

We want to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached.

Security: N – no restrictions



### **God arrives by bus** (p.5)

- Bus4Life meets people hungry for God

### **Not unwanted!** (p.6)

- Moldovans get a taste of serving in a Serbian refugee camp



transforming lives and communities



1957 · 2017

## Looking back - looking ahead



George Verwer speaking at OM's 60th anniversary celebration in Bangkok, Thailand, in February 2017.

(photo by Bryce McKay)

It all started with the passionate prayer of one woman, a prayer that resulted in a young man turning to the Lord - a young man by the name of George Verwer, who was then used by God in wonderful ways: first delivering Christian literature to Mexico in 1957, then starting a movement that mobilised thousands of Christians for outreaches in Europe, later leading to the smuggling of Bibles to Eastern Europe and other places closed to the gospel, so that today, 60 years later, we can see OM ministering alongside churches in over 110 countries of the world.

This year, therefore, is one in which we look back at the faithfulness of God throughout these 60 years we celebrate - a period during which thousands of missionaries put their lives at God's disposal to make Him known to those around them. Throughout this whole time the ministry of OM was and is based on values which give the first priority to God, to His character displayed in us and the Church of Christ.

These are our core values:

- Knowing and glorifying God - to know Him and make Him known
- Living in submission to God's Word
- Being people of grace and integrity
- Serving sacrificially
- Living as missionaries in a culturally appropriate way
- Loving and valuing people
- Reflecting the diversity of the body of Christ
- Evangelism and discipleship under the authority of the Church
- Global intercession
- Esteeming the Church through seeking counsel, advice and involvement in ministry

Throughout these 60 years those values have been pillars holding up OM's ministry; values that continue to serve as the guiding principles for OM for the years to come.

At the same time, right from the beginning of this movement, George Verwer's desire has always been that every person should hear the gospel at least once. This principle has been at the foundation of OM's work and is again highlighted in the ministry which our organisation is focusing on right now.

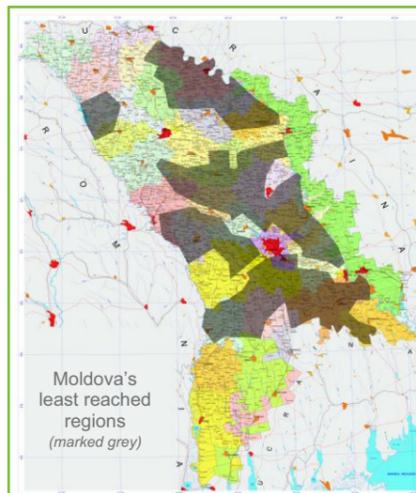
As OM seeks to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached, we too, here in Moldova, in the poorest country of Europe, want to come alongside the local churches to help create these communities. Therefore, as OM Moldova we are mobilising, equipping and supporting the Church to fulfil its call to create such vibrant communities of Jesus followers that will change Moldova and the world for Christ.

We are partnering with churches that are planting other churches, in order to reach the unreached communities and regions of Moldova. We come alongside these churches with outreach teams as well as projects that help them reach these communities, e.g. by meeting people's needs through different social projects, thus bringing hope and transformation into their lives.

Besides **supporting** church planting initiatives in direct ways like those mentioned above, we also continue **equipping** believers for ministry by offering training and practical missions experience.

At the same time we don't want to look only at the situation in Moldova, but also contribute to reaching the least reached nations of this world by **mobilising** and sending Moldovans to areas such as the Middle East, Southeast Asia, North Africa, Central Asia etc.

**Eugen Ciumac**  
Field Leader  
OM Moldova



Moldova's least reached regions (marked grey)

Several regions in Moldova have only a handful of churches and many villages without any gospel witness.

The desire to see churches planted in these areas is at the heart of our vision as OM Moldova. All our ministry feeds into this, as Local Ministry Teams and our various projects are tools through which we come alongside church planters, as we partner with mission-minded churches to reach the least reached areas of Moldova.



### Lozova:

## A church grows on hard soil



It is the talk of the village and many curious inhabitants set off to watch what is going on, as truck after truck passes through the streets, all heading for the same place in the centre of the village. There you can see a newly laid foundation, already indicating the dimensions of the building that is about to be raised. Having been refused building permission again and again since first applying in spring 2015, finally this April the construction of the church in Lozova started. For several years one of our Local Ministry Teams has been working in this region, helping to plant churches in some of the villages. Now Spiridon and Stefanie, our OM workers who led this team, are responsible for the church plant in Lozova.

Not only the construction of the church building has faced many obstacles; ever since ministry started in this village the believers in Lozova have been confronted with opposition and hostility, prejudices abounded and false rumours were spread about them. Much of this is still happening, but at the same time the lives of the believers prove these rumours wrong and there are people in the village willing to recognise this. Slowly trust and respect are being built. The perseverance of the believers is paying off, as is powerfully shown not only on the construction site.

Talking to a lady who was one of the first believers in the village, the joy and passion of her faith are obvious. Church meetings are always too short for her, during the week she seeks out other believers to have fellowship and study the Bible together. Though she has no home of her own (she and her children share the home of an invalid she looks after), she has found a spiritual home in the fellowship of the local believers. Last summer she was baptised, along with two other ladies from Lozova - the first people of the village to undergo adult baptism, which is a strange thing to most of her acquaintance. But she has learnt not to care about others' remarks: "People say that the church is buying me, but I tell them I am free to go where I choose", she confidently declares.

Asked about her hopes for the new church building, she explains her desire and expectation that many more people from the village will be willing to attend. At the moment the church is still meeting in a small old house - this offers insufficient space for the group that is already regularly gathering, while some other people from the village do not feel comfortable coming there - to a private home - whereas they show a readiness to meet the believers in a more neutral space. At a special event held by the church in a restaurant in March, over 200 people came - even though some other villagers tried to keep them away and even blocked the door, so that visitors had to use a back entrance to get in. This opposition actually became a promotion for the church, as it was widely talked about and after this incident everyone in the village knew about the believers. Now their hope is that the new building will provide this 'neutral space', where people will feel free to participate in communal activities offered by the church.



Challenges remain as the construction process still requires more documents as well as finances, and wisdom is needed for interacting well with workers and people from the village. Pray with us that as the eyes of the village are on the church, the believers' continued witness is speaking to the onlookers; that this church will reach many more people in their village and that those who attend church meetings will grow from being visitors to becoming committed followers of Jesus.





## On the potter's wheel

MDTe<sup>3</sup>

Learning about the needs of the world, discovering themselves, in-depth Bible studies, physical work, faith hikes, outreaches in gypsy villages or with the Bus4Life or on snowboards in the Romanian mountains - the participants of our Mission Discipleship Training (MDTe<sup>3</sup>) have had a great variety of experiences so far. They could mention many more activities - and they do not even know yet what is in store for them in the remaining weeks of the programme. However, when you ask them what has impacted them most so far, this is not as easily defined as an event or activity. You immediately sense there is something much deeper going on, as they try to find words for what God is doing within them and through them in each other's lives. Maybe the best illustration is that of watching a potter working on a clay jar: you can clearly see the process of change and yet cannot clearly imagine what the finished object will look like. When in one activity the participants received plasticine and were asked to form something representing their experience so far, one of the girls actually chose to display a potter at work. She knew God had also been moulding her before she joined the MDT, but like most of the others she felt it was deeper here - or maybe they were learning to be more receptive to God's forming touch. "I think I have become more 'mouldable', like this playdough", she explained.

The first module on which they started the course focused on their personal lives and walk with Christ, with sessions and activities aimed at creating self-awareness, leading them towards personal wholeness and self-initiated growth. Most of them found it difficult to look at themselves and how their past had marked them, and even harder to share this with others, but in the end found this experience to have been truly liberating - and each person's story had inspired and encouraged the others. "As good as the classes so far have been, I feel most of all I've learnt from you," one participant told the rest of the group during their evaluation at the end of that first module. It was an intense and challenging start, but it laid the foundation for them to be truly able to grow and learn in all the experiences that were to follow.

Today when you see the group of participants interacting - whether they study or worship, share their faith with others or simply have fun together - what immediately strikes you is their unity and confidence. These young people have truly connected on a deeper level and will confidently stand up for their faith and for each other. This was not a natural attitude for many of them: The leaders described some of them as having been very shy and unsure of their faith and of what God wants from them. "I have seen people who had no confidence in what they believe, grow into healthy Christians, leaders, people who confidently share the gospel, who find they love to study the Bible", Aryel, one of the MDTe<sup>3</sup> leaders from OM Romania, shared.

When you listen to them, you realise how very different their personalities and experiences are; when you hear them pray, you notice the variety of languages and cultures present in that group - and yet they are united by a sincere love and a desire to be formed by God, to become more like Jesus and to reflect Him in their lives. Anyone who has spent just a little time with that group understands when Aryel explains what is so amazing about being able to lead this MDT: "I can watch people blossom."

Bus4Life

(photography: Ion Manoil)



## God arrives by bus

A lady offering cheese in payment for books was just one of many people who visited the Bus4Life this spring, hungry to hear from God.

"You are the first person to ever tell me these things", 14-year-old Ilie said, as a member of the Bus4Life team shared with him about Jesus. Ilie was the first of his location to visit the bus as it stopped there during its journey through a northern district of Moldova in March. Although the conversation had started on the topic of football, it soon turned to Jesus, whom Ilie knew almost nothing about. On the bus this boy, who had been abandoned by his own father when he was just one month old, heard that God wants to be his Father, was told about all that Jesus had done for him to make this possible and received a New Testament so he could find out more. During the subsequent stay in this place - as also in the other locations the Bus4Life visited - the team met many people who were open for conversations, people who were seeking God, people expressing the desire and need to have their lives changed, people who wanted the team to pray for them and many who bought Bibles.

It's a great blessing that in Moldovan villages the simple sight of a big vehicle like the Bus4Life is still unusual and immediately creates curiosity. It is an attraction that draws people and helps to open doors with local authorities; it can give teams access to places without a local church and facilitate the first contact many inhabitants have with the gospel and believers. While the children enjoy fun activities like a bouncy castle, games and a message creatively presented for their understanding, adult visitors are served with tea, coffee and biscuits while they talk with the staff or browse through the books on display. Thus young and old hear about God and can take home literature and Bibles to learn more.

There are only a few places in Moldova where you can buy Christian literature; this is why the Bus4Life is a huge blessing also for local believers, offering access to a great variety of books even in remote villages. However, most of the visitors to the bus have no connection to a church and come simply out of curiosity - but they show just as much interest in what the team has to share and in the literature on offer.

As the bus moved on from Ilie's home town to a very small village in the area, one of the visitors was an elderly lady who was greatly interested in all the books she found on the bus. After looking at many different titles, she chose two she wanted to purchase, but said she'd have to go home to get money. Returning a little later, she explained that there was no money at home either - but she had brought 1.3 kg of home-made cheese, which she offered as payment. A team member bought the cheese from her, so in exchange she could get the books. OM sells the literature at reduced prices - mostly far below purchasing costs - to make it affordable to locals in the villages, but for some it's still money they cannot easily spare. At the same time, this lady's simply offering what she had was an encouraging sign of her desire to hear from God, and there's a high probability she will value and read the books she took home. One of the books she bought is written in the form of God addressing the reader as a Father his dear child.

Though living in a culture that sees God as distant and impersonal, this lady - as well as Ilie and all the other seeking visitors - now have the opportunity to continue hearing personally from their Creator and Father, even after the bus has left, through the Bibles and books they purchased.



Why not step out in faith and see what God can do in and through you as you commit five months to Him?  
You can already sign up for the 2018 MDTe<sup>3</sup> programme. If you are interested, or know somebody you would like to mobilise for missions and discipleship, please contact us at [MDTe3.md@om.org](mailto:MDTe3.md@om.org)



A group of young Moldovans had their first taste of international, cross-cultural ministry as they spent a week helping in a refugee camp. It was an experience that completely changed their perspective.



**Not unwanted!**

“We have seen the need; we have experienced the work; we want to go into missions!” Here we were, faced with two Moldovan girls determined to bring the gospel to the least reached of the world; two girls willing to go to even the most difficult and dangerous places on this globe; two simple girls from the poorest country in Europe, convinced that God was calling them and that He was also able to open a way. What had awakened this passion?

Last autumn these two girls went through our ‘Challenge into Missions’ (CiM) training and in April they joined a team from Moldova that went on a short trip to Serbia to help with the work in one of the refugee camps there. It was the first time OM Moldova offered Moldovan believers such an opportunity of experiencing short-term cross-cultural ministry in another country. The team was made up of three of our Moldovan OM workers and five others that had signed up from various Moldovan churches, among them these two girls.

Even for these two - although they had gone through CiM - it was challenging, as now they were interacting with people of a different language, different culture and mostly a different religion. At the same time most of the other participants had no previous experience at all and were unsure about how to speak to people or even how to approach them. But they found that they didn’t even need to approach anyone, as people came to them, seeking them out, eager to speak to them. OM has a heated tent in this camp, where they offer tea to people and, since there is not really any occupation for the people in the camp, many come to the tent to sit down for a cup of tea, a game of dominoes or simply some conversation. As some were trying to learn English, they were excited to have the chance to practise with a foreigner, but most were simply hungry for attention and a few kind words.

It was not easy for the team: to hear the stories of what some of these refugees had gone through, to see the pain in their eyes and the hopelessness with which they looked into the future. At the same time the team experienced how much their sincere interest was valued by these people who felt unwanted wherever they turned. The team’s own life stories were shared again and again, people eagerly listened to the message of acceptance and forgiveness they shared and often in tears would ask the team to pray for them, even if they did not share their faith.

There were also a few refugees who had turned to the Christian faith a few months before, and now were full of questions and every day urged the team to study the Bible with them. The example of these believers greatly encouraged the team and they also noticed that there was a difference between this group and the rest of the people in the camp: These Christians spoke with hope! The deep confidence that God was with them and was in control, whatever would happen to them, gave them a peace and joy most others could not find.

Returning to Moldova the team was exhausted but excited and overjoyed by what they had experienced. For every single participant it had been a time of growth: whether it was simply realising that, compared to the people they had met, they were blessed with a lot of things, or being motivated to study their own faith more because - having been challenged about it for the first time - they felt they needed to become more sure about what they believe and why they believe it.

And they understood that mission is possible - even for simple Moldovans.



*The team’s own life stories were shared again and again, people eagerly listened to the message of acceptance and forgiveness they shared and often in tears would ask the team to pray for them.*



## Stepping out of (into) the boat



interview

*Anastasia Damaschina is one of our native Moldovan OM workers and has been with our team since autumn 2015. She is now preparing for a two-year term of serving on OM’s ship Logos Hope, starting at the beginning of September.*

### Why did you join OM Moldova?

I used to pray for missionaries and read books about them, but I never thought I could be one myself; I had the impression that they were ideal, perfect people. However, I always had the desire to learn how to tell the gospel to children. This is what later made me attend OM Moldova’s “Challenge into Missions” (CiM) training and after that I joined the OM team.

### What do you like about your work with OM Moldova?

I am part of the relief ministry, overseeing a few Elderly Care projects and I really like visiting these centres, discussing with the elderly and encouraging them. It is also great to see that we can truly physically help those in need. At the same time I very much enjoy our ‘Love Moldova’ outreaches, where I can get directly involved, talk to people and work with children.

### What have you learnt during your time with OM so far?

I’ve learnt what “unity in diversity” means in practice, how to love people not just with words but in action, and I have grown in the practice of fasting. Also, when I came to CiM I spoke only Russian, but since then I have become more fluent in Romanian and also had to learn English. In all this I was often encouraged by the Bible verses saying that God has chosen the weak, and that His power is shown in our weakness.

### What made you decide to join the Logos Hope?

One of my fellow OM workers was on the ship for a while and shared about it on his return. During his presentation I clearly heard God tell me that He wants me to go there. After that I began to ask questions and find out more about this ministry. With time other people, too, encouraged me that I can do this.

### What do your current preparations for the ship include?

I need to raise financial support and build relationships with churches who will pray for me and whom I can encourage by my ministry. There are many practical things to take care of, like vaccines, insurance, visa and flight tickets. In August I will attend a conference and of course I need spiritual preparation - there have been obstacles on the way and I know there will be still more, so I need to know how to go on despite these.

### What part of the preparations has been most challenging and how have you seen God provide?

The biggest challenge was support raising - but this is also where I have been most encouraged by seeing God answer my need: I got reductions for the programme and for things I needed to buy. I received finances even from churches that met in half-finished and cold buildings at the start of winter, or from fellow OM workers; some donors don’t know me well, others were not even believers. And I saw God provide peace - a deep knowledge that God is with me and goes before me.

### How do Moldovan churches respond when you visit?

Most churches I visited understand the need to send people to reach the world and are happy that I am going. Many also remembered the visit of an OM ship to Odessa in 2004 and already had an idea about this ministry. These churches are now praying for me and some promised to further support me financially. I was encouraged to see people’s desire to help - some who could not give money offered me food or clothes.

### What does your family think about your plans?

My mother has blessed me in this, but my siblings are not sure it’s a good decision. They understand it is a good work, but think it’s dangerous: something could happen; I am alone etc.

### What keeps you going when discouragements appear?

I know that God is with me. He has called me and I’ve already seen all these answers to prayer, so surely he will also be with me in the future. I am also encouraged by 1Timothy 4:12 “Let no one despise your youth”. I may not have much experience, but God has put something in me that He wants to use.

### What are your expectations for your time on the ship?

I want to be a blessing and a light for others, to share God’s love and see many people turn to Him. I also want to be an encouragement to the team and to grow in my experience. I desire to grow spiritually: being far from family and friends, I want this to make me draw closer to God.

### How can we pray for you?

Pray for God’s blessing and that I will be a tool in His hand. Pray for the financial support which I still need to raise. Pray for my support team - those who are praying for me - that they will persevere and not give up. Pray for the people we will work with and share the gospel with, that they will be prepared and ready to listen.

### Is there anything else you want to say?

I ask God to repay you who pray for us; you’re a great support and encouragement! May God answer all your prayers! My challenge for people is Luke 9:25 “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet lose or forfeit his very self?”

*We praise God that Moldovans are willing to respond when they understand the needs of the world! Please pray for us as we mobilise and prepare Moldovans for global service. Pray for Anastasia and the needs she mentions; also remember those who participated in the trip to Serbia or others who are considering missions.*



# Win a watching world



"Our church has been in this village for 7-8 years, but whenever we invited people, they would not enter the church property, but only ever come as far as the fence." This is how the pastor's wife, who had coordinated some of our relief projects in that village, described the situation their church had found itself in for most of its existence. Already a few consecutive years OM had provided food parcels, which this church gave to those in need in their community; however, though the help was gladly received and people could hear and see God's goodness, all these years there was apparently no direct fruit or change in people's attitudes - until the beginning of this year. After we had finished the food parcel project this winter, the pastor's wife wrote us a letter to express her gratitude and share how this project had transformed the community:

"People started to change their opinion about us," she wrote. "Recently we again held an evangelistic meeting and this time we could do it inside the church building. There were 80 people present who had never been inside the church before; professors from the local school came, bringing others along in their cars. They stayed from the beginning right to the end; the meeting went from 4pm until 9pm and still nobody was in a hurry to go home. People came to the front to repent; people chained by alcoholism are now coming to our church, falling on their knees and asking God to free them. Never has there been so much joy and grace in our church!"

*We give thanks to God for all those who contribute to making our relief projects possible! Praise be to God that these projects not only relieve physical needs, but make God visible to those who receive them as well as to the watching community - and that He is at work even when it is not immediately visible, but fruit comes in His time.*

## Freedom Climb 2017

Two young women from our team, Anastasia Belousova and Oxana Lisii, are currently preparing for the challenge of their lives: climbing up to Machu Picchu in Peru in September! This event is a part of the "Freedom Challenge", an initiative to combat human trafficking and exploitation, which also supports OM Moldova's work with vulnerable children, including the camps - one for girls and one for boys - we will run in July alongside our other Love Moldova outreaches.

By participating, Anastasia and Oxana will raise awareness of the situation of children at risk in Moldova, as well as collect finances for these projects.



Anastasia talking at a fundraising dinner

*Both Oxana and Anastasia still lack a significant amount of finances to reach their fundraising goals as well as cover participation expenses for the Climb. We encourage you to partner with them by praying for them and also consider making a financial contribution. Donations are best made through your local OM office, designating them for "Moldova - HFN - Anastasia" or "Moldova - HFN - Oxana".*

## Get involved:



**Pray** for our ministries  
OR



**Give** towards a project  
OR



**Go - join a programme:**

Love Moldova (2 weeks)  
MDTe<sup>3</sup> (5 months)  
Global Action (2 years)

*We're looking for people to join us mid- & long-term! Current needs include:*

- a married couple to provide **Pastoral Care** for our team
- a **professional accountant** willing to serve long-term
- **Local Ministry Team** workers: live in a village community & work with local children, youth or elderly
- a **videographer** to help promote our vision and ministry

*[Contact us for more information!](#)*

## publications:

Contact us to subscribe/unsubscribe to:

- "Moldova News" (post or e-mail)
- monthly prayer calendars and bi-weekly prayer updates (e-mail)

More stories can be found on:

<http://news.om.org/country-news/mdq>

We are also on facebook ('OM Moldova')

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