squatters. Known as a spiritually dark place, the name Makwati literally means nothing, or useless.

A tent for 200 people was erected, and the community was invited to watch the games. During breaks, the team preached and shared testimonies with the crowd. “That’s 30 days of football—thirty days of encouraging people,” said Christopher. “People started becoming Christians.”

When the tournament ended, people didn’t want the new community to end. Because the tent was rented, and the land borrowed, the new believers met in the open air until a shelter of wood and tarps was made. Makwati Community Church was born.

“(FIFA) lent us the platform to minister on a much bigger scale than a local event would have done,” said Chris. “By bringing the excitement of the event to the people, in their community and language, it builds something of the Body of Christ in unity.”

The church has brought hope: Once filled with crumbling houses and garbage, the area has been cleaned up and a road built. Next door to the church, OM-run Makwati Community School provides Christ-centred education for children.

Every sports field

From surf towns in Portugal to small communities in Zambia, God uses sports to break down barriers and bring people together in fellowship with Him. “Our vision is to see Christ-centred disciples developed on every sports field around the world,” said Chris. “We want to see athletes, coaches, local churches and communities make the most of the sports through sharing the gospel in relevant ways.” •

Global Village: An amazing God-given tool

AUTHOR: CORINNA SCHARRENBURG • PHOTOGRAPHY: TEENSTREET EUROPE PHOTOGRAPHY TEAM

“I did what I never thought I could do at home: tell an alcoholic on the streets that Jesus loves her and wants to be with her. It was an incredible experience.”

This is a response from a participant at TeenStreet 2015, OM’s annual event for European teenagers, held in Germany. The teenager spent an hour in Global Village, an innovative and interactive project that allows people to go on a simulated mission trip. While encountering a broken world face to face, participants discover more of God’s heart for people and are challenged to reflect Jesus into difficult places among some of the world’s most unreached people.

Global Village came out of a question: “How could we interactively present OM and missions at TeenStreet and give a wake-up call for a missional lifestyle?” explains Robert-Jan Sterk. Since 2009, the former field leader of OM in the Netherlands, together with a team from OM Europe, represented OM and missions at TeenStreet by offering interactive activities, even using the name Global Village. Frustrated by the response, they started to re-think the structure.

David Svensson from Sweden was part of that team and remembered an experience from a mission trip with a Swedish confirmation group: “On our way to the Ukraine, one boy said, ‘You are ruining my holidays!’ But after we worked, lived and experienced things together as a team, the same boy said, ‘This has been the best week of my life!’”

David asked if they could create the same experience at TeenStreet. The idea came: “Let’s build an airport, take them out of their comfort zone to another place and let this place come alive to them.” That was the beginning of Global Village.

Lots of feedback

The first Global Village at TeenStreet 2012 was an overwhelming success: Nearly 2,000 people experienced it. Since then, thousands of individuals have gone

through Global Village and have been impacted.

Barbara, from Germany, knew that she was part of a realistic simulation but was surprised

Countless individuals, as a result of the experience, have been inspired to deeper discipleship and a **more missional** lifestyle.



when, for the first time, she was face to face with a woman victim of human trafficking. “While I spoke to her, I felt like I had done it a thousand times before.” In this weird situation, Barbara suddenly had “the impression that God said very clearly, ‘I want you to take care of women like this.’ That made me think.”

Since 2012, Global Village has been motivating people for mission, not just annually at TeenStreet, but during various events in Europe like the Mission-Net conference in Germany and the Opwekking conference in the Netherlands. In some places, the experience was turned into a three-hour programme.

“We’re getting a lot of feedback after every Global Village,” explains Robert-Jan, now director of Global Village Europe. Participants are specifically asked what they can do today, tomorrow and beyond with what they’ve experienced. “We give them an opportunity for us to contact them later,” shares Robert-Jan. “And we’ve seen that the turnout is a lot higher than at any other events or OM stands.” Countless individuals, as a result of the experience, have been inspired to deeper discipleship and a more missional lifestyle, by going on a mission trip, joining missions or caring for the marginalised in their neighbourhood.

Opening people’s eyes

“Global Village could be used worldwide for OM as a mobilising tool to make the generation of today aware of

what’s happening,” continues Robert-Jan. “It’s not only for Christians; it’s also an evangelistic tool, because the message we put out is the gospel!”

According to Robert-Jan, Global Village will shape OM’s future ministry in many ways. “It’s the best tool we have to accumulate new contacts for OM. It is incredibly easy to bind people to the movement or have people join our movement because of what they see in the Global Village: It’s a vibration and that attracts people.”

Global Village is an amazing God-given tool to mobilise and inspire people to go out and to make a difference, Robert-Jan states. “Global Village opens people’s eyes for the least reached,” he explains, “while showing participants that they can be a vibrant community of Jesus followers.”

Several OM offices around the world are interested in having the experience in their field. OM Europe’s Riverboat, a floating ministry due to launch in 2018, will have Global Village on board as well, to mobilise the church for missions and to touch people’s lives, like Barbara’s. One year after her Global Village experience, Barbara joined A21, an organisation that fights human trafficking. She started the first A21-A-team in Germany.

Her story fits exactly into the vision of Global Village: To see thousands mobilised around the world to go out and spread the good news of Jesus. •

Freedom for captives

AUTHOR: ANNERETHA GROBLER • PHOTOGRAPHY: JUSTIN LOVETT / NATHAN SCHMUTZ

Rhani*, 12, has experienced more suffering than most people would in a lifetime. Her mother, who died five years ago, was a jogini¹ in India—a child dedicated to the temple to be used as a sex slave, like her mother before her. She had Rhani when she was only a teenager, later taking her to religious festivals where she was given alcohol until she passed out. Sexual abuse was part of life. When her mother died, Rhani was left with her last partner, a cruel man who tried to hang her. Finally, Rhani was taken to a shelter founded by the Freedom Challenge, an OM initiative.



Rhani's story is one of an estimated 30 million others. Women everywhere are trafficked into the sex industry, while children are forced to hard labour or to become child brides. The details may differ, yet the underlying issues leading to exploitation of women and children are the same: ancient cultural practices, lack of education, poverty, orphan issues, lack of government enforcement and more. Eighty per cent of those in slavery are female; 53 per cent are children. Rhani is part of only two per cent who will ever be rescued².

As global trends shifted over several decades, and the 'digital era' became firmly established, the world has experienced more fluidity than ever: Borders are crossed more easily (legally or illegally), money flows more freely, and the divide between rich and poor widens. In such circumstances, injustices like human trafficking flourish, becoming the most lucrative trade worldwide, generating an estimated 32 billion dollars annually.

OM's ministry of justice

In Bangladesh, Nuri* married at age 12. Becoming pregnant soon after, she was unprepared both physically and emotionally. When her baby died at birth, Nuri was left with severe physical and emotional trauma. Divorced by her husband because of stigma surrounding her injuries, Nuri was without hope. Elsewhere, dreams of a good job and securing a future for her son lured Grace* from Nigeria to Ghana. To her dismay, she had been tricked, and debt trapped her in sex slavery. For many women in Zambia, especially for a widow like Jane*, life is bleak: Fighting for survival without proper education, they are vulnerable to exploitation.

At the heart of missions lies a passion for justice. OM's work covers primarily four areas: prevention, development, rescue and restoration. Identifying issues that lead to oppression and exploitation and working to prevent them is a main focus. The Tabitha Project in Zambia and the Namana Project in Madagascar, as well as the skills training centres in rural Bangladesh and in Bangalore, India, are examples of prevention/development projects that help vulnerable women to generate their own income.

In Bangladesh, Nuri* found hope after treatment in OM's centre for fistula patients. She received tailoring training and now supports herself. The orphan schools at Lake Tanganyika, Zambia, and Ntaja, Malawi, provide education and feeding schemes to orphans, preventing them from being trafficked into slavery. Guatemala's Operation Rescue³ is a development programme targeting economically disadvantaged families vulnerable to unemployment, and who suffer from malnutrition, domestic violence and lack of educational opportunities. Abigail was a malnourished four-year-old suffering from hepatitis when she joined the programme. As Operation Rescue ministered to her whole family, her parents came to know God, and today Abigail is a joyful primary school student.

Grace*, from Nigeria, was rescued by OM, along with several other sex workers, and given the opportunity to be rehabilitated and reunited with her family. Similar stories of rescue and restoration come from the work done by OM with sex workers in the Balkans, Mexico, Hong Kong, Italy, Austria, Singapore, Latin America and elsewhere.

Prayer movements worldwide, gaining momentum, intercede for the end of slavery. Within OM, prayer is the foundation for all justice initiatives and has yielded an increased focus by the media and many government institutions on exposing and eliminating modern-day slavery. Five years ago, God planted a vision in the heart of OMer Cathey Anderson⁴ that has grown into the Freedom Challenge movement.

The Freedom Challenge

In January 2012, what was first known as the Freedom Climb was launched with 48 women from 10 countries climbing Africa's Mt. Kilimanjaro. Their purpose was (as



still is) to raise global awareness, funds and prayer for women and children oppressed, trafficked, enslaved and with no voice. Several international climbs have followed, including the Base Camp of Everest, the Rockies, the Alps and Machu Picchu, Peru (scheduled for September 2017). Through these climbs, over three million dollars have been raised for women's and children's ministries throughout the OM world.

All over the world, captives are being set free. Broken hearts are restored and light is replacing darkness. God is using those who pray, give and go. In India, Rhani's life has been changed forever because of freedom she found in Christ. Despite the horrific abuse she endured, Rhani grabbed the opportunity to a new future with both hands. She is doing well in school, and her dream is to be a social worker, helping to set others free who are trapped in similar circumstances. •

¹ Jogini are women forced into prostitution by a religious custom known as devadasi in India. Young girls are married to a local deity after which it becomes their religious duty to provide sexual favours to the local men, usually of the higher castes. This religious practice was banned in 1988, but the law is not enforced in all parts of India.

² <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>

³ Operation Rescue is one of six projects in Latin America supported by the Freedom Challenge, including projects in Argentina, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Panamá.

⁴ Cathey Anderson passed away in December 2015.

Hope amidst desperation

How the Syrian War changed OM's ministry in the Near East

AUTHOR: NICOLE JAMES • PHOTOGRAPHY: JUSTIN LOVETT

“When I was first a believer, I was thinking how my people can hear about Jesus. In the end, they came to me,” said Ibrahim*, a Syrian Muslim-background believer (MBB) serving with OM in the Near East.

Since the start of Syria's civil war in 2011, millions of people have fled. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported 4.8 million refugees registered in other countries, with 2.1 million Syrians registered in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, 2.7 million in Turkey, and over 29,000 in North Africa (18 Sept 2016).

But this exodus, birthed from desperation, has allowed Syrian Muslims to hear the gospel, many for the first time.

“People that hadn't received the gospel for generation after generation ... suddenly were right next to us. And the incredible change we found is that these people were so open, not only to have a visit or to receive a food pack but to actually sit down and ask questions,” explained Ethan*, a long-term OM worker and former OM Near East Field Leader.

“Syria's civil war, in combination with the Iraqi crisis, has totally upended and impacted the countries in which we serve (Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon). The refugee crisis has put [us] in contact with many Muslims who ... are asking many questions and are open for change,” stated OM Near East Field Leader Lane*. “It's helped us to truly partner with local churches where we've had relationships for years ... both in relief and development programmes and in providing training.”

Ministry in response to the war

Over the past five years, OM has partnered with over 40 churches in the Near East to meet needs of internally displaced people and refugees. In 2015 alone, OM's Syrian and Iraqi relief fund distributed \$3.2 million US, with over \$1.8 million US going directly to aid, relief and development projects inside Syria.

Each project supported by the fund adheres to four core principles: providing local and relationally based assistance, working with local believers and building their capacity, helping people of all religious and ethnic backgrounds without condition, and maintaining a long-term view of the growth of indigenous communities of Jesus followers.

“We're talking about providing significant interventions that meet desperate physical needs. That changes people's lives, but then to create relationships while meeting that need has allowed OM to help people discover spiritual needs,” explained Lane.

Besides financially supporting relief projects, OM has mobilised workers to reach out to displaced Syrians in Northern Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. “[We] listen and pray with people, share the gospel ... and say, ‘We're here to love you because God loves you. God has not forgotten you,’” Ethan summarised.

Linda*, a long-term worker who has served among Syrians in the Near East and Turkey, said, “There is so much openness for Muslims to study the Bible doing the DBS (Discovery Bible Study) method. I find it amazing. Syrians’ hearts have been prepared and opened by God for such a time as this,” she emphasised.

Changed lives in the midst of the war

“Through the war, people came [to the Near East] and had the chance to hear about Jesus. My uncle came here; he heard about Jesus and now he’s back in Syria. This happened to lots of people—they’ve had opportunities to hear they wouldn’t have had otherwise,” stated Freddy*, a Syrian MBB partnering with OM in church planting in the Near East.

Thirty years ago, OM workers in the Near East had not heard of Syrian MBBs, Ethan said. Now, in the neighbourhood surrounding one major city, he estimated there are nearly 600 small group Bible studies among Muslims, mostly Syrian.

“When we lived in Syria, we found that people were very nice ... but weren’t spiritually interested at all,” he described. “Then Syria’s civil war happened, and we found many people incredibly open ... to find out about Jesus, [and] why these Christians or Muslim-background believers are reaching out to them in love with no strings attached. What we’re discovering now is this massive interest. If you look at a history of what’s happened in the Church since the

coming of Islam, there has not been a movement to this degree—where we’re talking of thousands and thousands—in this part of the world for 1,000 years,” he continued. “To watch what God’s doing now is truly remarkable.”

Vision shift and long-term impact

The crisis in Syria “has given the Church much greater experience working with Muslims and more vision. Churches are coming to us, asking to be equipped,” Lane stated. “A more equipped church means more people ... bringing the gospel to more places.”

Long-term worker Renee* spent three years in Syria before the war. Now, she serves alongside Ibrahim and Freddy. “In Syria, we were focusing on just seeing one person be vaguely open, seeing one person come to faith but, with what’s happened, the vision’s much broader. Our expectations for what God’s doing have changed,” she explained. Her focus has expanded from “an individual [to] working through an MBB to a community to mobilising them to be co-workers [in ministry].”

Ibrahim hopes to see many more Syrians come to faith so that, when the war ends and they return to Syria, they can “testify about Jesus to their family members, to their cities, to their towns.” •



A Bible on the shelf

AUTHOR: AYLIN MARDIN • PHOTOGRAPHY: JULIE COLEMAN

In 2011, OM's work in Turkey turned 50, and Eileen*, a long-term OM worker, felt more than a party was needed to mark the occasion. She remembered her talk with Bishop Haik Hovsepian from Iran, a few years before he was martyred. He firmly believed that the amazing things God was doing in Iran stemmed from a project in the late 1970s to see every home in Iran receive a Bible.

OM and other organisations had partnered together to cover the country with Scriptures when their efforts were cut short by the Iranian revolution in 1979. "Even that was part of God's plan," said Bishop Haik. "When everyone was in fear and despair over what was happening to their country, there was that Bible on the shelf."

Eileen thought about the political changes happening in Turkey, thinking she had neither the faith nor capacity to lead a project to reach every home in the country. But she believed she could find teams to go to each of Turkey's 81 provinces to do literature distribution and evangelism in a bold, public way.

With that, The 1881 Project was born with a vision to see each of the country's 81 provinces engaged over an 18-month period. Starting in July 2011, the project also helped commemorate the Bible Correspondence Course's (BCC) 50th anniversary in 2012.

Local staff at the BCC relayed one experience to

Eileen. "Four of them travelled to a province in the south-east," she reminisced. "They were two Turks, an Armenian and a Kurd—an expression of the gospel itself! While doing literature distribution and sharing with people, they met the priest from the local mosque who was excited by what he heard and invited the team to stay at his house. They shared for hours with him when, at 21:00, he jumped up and said, 'Oh no; I forgot about my Qur'an class! Would you come to the mosque and tell them the things you are telling me?' They went with him and shared from the Scriptures with nine curious Muslims until after 1:00 in the morning."

Prepare, but pay attention

Eileen, team leader of TACO, a creative arts ministry, excited her team about the project too. One team member built the website, the1881project.org, to track progress. TACO had recently created a show using Turkish music, theatre and folk dance that told the story of Abraham and Sarah, ending with a bold proclamation of Jesus being the final sacrifice. In support of The 1881 Project, they took the show around the Marmara region and engaged



every province in that region.

“It was the first time we had done what we ended up calling ‘The Holy Spirit Tour,’” said Alan*, a long-termer worker with TACO. “We spent every morning in prayer and worship; in the afternoon and evening, we’d stop to perform anywhere we felt the Holy Spirit was telling us to.”

As the team’s van bumped down the gangplank on their way to Çanakkale, Alan felt from the Lord that they should stop and perform on the seafront nearby. The team was dubious, since there didn’t seem to be a soul in sight, but Alan was adamant. So the team set up their stage, put their costumes on and took their instruments out, even though there was only one woman on a park bench. The team began with a few Turkish pop songs to draw a crowd of about 25. After they played, the team engaged with the crowd, offering tracts, New Testaments and a short survey for those who wanted more information.

Two girls on the team noticed the woman on the park bench crying, so they approached her. They were stunned by her story: She had been sitting waiting, her ankles already weighted, to throw herself off the pier and commit

suicide. She had been thinking, “No one cares about me, even God.” Imagine: At that moment, people pour out of a van in front of her, perform a play, and the soundtrack asks, “Do you think that no one cares about you, and even God doesn’t care about you, like He did about Abraham?” The woman then prayed to receive the Lord.

The website map started out grey, and as each story poured in, Eileen would post it, turning the province red. Hundreds of people joined the vision in intercession, receiving prayer requests every 18 days, with some attending a live prayer meeting in Istanbul every 81 days.

In December 2012, the website map became completely red when the last province was engaged. Yet, many who had participated weren’t willing for the project to end. One church in South Africa sent representatives to Eileen to deliver the message that it needed to happen all over again. So, in 2014 the project launched for the second time; in 2016, the provinces are turning gold through a special year of prayer to ask God how He wants to use The 1881 Project in the future. We think something special might be in store for 2018. •

Local volunteers on board *Logos Hope* make a difference

AUTHOR: ELLYN S. • PHOTOGRAPHY: DOSEONG PARK



“The *Logos Hope* has a wonderful pictorial presentation of the Prodigal Son on display in the Visitor Experience deck,” Cheuk Chung, OM Hong Kong Field Leader, recalled. “It shows the love our heavenly Father has for us and can easily be used to share the gospel.”

When *Logos Hope* visited Hong Kong for the first time in December 2012, the local team wanted to make the most of the opportunity. However, few crewmembers could speak Cantonese with local visitors.

“I remembered when OM partnered with a short-term mission training centre known as Hong Kong Christian Mission Centre (HKCMC) in the 1980s,” Cheuk Chung said. “So we invited them to send

trained volunteers to work on board during the visit.”

Around 450 volunteers from 70 churches came on board wearing jackets bearing the legend ‘ambassador’. They shared their faith with visitors, often using a tract called “Precious Gospel” and other tools learnt during their training. The ambassadors had practiced approaching strangers on public transportation and in other public places, and utilised their skills to

draw visitors into engaging dialogue.

When *Logos Hope* was purchased, it was selected because it allowed for an indoor space of about 1,500 square metres for the book fair and an interactive experience for visitors. “The vision was to look in the eyes of every visitor and engage them with the gospel. By creating a visitor’s experience that had the space, we would be able to do so,” said Randy Grebe, director of Partner Ministries on board.

On Deck 4, visitors have the chance to look inside a staged crewmember’s cabin, interact with a simulated bridge with a steering wheel and electronic equipment, learn about the history of OM ships and sit in a lifeboat to watch a video about the ship that shows areas not open to the public like the galley and engine room. From there, visitors enter the book fair and, when done browsing, are led to *The Journey of Life*, a unique pictorial walk-through story of the Prodigal Son.

“If there’s a place where we have a visitor’s heart and eyes, it’s during the Prodigal Son walkthrough,” shared Randy Grebe. “We are very intentional about making contact with visitors, and our ambassadors are of highest value to us in making those connections.”

Every port sees between 50-120 volunteers helping, a group of these as the ambassadors that are essentially trained evangelists passionate about sharing Christ. They engage visitors in their own heart language and know the culture and idiosyncrasies of the language.

“We want every visitor to take a step closer to Jesus in some way,” said Randy. “We choose [ambassadors] specifically to stand at the beginning of this story [the Prodigal Son] and literally walk people

through it. They can assess whom they are speaking to and how they need to drive the story to make it most understood. They’re able to go to the heart of the story much quicker than any foreigner.”

In Hong Kong, an estimated 1,100 conversations about spiritual matters and faith in God occurred during the three-week visit. One ambassador, Amy Lao, spoke with a 50-year-old man. “I told him it was no coincidence he had come to the ship,” she said. “Jesus had wanted him to come to the ship and hear the gospel.” When Amy asked if he wanted to accept Christ, he prayed and committed his life to follow Jesus.

In the end, over 130 people made decisions to respond to God’s voice. Local churches were put in touch with them and more than 600 others who expressed interest in further contact. These churches will continue the conversations and support those who made new commitments.

“Thank you for coming. For me, your visit is a surprising gift from God! Now I know God is listening and waiting for me to turn to Him,” Teresa Shum, a local visitor in Hong Kong, said. She and over 13,000 other visitors were engaged in their own language, in their own city, and heard the good news presented in a colourful, tangible way.

One million visitors walk through this same Visitor Experience annually and have opportunity to talk one on one with someone on board. Randy explained how ambassadors and crewmembers write down experiences or conversations that stood out;

countless [such] stories led him “to be absolutely convinced that every day there are God stories of how people are being transformed and changed on this ship.” •

“We are very intentional about **making contact** with visitors, and our ambassadors are of highest value to us in making those connections.”

One million visitors walk through this same Visitor Experience annually and have opportunity to **talk one on one** with someone on board.

Welcoming strangers

AUTHOR: ANNEKE BOLT • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL

“I never thought I’d see my husband driving with a head-covered lady in the back of his car,” says Afke from the Netherlands, while she pauses from playing shuffleboard with 20-year-old Mahmud* from Syria. “He wouldn’t have believed me if I told him that he’d be having so much fun with immigrants. But here we are. This ministry has changed our lives.”

A year ago, Afke confesses, she cried at times watching news of the large influx of people seeking refuge in Europe due to war in Middle Eastern nations. Thousands of people, mainly from Syria and Afghanistan, arrived in her country daily, seeking a new home.

“I was scared of what would happen to our country and our identity,” she shares, sitting around a coffee table with about 10 refugee men. “But I realised that it’s our duty as Christians to come alongside people in need. Now that I’ve come to know some immigrants, I enjoy them so much. It’s so rewarding to give them love and warmth!”

Afke and her husband Bert, a retired couple from Emmeloord, are part of the ministry that OM workers Robert-Jan and Ruth Sterk set up in this town in January 2016, together with their local church. Ruth, who has also been co-running a women’s group in the nearby asylum centre for several years, shares how they responded to the large influx of immigrants: “We realised that our church building is centrally located

near several low-budget stores where many asylum seekers run their errands, and that they receive their weekly payment on Tuesdays. So we put up a simple sign and opened our church on Tuesday afternoons offering coffee, tea and a chat.”

People started coming, and invited friends, too—soon around 25 people every week. As Arabic speakers, Robert-Jan and Ruth chat and help fill out official forms. Bert and Afke serve with hands and feet, driving people to church on Sundays, helping with language classes or repairing bicycles. Several other church members serve the immigrants faithfully in whatever way they can.

The team extended Tuesday afternoon gatherings with an evening meal and an Al Massira course on the general principles of the Bible and Christian faith. “We started with a group of 14 but were afraid that people would be scared off

after the first time,” recalls Ruth. “Surprisingly, more people came in the following weeks, and we’re planning to invite them for a meal in our house.”

As churches reach out to immigrants, Jesus’ **love** through them becomes visible not only to the newcomers, but also to local society and government.



People come and go. If they are allowed to stay in the Netherlands, they don't get to choose where they'll live. "We've had so many different people coming through here," says Ruth. "We can't keep in touch with all of them, but pray that they'll settle well in their new homes."

Critical moment

As in the Netherlands, many OM workers around Europe have felt the same call to reach out to refugees settling in their countries. OM believes that this is a critical moment where the Church can make a huge impact. Local Christians know the social situation and speak the language; they can be Jesus' hands and feet very effectively. As churches reach out to immigrants, Jesus' love through them becomes visible not only to the newcomers, but also to local society and government.

Oftentimes, providing assistance with language study is a great way to connect to immigrants. OM teams in Spain, France, Austria and the UK help newcomers to learn their tongue. OM's Xenos team—Greek for 'stranger'—works with immigrants and asylum seekers in Germany, meeting them with love, friendship and acceptance, introducing Jesus and what it means to be a follower of Christ. In Finland, OM workers extend love and fellowship to immigrant

mothers through friendship groups, open conversation and learning together. And so on.

Many OM workers around Europe have become close friends with 'strangers' from abroad, several of whom have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour.

A bit of courage

For 22-year-old George* from Syria, the weekly gatherings in the church in Emmeloord have been very helpful in his study of the Dutch language. Only eight months after his risky escape from the war together with his father, he acts as a capable translator for his countrymen around the table.

George is anxiously waiting for a response from the immigration office. His mother and sister are still trying to survive in one of the most war-torn cities in Syria. As soon as he and his father get their paperwork done, they're hoping to reunite with them in the Netherlands. He would love to go back to university; studying had become impossible in Syria. "I'm still young, you know," he says. "The most important thing is that I'm still alive. With a little bit of courage, I'm sure I can make it here."

He says goodbye to Afke and the other volunteers. "I just love these guys," she whispers, smiling. "See you next week!" •



Using new technology to share the gospel

AUTHOR: OM INTERNATIONAL • PHOTOGRAPHY: OM INTERNATIONAL / FRANNIE FABIAN

When you think of digital pioneers, your mind probably settles on a business with more association with Silicon Valley than church planting in the Jezreel Valley. Yet after ministering for almost two-thirds of a century, even an 'ordinary' missions organisation has to keep up with the times. When it comes to reaching the least reached, OM workers are using new technology to make ministry more effective—one byte at a time.

Audio Bible preaches itself

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” – Romans 10:14

Paul’s logic in Romans is irrefutable, and Christians have taken these principles seriously for centuries. Entire mission organisations have devoted themselves to translating the Bible into hundreds of languages. Yet for many people, having the Bible in a language they can understand isn’t the problem; it’s having it in a form they understand.

Such is the reality of the Islamic Yao tribe in Malawi, many of whom are illiterate. Up until 2015, the Bible was unavailable in chiYao in written or audio format. Today, the whole Bible can be heard through AudiBibles.

In the first seven months of 2016, the OM team handed out 297 solar-powered AudiBibles. Each recipient is expected to start a weekly listening group, sharing the Word of God.

After training, Shadrack started an AudiBible listening group in March 2016 with 14 people in a nearby village. Mary* was a Muslim whose husband is a sheik. Against his wishes, she started attending the listening group. “I felt like I was empty,” she said. “I needed more; I needed God to change my life.”

After two months of listening to the AudiBible, she accepted Christ. Though Mary continues to go to the mosque—to avoid problems in the community—she strongly desires to go to church. “She’s making changes little by little but can’t switch all at once,” said Shadrack, which is advisable in her community where culture and religion are closely intertwined.

“The AudiBible is a true preacher,” said Fredson Phiri, an AudiBible trainer. “It doesn’t add, it doesn’t subtract; it gives the whole truth to the person. It preaches itself.”

A miniscule device with a big impact

Even in the unlikeliest of places, one thing connects people: smartphones. Travel for hours on dirt tracks in Africa or trek for days in Nepal, and you’re guaranteed to see or hear signs of this small-screen device.

In October 2015, during a three-week outreach, OM teams in Nepal travelled several days by bus to a remote western district. Known for its rugged terrain and

sparse population, this area has about 9,670 households in 3,535km² (1,365 mi²), but there are only 113 known believers.

“We want to see a New Testament in every household in this area,” said Matthew*, an OM ministry leader. “We hope that people hearing God’s Word will be what brings them to believe in Him as their Saviour.”

The team distributed over 2,500 New Testaments, paired with a mini-SD card—one to each household they visited. The mini-SD cards fit into cell phones and have audio recordings of the New Testament, the gospels in the local language and a book called *God’s Promises*.

Considering the treacherous terrain of Nepal, a miniscule device makes delivering these resources much easier than printed media. What may seem like a small gesture continually receives a warm welcome from those that receive an SD card. One man stayed up until midnight listening to the words of the gospel in his own language, and asked for his own copy to take home to continue listening.



A young boy uses a mini-SD card with the New Testament in his radio to listen to the Book of Matthew for the first time.

Mobile app brings relevance

When Ted* and Jennifer* first arrived in North Africa, they worked for another organisation focusing on Bible translation. In the beginning, local believers did not want to use a Bible written in their own dialect, preferring the standard Arabic translation, Jennifer explained.

For many years, the couple laboured to make progress on the project, eventually passing it on to other champions “who struggled equally as hard,” Jennifer said. Right before she and Ted left North Africa after two decades of ministry, they heard of the translation’s fruit.

Friends shared that on consecutive days, two locals, both struggling to understand the standard Arabic Bible, were introduced to the local dialect translation available on a smartphone app. For half an hour, both individuals poured over the app, asking the other worker not to interrupt their reading.

“Now [the gospel] is reaching people, and that was the intention,” Jennifer shared. “It’s such an exciting way to be leaving on that note, to know what we worked so hard on is bearing fruit and being used. Maybe they’re not being saved yet, but they have the opportunity to hear it, understand and hopefully come to faith.” •

Letting God lead us forward

AUTHOR: LAWRENCE TONG, INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR • PHOTOGRAPHY: DOSEONG PARK

OM is known for action, not reflection—for pioneering, not reminiscing. Still, we are wise to celebrate milestones and learn from our past, whatever will serve us well for today and tomorrow.

God alone deserves the glory for OM's story. Despite the founding generation's inexperience, God laid a solid foundation of ideals and principles that have withstood great testing:

- OM's passion has always been to mobilise 'ordinary' people into mission. Short- and long-term programmes made it possible for people from all backgrounds to serve together.
- Leaders were passionate in training people and releasing them to serve in or start other ministries. More than 200,000 people have served with OM over the last 60 years. More than 100 mission organisations were birthed by OM graduates. Thousands of Christian leaders trace their mission roots back to OM.
- OM was birthed out of prayer, fuelled by prayer and will continue to be powered by prayer. Whether it was our own needs or those of nations, we threw ourselves at His mercy. It was in nights of prayer where vision was cast, ideas were developed and faith was strengthened. This intensity and frequency of intercession must continue.
- From the early days, there has been a sense of urgency to reach those dying without Christ, driving us to redeem time and opportunities for evangelism. May we never compromise in this area!

- OMers were known for being able to accomplish a lot with very little. It was never proof of spirituality; rather, it has been about being good stewards of what the Lord has entrusted to us, whether ministries or materials.

OM has contributed to the modern missions movement in several ways. One is that we broke from tradition in mobilising workers. Life experience and passionate commitment are valued as much if not more than higher education alone. OM also created short-term opportunities for ordinary people with a few weeks to offer—an opportunity that has often been life-changing and has been adopted by other missions.

Secondly, training has always been hands on, side by side and continuous. Cross-cultural understanding, language acquisition and ministry skills are developed in active ministry rather than in classrooms of theory.

Thirdly, OMers employed innovative methodologies often only recognised in hindsight: smuggling literature through the Iron Curtain, using ships as a demonstration of global faith, organising massive mission conventions for teens and more. Recently, this has included agriculture and small business enterprise to sustain the work and bless poor communities.

Challenges we must face

Our world's culture is changing so rapidly and broadly that it challenges biblical convictions. Though we now find ourselves a minority, we must not waver in our conviction in the Word of God. But we are also confronted with gross injustices, a tsunami of the poor and increasingly antagonistic governments.

In light of these, we are determined to increase our impact, while handicapped by our work's long-term sustainability. Our capacity to sustain (let alone increase) work-



ers from non-traditional missionary sending countries is insufficient. Many workers come from smaller churches and regions with limited economic means, so funds must come through other means, such as being bi-vocational in business. Essential home office staff, especially in administrative roles, struggle to raise support for their strategic work that directly affects every team and ministry worldwide. I believe that solutions exist, but we must seek them together.

In recruiting, there has been a shift toward a kingdom theology that speaks of justice in economic, political and social relationships. This has wide-ranging implications. Today's generation is looking to work with mission organisations that represent their values; if OM does not address issues close to their hearts, they will find someone else to work with.

Internally, we can become victims of our own success and put administrative efficiency over innovation. Management and administration exist to serve ministry, not the other way around. Life is messy and vibrant and creative, and our life as a mission organisation needs to be in tune with that. Not everything that really matters is neat and controlled; if we lose sight of this through increased bureaucracy, we can become 'armchair OMers', which is definitely not good stewardship!

OM's mission is "to see vibrant communities of Jesus

followers among the least reached." That will only occur in partnership with the whole Body of Christ. Mission is a collective effort with local churches and mission organisations everywhere. OM has done well in this regard, and yet so much more needs to be done in cooperation. It will also require a paradigm shift in our recruiting. Living among the people, earning their trust and acceptance, winning them to Christ, discipling and then sending them in ministry demands long-term commitment. The unreached are the final frontier for missions, and reaching them will not be easy; there will be discouragement, disappointment, rejection and opposition. It will take people with Holy Spirit-led tenacity to not give up until the harvest comes.

I want OM and our partners to prayerfully consider our part in the Great Commission by focusing on the least of the least reached, who absolutely have no access to the gospel whatsoever. What if OM and all our partners commit afresh to re-harnessing that zeal that made us a movement over the past 60 years? "To know Him and to make Him known" was OM's heartbeat in earlier days. As we are now closer to the Lord's return than ever before, we "*look forward to the day of God and speed its coming*" (2 Pet.3:12) by striving together so that all will be reached for Christ. •

Timeline of OM Milestones

1950

- Mrs. Clapp prays for the young people of the nearby high school (p. 12).
- George Verwer attends a Billy Graham meeting and makes a decision for Christ (p. 12).
- George and friends take their first trip to Mexico (p. 12).
- A bookstore in Mexico is opened, and weekly radio broadcasts begin. Send the Light publishing house is established (p. 12).



1970

- Logos is purchased (p. 32).
- Hundreds of East Asians joined OM (p. 34).
- Work begins in Bangladesh (p. 36).
- The vision grew of using the ship as a catalyst to send out of missionaries not only from Europe and North America, but also from Asia, Africa and Latin America (p. 42, 52).
- Doulos is purchased (p. 42).
- Doulos visits Mexico, the first visit to Latin America for OM Ships (p. 42).
- Work begins in Pakistan (p. 44).

1960

- Work begins in Spain with mass mailing of tracts offering a correspondence course. A Christian bookstore opens (p. 12).
- After distributing gospels in the Soviet Union, George and Roger Malstead are arrested and escorted out of the country. The work becomes known as Operation Mobilisation (p. 12).
- The first European summer outreach takes place (p. 14).
- Long-term teams enter the Middle East and North Africa (p. 18).
- Teams begin distributing literature in Iraq, Syria and Kuwait (p. 18).
- Teams go overland to India (p. 22).
- Work begins in Communist Eastern Europe (p. 24).
- A coordinating base in Zaventem, Belgium, is established (p. 24).
- OM establishes the Bible Correspondence Course in Turkey (p. 28).
- Two hundred people join the OM year-long programmes in Europe and the Middle East (p. 30).
- George challenges OMers to pray for a ship (p. 32).
- Work begins in Nepal (p. 72).



1980

- *Logos* visits China (p. 52).
- Short-term workers put tracts in every letterbox in France (p. 56).
- Work is established in Algeria (p. 60).
- Missions Discipleship Training in South Africa is established (p. 62).
- *Logos* is shipwrecked in South America (p. 64).
- *Logos II* is purchased (p. 64).
- Love Europe summer outreach begins with over 7,000 people. Hundreds join long-term work (p. 70).
- Afghan refugee ministry begins and OM starts an independent NGO (p. 82).
- OM's relief and development work begins (p. 82).
- OM responds to the poor and marginalised in India (p. 94).

1990

- After 45 years of Albania being closed to the gospel, an OM team moves into the country and starts one of the first fellowships (p. 54).
- Pamir Productions is established (p. 80).
- The first TeenStreet in Europe takes place in Germany (p. 88).
- *Doulos* facilitates historical reconciliation of rivaling factions in Papua New Guinea (p. 92).
- OM SportsLink starts to help establish sports ministry around the world (p. 96, 124).

2000

- Mercy Teams International is established as a relief and development arm of OM in the East Asia Pacific area (p. 86).
- Peter Maiden becomes the new OM International Director (p. 102).
- *Logos Hope* is purchased (p. 104).
- OM Arts is established (p. 110).
- Pro Christo in Africa merges with OM, as a key component in the expansion of OM in Africa (p. 116).
- OM launches Business for Transformation (p. 120).

2010

- Global South Initiative is established to help ministries achieve financial sustainability through business models (p. 118).
- First Global Village takes place at TeenStreet (p. 126).
- First Freedom Climb (now Freedom Challenge) launches with 48 women from 10 countries climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro (p. 128).
- OM in the Near East and Europe responds to the refugee crisis brought on by the Syrian civil war. (p. 130, 136).
- OM uses new technology to share the gospel (p. 138).
- OM appoints International Director Lawrence Tong (p. 140).





About OM

We want to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached.

3,442

TOTAL ADULTS
SERVING IN OM

115

NATIONALITIES
SERVING IN OM

110+

COUNTRIES
WE WORK IN

WHAT WE DO

Evangelism

As believers in Christ, we are commissioned to be His witnesses in every country, people group and culture. We are called to deliver His message of hope, to proclaim to the world what He's done in us—and what He can do for others.

Relief and Development

Where some look at the needs and pain in the world with despair or disinterest, OM sees tremendous opportunity and privilege to serve the poor, marginalised and forgotten.

Church Planting

The DNA of God's global Church includes the reproduction of believing communities in every nation. Thus,

in everything we do, our aim and passion is to see churches formed and self-reproducing, especially in places where there are few or no churches today.

Justice

We are concerned about justice because God is serious about it, and we want to reflect Him in all we do. We must move from lamenting or ignoring it to winning it for one person at a time.

Mentoring and Discipleship

Mentoring and discipleship is more than just training—in OM, it's sharing lives, walking side by side on international teams and learning from each other. It's walk, not talk.

OUR CORE VALUES

- **Knowing and glorifying God**
- **Living in submission to God's Word**
- **Being people of grace and integrity**
- **Serving sacrificially**
- **Loving and valuing people**
- **Evangelising the world**
- **Reflecting the diversity of the body of Christ**
- **Global intercession**
- **Esteeming the Church**

Thank you

OM is truly grateful for the thousands of partners world-wide standing with us as we serve the Lord together. Thank you for your continued support!



PHOTO BY JUSTIN LOVETT

List of ministries

• FOUNDED BY OM WORKERS •

The following is a list of ministries founded by OM workers, adapted from the book *Spiritual Revolution: The Story of OM*, by Ian Randall.

- **Action International**, Doug Nichols
- **AFA**, Issam Naser
- **AlongSideAsia**, Dave Hicks
- **Alpha**, Ron & Annabeth Beard
- **Ambassadors Fellowship**, Virgil Amos
- **Antioch Network**, George Miley
- **Aslan Video**, Rick & Darlene Munro
- **Auto-Mission**, Stuart & Maureen Moreton
- **Bagda for Christ**, Durai Raj and Muthan
- **Bisjyothis Ministries**, Patabani
- **Bookshops**, George Khalil
- **Business Aid, Knowledge Life**, Lars-Göran Gustafson
- **Camps**, Federico & Marta Aparisi
- **Care & Share**, P. Mukherjee
- **Central European Missionary Fellowship (CEMF)**, Marsh Moyle
- **Christ Mission Ashram**, Sukrit Roy
- **Christian Youth Connection Nepal**, Steve Kaptain
- **Church planting**, Librado Sagado
- **Coach Missions Fellowship**, Sung-Chul Cho
- **Coffee shop ministry**, Mauricio Salazar
- **Cornerstone World Challenge**, A. Stephan
- **Cursos Biblicos. Alturas**, Daniel Gonzalez
- **Dalit Freedom Network**, Joseph D´Souza
- **Doorway to Spain**, Bill Roop
- **El Olivo**, Trevor & Manoli Allen
- **Elijah Company, Inc.**, Norman Przybylski
- **Elshadi**, Gopu
- **Equip & Encourage International**, Graham & Frieda Roberts
- **Farel Publishing**, Mike Evans
- **Fellowship for International Mission**, Hae-Seok Yu
- **Fellowship of Evangelical Missionaries FEMI**, Jonathan Gilmore and Kurt Jost
- **Firm Foundation Trust**, Roger Malstead
- **First Generation Christians**, Yodhistir Behra
- **Formation**, Viv Thomas
- **Freedom Quest**, Mel & Sharon Middleton
- **Friends of All Nations**, David Chul-Hwan Jun
- **Friendship Centre India**, John Gladstone
- **Frontiers**, Greg Livingstone
- **Global Career**, Ben Bester
- **Gospel and Social Action Ministries**, D. Naik
- **Gospel for Asia**, KP Yohannan
- **Grace and Light**, Mark Hopkins
- **Grupos Biblicos Universitarios**, David & Margaret Burt and Stuart & Verna Park
- **Handicapped Prayer Ministry**, Narayan Bhagat
- **Hannah International Mobilisation**, Barnabas Soo-Jin Park
- **Hope Ministries**, Stephen Banna
- **Horizons International**, Georges Housney
- **House of Hope**, Youssef & Hie-Tee
- **Hungipanki Tribal Missionaries**, Vinod Kalpal
- **Indian Evangelical Association**, PR Paricha
- **Interaction**, George Baxter



PHOTO BY KIET VAN

- **International Outreach**, Mobin Khan
- **Jericho Walls International**, Bennie Mostert
- **Jubilee Action and Jubilee Campaign**, Danny Smith
- **K.A.B.A.**, Paul Bolus and Tone Johansen
- **Karnataka Subhasamachara Mandali**, B.D. Immanuel
- **Kerygma Video Trust**, Nick Hall
- **Korea Harbor Evangelism**, Paul Choi
- **Lingua Link**, John & Pauline Hymus
- **Love in Action**, Sue Halstead
- **Love Maharashtra**, Chris Williams
- **Love Orissa**, S. Patro
- **Magazine**, Ed Hoyer
- **Manara Book Ministries**, Isam Ghattas
- **Media Matters**, Bob McCloud
- **Media Serve**, Frank & Leena Arthur
- **Medical Ambassadors**, Arul Paul
- **Middle East Media**, John Ferwerda
- **Ministries Argentinas**, Matthias Boerhoop
- **Misiones Mundailes**, Frederico Bertussi
- **MK Nest**, In-Sook Baek
- **Mobilisation Church**, Sverre Blindheimsvik
- **MultiLanguage Media**, Jay & Jean Krause
- **Near East Initiatives**, Grant Porter
- **Nepal Gospel Outreach**, **Nepal Mission Society**, Resham RajPoudel
- **New Life Ministries / New Life Publishing**, Thomas Mathai
- **New Life**, Heinz Strupler
- **New Light**, Nathan H.
- **Off the Fence**, Paul Young
- **Orissa Follow-up**, D.B. Hrudaya
- **Orphan's Hope**, Steve Cassidy
- **Orphanage**, Joseph Paul
- **People International**, World in Need, Ron George
- **Prayer for Israel**, Ken Burnett
- **Prayer Mobilisation**, Arunn Kumar Gundami
- **Precision Media**, Bill & Tami Sue Webster
- **Projeto Magreb**, Pablo Carillo
- **Quiet Corner Ministries**, Thomas Samuel
- **Radio, church planting**, Pepe & Judith Barrios
- **Retreat and Training Center**, Mike McKinley
- **Rollins Associates**, Harley Rollins
- **Salem Orphanage**, Vijayakumar
- **Sat 7**, Terry Ascot
- **Set My People Free**, Kamal Fahmi
- **Silk Road Institute**, George & Alison Burch
- **Somebody Cares Southland**, Norm Brinkley
- **Source of Life Ministries**, Rev. Joseph Chacko
- **Southampton Asian Christian Outreach**, Clive Thorne
- **Spear; World In Need**, Bob Hitching
- **Stichting Hand**, Tiny Snell
- **STV videos**, Dave Armstrong
- **The Harvest Team**, C.M. Joy
- **Translation Trust**, Trevor Penrose
- **World Outreach Mission**, Terje Liverød

Meet the authors

- **Adnan and J. Paul** serve separately with OM in Western and Central Asia with their families. They desire to see more people place their hope and faith in Christ, reaching the unreached through all possible creative means.
- **Rebecca Barnhart** served with OM as a writer and communications leader from 2001-2015, based in Hungary, Austria, England and the US. Currently working as a freelance writer/editor, she remains passionate about telling stories of what God is doing around the globe.
- **Anneke Bolt**, from the Netherlands, started her work with OM in Latin America and is now back in her home country coordinating communications for OM in Europe. Anneke is a journalist and loves to write, edit and ask lots of questions.
- **Andrew Fendrich** is part of the OM Africa Area communications team, for which he travels the continent working with OM ministries. In addition to his work for OM, Andrew's passions include traveling, reading and writing, photography and cooking.
- **Anneretha Grobler** did her doctorate in community-specific creative writing, focusing on the role of orality and identity in the promotion of community-specific word art in South Africa. Anneretha served in communications with OM in Africa from 2009-2013. During this time she compiled and edited *Followers and Fishers: stories of the Emerging Mission Movement in Africa*.
- **Peter Hawkins** serves as OM's International Prayer Coordinator. He started with OM in 1974 in Iran. Since then, he and his wife have served with OM in Europe, on board *MV Logos* and in the USA.
- **Esther Hippel** grew up in Austria and has worked with OM in Moldova since 2006. After living several years in Moldovan villages doing youth and children's ministry, she is now responsible for OM Moldova's communications department. Her passions include helping others grow deeper in faith, revealing beauty and finding God's fingerprints in the ordinary.
- **Jill Hitchcock** joined OM in 1992, serving in Belgium for five years before moving to Hungary in 1997. She has held many roles in OM over the years, but, for her, it's about being His servant and using the gifts and abilities He's given her wherever there's a need.
- **Nicole James** is a journalist, ESL teacher and adventurer. As a writer for OM Middle East North Africa, she's passionate about publishing the stories of God's works among the nations, telling people about the wonderful things He is doing in the world.
- Scottish by birth, **Kris Johnstone** serves as writer and editor of OM's Global Magazine for OM UK. He is a former creative advertising copywriter and his passions include food, travel, art, surfing and discipling youth.
- **Tatu Kekkonen** is a journalist and creative artist from Finland. Through everything he does, he wants to keep reflecting the Creator.
- **Greg Kernaghan** joined OM in 1978, a time when most of OM's pioneers were still in leadership and when tales of early exploits could be heard of first hand. He and his wife, Anni, have served on the ships, in Finland, in Canada and as part of the OMNI (communications) team internationally.
- **Julie Knox**, from the UK, is the writer for OM Ships, having been called to the ministry out of a career in broadcast journalism. In 2016, she hung up her microphone and body armour but found that her previous experience of reporting from warships could be used during a stint at sea as *Logos Hope's* journalist. Julie is now shore-based, working from the ship ministry's office in Germany.
- **Dr. Benjamin Youngkyu Lee** was one of the few Korean crewmembers of *MV Logos*. He now serves as a pastor in Korea and is an advisor to OM Korea. He helped to pioneer OM Korea's ministry in both Korea and the United States.
- **Marcell**, an OM ministry leader, has served in the Muslim World for over 35 years and in Iran throughout OM's history there. He desires to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached, particularly among the Iranian people, whom he loves.

- **Aylin Mardin** has worked with OM in Turkey for more than 30 years. She's been involved in church planting in three cities and the development of Turkish worship on a national level. Together with her husband, Aylin has worked to develop the ministry of the Bible Correspondence Course, which has birthed other ministries such as The 1881 Project and Taco, a ministry creatively proclaiming the gospel to Muslims.
- **Simon Marijani** joined OM in 2008. As a journalist, he's passionate about using research, media and testimonies about God to excite and challenge believers to get involved in world missions. He's married to Kumbie and serves as the communications officer of OM Zimbabwe, whose focus is to mobilise the local church to send workers to make disciples of all nations.
- **Deborah Ngobeni**, from South Africa, has a diploma in media studies and journalism. Passionate about communications, she has served with OM for over six years and currently works in the communications department of OM in South Africa. She speaks five languages.
- **Katherine Porter** and her husband, Lloyd, have served with OM for 26 years. Six years helping to establish teams in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism paved the way for 11 years as field leaders in Russia. In 2007, they and their two daughters moved to Australia, recruiting and sending people to serve across the world. Katherine is currently the Director of OM Global Organisational Development.
- **Inger R.** loves to give people a voice by sharing their stories as she writes for OM's EurAsia Support Team (OM EAST). She is from Scotland and is half Danish and likes drawing, playing the drums and enjoys a good brew of British tea, which she sometimes spills while laughing.
- **Megan R.** spent three months writing and taking photographs in the Middle East with OM in 2013. She now serves as the managing editor of OM's news website alongside her full-time communications work for a seminary in the US. She and her husband, Erik, enjoy live music, exploring new places, drinking good coffee and spending time with friends and family.
- **Rebecca Rempel** is a photojournalist from Canada. Serving on the Africa Area communications team, she travels Africa capturing the work God is doing around the continent with her camera and pen.
- In 1961, **Elaine Rhoton** worked alongside her husband, Dale, as he pioneered OM's work in Turkey. When visa problems ended their work among Turks, they began taking Bibles and Christian literature to believers in Communist countries. Leaving that work in the capable hands of others in 1975, they moved into the Ship Ministry and sailed with their children aboard *Doulos* in 1978. They are still with OM Ships.
- **Ellyn S.** grew up as an American overseas in Europe and has continued to pursue her love for travel, writing and photography. She studied creative writing and works as a writer for OM. She is passionate about using her skills to capture moving stories of what God is doing in Asia.
- **Corinna Scharrenberg**, from Germany, works in communications for OM Germany and Global Village Europe. She loves to write about the great things God is doing around the world.
- **Nathan Schmutz**, from Switzerland, works for OM in Latin America. Besides taking pictures and writing articles, he also supports OM Guatemala in their ministries and serves the Lord as well as he can.
- **Katie M. Stout** is a seminary student, writing tutor and running enthusiast, which is a good thing, since she also loves food. She formerly worked with OM in communications.
- On 1 September 2013, **Lawrence Tong**, from Singapore, became OM's third International Director. Lawrence's leadership journey has included serving on the Board of OM Singapore, as OM country leader for Taiwan, as director of *Logos II*, and in financial development with the OM Ships USA office in Florence, South Carolina. Lawrence also led the fast-growing work of OM in China, with a significant focus on welfare and agricultural programmes. He met his American wife, Susan, while serving on *Doulos* and married in 1989. They have two adult sons, Josh and Benji.
- **Anne Marit Viljoen**, from Norway, joined OM in the early '80s for three summer campaigns in France and long-term work in administration, hospitality, leadership and communications in Europe and East Asia Pacific. She and her husband reside in Norway, and she currently serves as a member of the OM Europe communications team.
- **Janet Weber**, an American, has served with OM since 2008 as a writer and editor in England and Germany. Passionate about enabling young writers and photographers to use their God-given skills in missions, she currently serves as OM's International Communications Director. She and her German husband are based in the US.
- Born and raised on the mission field throughout Latin America, **Patrick Wood** serves as a writer and content curator for OM USA. He is based in the Atlanta area, and his passions include long-distance running, books, TV, caffeine and eating.





PHOTO BY BRAD LIVENGOOD