



September – December 2024

千亿

BILLIONS



People

Adventures in trusting
God: 25 years with OMF
Ministry among the
marginalized in Taiwan



Places

Amidst the 9 to 9: seizing
the opportune moment
in East Asia
Three cities, three
ministries

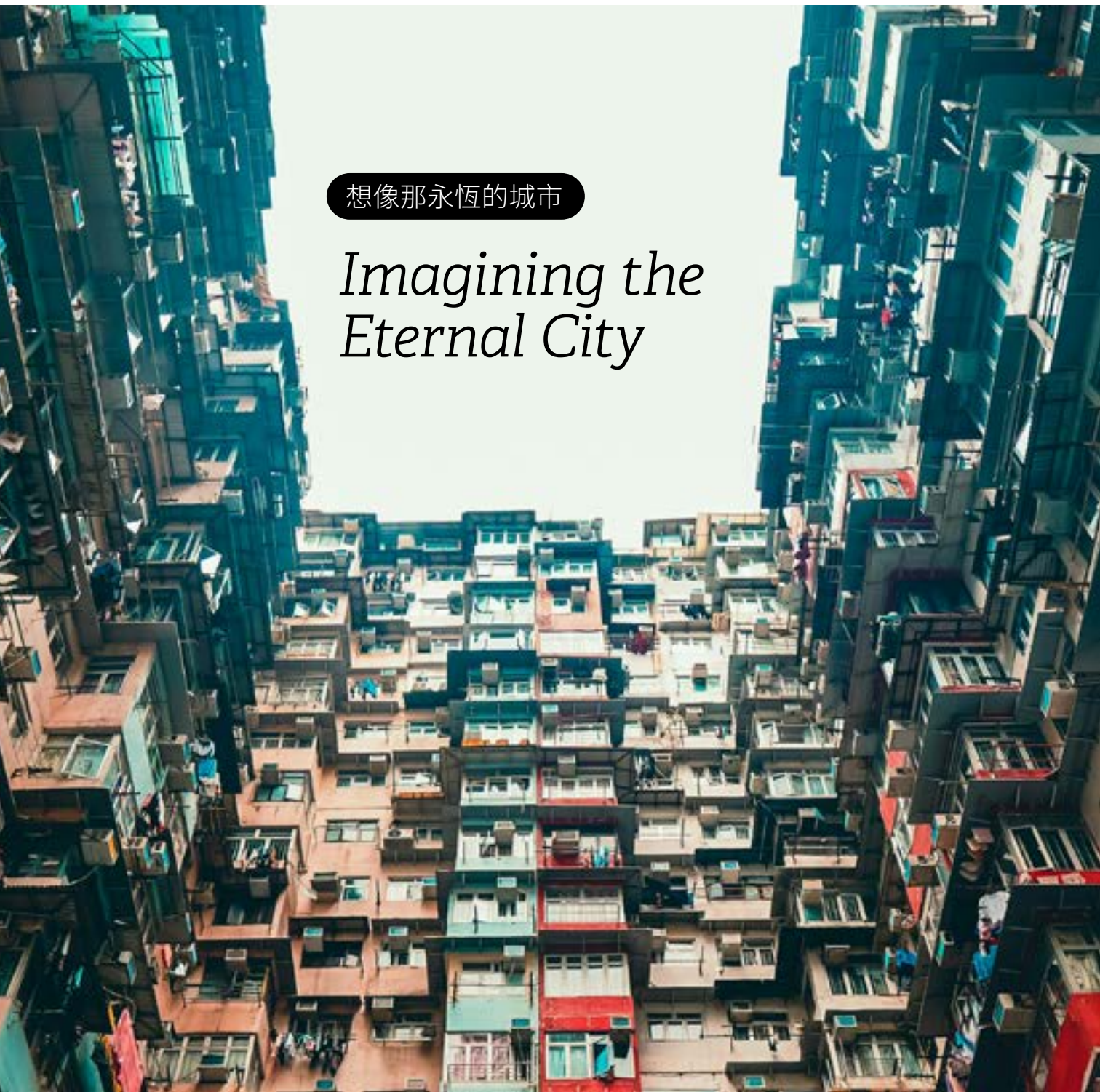


Participate

From oikos to polis:
Strategic urban
marketplace ministry in
the 21st century
Two Sides of a Coin

想像那永恒的城市

*Imagining the
Eternal City*





Heart for Asia. Hope for Billions.

We are OMF International, founded by James Hudson Taylor in 1865 as the China Inland Mission. We serve the Church and share the good news of Jesus Christ in all its fullness with the people of East Asia.

Billions comes out three times a year and is free for supporters. It started life as *China's Millions* in 1875, the title highlighted the numbers of people without the hope of Christ. In 2000 we changed the name to reflect East Asia's growing population. Today we still want to help all Christians get involved in God's global plan and to pursue every avenue to reach East Asians for Jesus.

編者的話

From the Editor

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

By the time I was a young adult, my understanding of a missionary was Christians living and sharing the good news of Jesus in the remote areas of Papua New Guinea. Perhaps this perception was shaped by my connections to missionaries who have served in those environments. All this changed when I came back from a short-term mission trip to a big city in East Asia. It opened my eyes to the wide possibilities for serving in urban environments, as well as other different places and spaces.

The great commission compels us to reach all the unreached, many of whom reside in big cities. This not only means we consider where we send, but also who we send. For those who go, living in a way that fosters an environment for connecting with people and sharing the gospel is just as important. Will you pray with us for workers willing to explore and reach people in the new mission frontiers?

Scott Brown

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目錄

Contents

A New World Coming: Mission and the Imagination	3
Amidst the 9 to 9: Seizing the Opportune Moment in East Asia	5
From <i>oikos</i> to <i>polis</i> : Strategic Urban Marketplace Ministry in the 21st Century	7
Three Cities, Three Ministries	9
A New Focus	11
A Church in the City	13
Home for Christmas	15
A Faithful Witness	16
The Callused Hands of Christ	17
Dawning Hope	19
Departure	21
Journey	22
Arrivals	23
Anniversary	29
Finance	30

From *oikos* to *polis*: STRATEGIC URBAN MARKETPLACE MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Page 7

A Faithful WITNESS

Page 16

A CHURCH IN THE CITY

Page 13

A NEW WORLD COMING: *Mission and the imagination*

In the final act of the biblical drama two themes combine to form a vision of the future: the urban and the intercultural.

The future – God’s future – is a multicultural one. John has a four-fold way of describing the nations of the world: ‘peoples, tribes, languages, and nations’. It varies each time it is used but the phrase is always four-fold, and we find it seven times in Revelation: 5:9, 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15.¹

The gospel creates a multicultural community. Its full expression will be seen in all its beautiful diversity in the new creation. This future vision motivates us to make the gospel of the kingdom seen, heard, and translated into the thought forms and life forms of all ‘peoples, tribes, languages, and nations’.

God’s future is also an urban one. The final two chapters of Revelation describe the city of God, the New Jerusalem. First century Christians hearing John’s message would have had their own experience of urban life in the Roman empire. Sociologist Rodney Stark describes Antioch, a typical Roman city, as:

‘A city where the average family lived a squalid life in filthy and cramped quarters, where at least half of the children died at birth or during infancy, and where most of the children who lived lost at least one parent before reaching maturity. A city filled with hatred and fear rooted in intense ethnic antagonisms and exacerbated by a constant stream of strangers.’²

Stark points out that as Christianity began to grow in cities, ‘its superior capacity for meeting these chronic problems soon became evident and played a major role in its ultimate triumph.’

Cities today

By 2050 some 70 per cent of the world’s population, about 6.3 billion people, will be living in cities. Today, 1 in 7 people on the planet currently lives in a slum, and 1 in every 4 will live in a slum by 2030, according to current estimates.³

As an organisation we need to do more in developing our theology and practice of urban mission. Revelation challenges us to embody and proclaim the gospel in all its fullness, and to anticipate in our missional work today, that vision of God’s urban future in the new creation.

‘The hope inspired by John’s visions is not focused entirely on the future, but provides both a radically alternative model of human, urban community and society, and the inspiration and dynamic enabling resistance to evil and the creation of counter-cultural communities in the present.’⁴

It is often the intercultural character of these ‘counter-cultural communities’ in today’s cities that marks them out as signposts of hope and healing. As theologian René Padilla said: ‘the church is called to be, both locally and globally, the community of reconciliation fully committed to unity and mutual acceptance in the midst of diversity, fragmentation, discrimination, exclusion, and social apartheid.’⁵

1. Numbers are significant in Revelation: 7 signifies completeness and 4 is the number of the world (with its four corners - 7:1; 20:8).
2. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (New York: HarperOne, 1996), 160.
3. See Habitat for Humanity <https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/what-we-do/slum-rehabilitation/what-is-a-slum/> accessed 17 May 2024.
4. David Smith, *Liberating the Gospel: Translating the Message of Jesus in a Globalised World*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2016), 140.
5. C. René Padilla, ‘Mission at the Turn of the Century / Millennium’ in *Evangelical Vol. 19*, no 1 (2001): 11.



**"THE GOSPEL CREATES A
MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY. ITS
FULL EXPRESSION WILL
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DIVERSITY IN THE NEW CREATION."**



Imaginative witness today

Finally, the nature of the book of Revelation itself is instructive for how we think of our witness everywhere in today's world, but particularly in urban contexts. The circumstances into which the message of Revelation first came required fresh vision and a different kind of theological vocabulary. 'The visions', writes David Smith, 'demonstrate the crucial importance of the faculty of the imagination in the Christian response to the world.'⁶

Our fruitful anticipation in this present life of the counter-cultural vision that combines the urban and intercultural themes of Revelation will require our imagination.

For example, Alister McGrath describes how C.S. Lewis was able to engage secular culture through his novels, creating an imaginary world that set the scene for commending the faith. Lewis has been seen 'as a catalyst, who opens up a deeper vision of the Christian faith, engaging the mind, the feelings, and the imagination...'⁷.

Few of us will have an impact like Lewis, yet isn't this what mission requires in all the contexts, and among all the peoples of East Asia in which we minister and for whom we pray? That through our kingdom witness we become catalysts, opening up a deeper vision... engaging the mind, the feelings, and the imagination... so that we translate Christ, in all his fullness, into the thought forms and life forms of the peoples, places, societies and cultures, in which we find ourselves.

I'm convinced that one of the most effective spheres to employ 'the faculty of the imagination in the Christian response to the world' is the arts.⁸ Wouldn't it be great to see intercultural churches engaging their urban context by creating an environment where imaginations are opened up to consider the transforming power and beauty of the gospel and what it means to anticipate a new world coming?

Dr Peter Rowan

OMF (UK) Co-National Director

6. David Smith, *Liberating the Gospel*, (2016), 118.

7. Alister McGrath, C. S. Lewis – *A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 375.

8. For example, see Warren R. Beattie & Anne M. Y. T. Soh (Eds), *Arts Across Cultures: Reimagining the Christian Faith in Asia*, (Oxford: Regnum Books 2022), and Makoto Fujimura, *Art and Faith: A Theology of Making*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

Amidst the 9 to 9: SEIZING THE OPPORTUNE MOMENT IN EAST ASIA

With many professionals in East Asia working long hours from 9 to 9, Matthew and Miriam formed workplace small groups that meet at lunch. "Many seekers come along, looking for things to do, and have found hearing the gospel and discussing its truths to be interesting and stimulating," Matthew reports in this story of urban marketplace ministry.*

I work in a big bustling city in East Asia. Apart from my roles as a doctor and OMF Field Medical Advisor, I am also a husband and a father.

Our family attends a church in a busy part of our city that is known for many internet companies. In our city, and especially in the tech sector, everybody works long hours and a lot of overtime—usually starting at 9am and not finishing till 9pm (and this doesn't include the typical one-hour commute, either).

Despite these seemingly late finishing times, most employees have a two-hour lunchbreak! Therefore our church—planted two years ago—has found that a useful strategy is to create "workplace small groups" that meet during lunch. We specifically seek professionals with a hope that more can be reached with the gospel. Many of our church members and pastors are involved in this ministry.

My wife Miriam has been part of a workplace

group at her company, which runs Alpha sessions every week. They've had many seekers come along, looking for things to do during their lunchbreaks, and have found hearing the gospel and discussing its truths to be interesting and stimulating.

A second hat as Field Medical Advisor

Whilst I have a main job as a doctor in an international hospital, I have another important side job as Field Medical

Advisor for my colleagues in East Asia. Most of the people I support are either students studying language or those with a job looking to reach out to people in their communities with the gospel. In practical terms, this may be as simple as making sure they know where the closest hospital is and have access to their chronic medications, or as

complex as helping them with an acute physical or psychological emergency.

Another part of my role involves assessing people who are hoping or planning to serve in the big cities of East Asia long-term, and to help

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them prepare physically, mentally and socially for medical challenges that may arise. I work most closely with colleagues in East Asia, but also interact with sending countries and the OMF international medical team in Singapore.

It can be challenging at times, especially when there is an emergency or crisis, but my hope is that our team can support colleagues to be healthy holistically and stay as long as possible.

Three tips on serving in urban marketplace ministry

Big cities by their very nature are filled with a lot of people who always seem busy and work very hard at their jobs. For those interested in ministry in this context, I would suggest:

- ***Don't neglect the skills, degrees or work experiences that God has already given you.*** Similarly, also don't discredit getting more experience working in a secular job now. The degree or job you did or are doing is not meaningless, but may very well be the way that God enables you to serve in a different context.
- ***Be open minded and don't give up.*** There is always a way forward, even if it may not be what you initially thought. Continue to uplift it in prayer and seek people and ways to get advice about how to keep moving forward.
- ***Practice being salt and light in the workplace now.*** If you don't do it now, it will be even harder cross-culturally in a different country with a different language!

How you can pray

- ***Pray for wisdom for Matthew on how to best support colleagues serving in East Asia.*** Mental health and trauma have been recurrent themes; many workers have been unable to return to East Asia for various reasons including ill family members. Many had to leave suddenly and experienced poor transitions.
- ***Pray for Matthew, his family and their church.*** Matthew serves as a small group

leader and Miriam is involved in her workplace Alpha group. Pray for faithfulness as they help lead and encourage those they work with. Pray for more people to be open to the gospel in each of their workplaces.

- ***Pray for the East Asia team.*** There has been a lot of activity—university ministry, English corners, workplace groups, celebrations as a way of sharing the gospel—but the fruit hasn't been as much as they would like, which can be discouraging. Pray for strength, perseverance and encouragement.
- ***Pray for East Asia's cities.*** There are unique challenges that come with serving in a big city and can often impact the ability of local churches to meet faithfully; there can also be barriers for people seeking Jesus or to take the next step of faith. Pray that the OMF team can be a light and source of hope as they point to Christ.

*Names have been changed for security purposes



From oikos to polis: STRATEGIC URBAN MARKETPLACE MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Oikos Origins: Gossiping the Gospel

The early church was established in a very different context to our urbanized and globalized world. Jesus and His first disciples operated in a largely agrarian economy, and even urban centers and trade routes were dominated by an *oikos* or house. Not a house the way we may think of it today—but a place that served as both home and small business workplace for family members, hired workers and household servants.

It was into this setting that the gospel first spread like wildfire—through networks that wove together family units, workplaces, supply chains and the broader community (White and Peel, 2023). Informal conversations took place, and working men and women shared the gospel with friends, relatives, co-workers, suppliers, customers...The gospel was gossiped about—and as a result, the church grew to over 6 million by the end of the third century (Stark, 1996).

Urban World: Ministry Opportunities in Cities

Much has changed since those early church days. Today, many places in the world are not

characterized by a local community market or family businesses bound to a tight group of local suppliers, customers and close-knit relationships. Most people live and work in cities, travelling many kilometers to workplaces (or working from home without the need to set foot outside!), our interactions not characterized by small community, extended family or local business.

In other words, the world has become much more urbanized. The World Bank reported in 2023 that over half of the world's population – 56% or 4.4 billion people – live in cities, or polis. This figure is expected to rise to nearly 70% by 2050.

In urban settings, the evangelistic opportunities lie in our companies, universities, office buildings and



meetings (online or in person). As ambassadors for Christ, we must prayerfully and purposefully pursue these opportunities.

How Then Shall We Live?

In light of this, OMF has many initiatives in the strategic space of the marketplace:

- University teachers engage with students and staff
- Medical professionals serve their communities, connecting with colleagues and training medical students
- Professionals in agriculture and ecological development share their expertise while engaging with government officials and their local communities
- Missional businesses contribute to local economies, providing services, products and jobs and interacting with employees, suppliers and customers
- IT professionals work for multinational companies, building friendships with colleagues from around the world

Marketplace ministry in urban settings is vital, and needs to be done intentionally and with sensitivity to the context and need. The workplace is often a pragmatic place focused on tasks, results and productivity. Being a witness and example in these ways is essential for building trust and proving character—without which we are unlikely to gain a hearing for our Christian testimony.

Competence, reliability, character and trust are indispensable. Our lives and our message are inextricably linked. As C.S. Lewis wrote, “When we Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world.”

Dr Bill Peel, co-founder of the Faith@Work Summit, and Jerry White, a member of the Lausanne Workplace Network,

explain, “In the marketplace, people usually judge us first by our work, not our theology.” These principles are clearly seen in Scripture. Paul tells us in Colossians 3:23, “Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord;” Solomon advises in Ecclesiastes 9:10, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.”

Changing the World One Colleague at a Time

Noriman Mak was a successful engineering manager in East Asia, promoted to high leadership positions at a young age. His parents were not Christians although he went to Christian schools in East Asia and the UK. At one stage, Noriman felt he had achieved a lot, but found none of it fulfilling nor purposeful.

One day, he met with a long-term friend and ex-colleague from a similar background. His friend had become a Christian while he was in the UK, and had been recently transferred to East Asia for work. This friend asked Noriman to meet regularly after work in a quiet tea shop for discipleship studies on Friday afternoons.

It was a simple act of faithfulness and friendship, but it was just what Noriman needed. These times led to a deeper understanding of the Bible and who Jesus is—and in time, Noriman gave his life to Christ. Simple, straightforward and effective. Workplace ministry at its best. Today, we are blessed in Australia as Noriman serves as Chair of our National Council.

We do not need to be superhuman evangelists or have degrees in theology to make an impact in urban marketplace settings. We simply need to be faithful and willing. For God produces the fruit and we can entrust the results to Him. May we as the Lord’s people use the good gifts of employment, skills and workplace relationships God has given us for His purposes and glory.

Paul Jessop
OMF Australia National Director

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三つの都市と三つの働き

THREE CITIES, THREE MINISTRIES

Taipei, Tokyo, Phnom Penh - three very different capital cities, but in each, OMF workers are seeking to share and show the good news of Jesus:

Tokyo: Homeless ministry

Homelessness is a largely invisible problem in Japan. Yet in Yoyogi Park, one of Tokyo's major green spaces, around 100 people make their home and some have been living there for over 30 years.

Sadly many churches tend to focus more on serving their members than reaching out to the marginalised. Yet on Saturday mornings around 70 people meet for Sidewalk Chapel. Meeting outdoors, there is worship, a Bible message, small groups and a bag of food to take away. There are also smaller gatherings during the week and through Sidewalk Chapel over the years many have come to faith in Jesus. 'They come first for the food, they come again for the community, they stay for Christ', says Canadian OMF worker Rijke Rombeek, who supports this ministry.

Once a week there is also a gathering with a Bible devotion and food for homeless people near one of Tokyo's main train stations. This was started around ten years ago partly through the work of a short-term mission team from the UK and has also seen several people turn to Christ.

The reasons for homelessness are complex and not easily resolved. However these ministries are giving people community, stability and hope that can bring about true transformation, beginning with knowing Christ.

Pray for wisdom to support people well and to expand homeless ministry to other locations in Tokyo.



Taipei: Pearl Family Garden

OMF worker Tera van Twillert from the Netherlands moved to inner city Taipei in 1993 to join a team serving the homeless and other marginalized people. However, she was living on a street where women would often wait at night for their customers right on her doorstep. 'God used that to give me a desire to one day befriend them and share the gospel with them', Tera says.

By Christmas 2005 Tera had put together a team to go out on the streets to bless and befriend women in the red-light district. At Christmas 2007 the team began renting a meeting place for ministry, which they called Pearl Family Garden.

Over the years, Pearl Family Garden has demonstrated God's love to many women in Taipei's red-light district through evangelism and practical care. Yet the Pearl team's vision is wider than Taipei. They long to see a string of pearls – initiatives supported by local churches in cities across Taiwan. Excitingly, work is now going on in five locations.

Pray that in the long-term the Pearl Family Garden may provide help and a safe place where women can come to know God's love and where their lives can find new meaning, direction and security in him.



Phnom Penh: Prey Tia Church

If you've ever looked at your clothes or shoes and seen the words 'Made in Cambodia', it's likely they were made in one of the many factories on the east side of the capital Phnom Penh. But have you thought of the people who made them?

Many of the 20,000+ factory workers in the area have moved there from other provinces to earn more money for their families. For many years there was no church in this part of Phnom Penh. In 2009, OMF (US) workers Danielle & Joseph Choi helped start the Fellowship Church of Prey Tia in one of the villages on the eastern edge of the city. Fifteen years later, it is a thriving church under the leadership of Song and Keo, two single Cambodian Christians. Song is in her final year of the Pastor Training Programme at a Bible school while Keo is working as a supervisor of the human resources department in a factory, as well as being a pastor.

The journey hasn't been easy. Danielle says that it 'can be compared to a marathon.' You have to

persevere and keep going even when 'the spiritual fruits you want to bear are very slow in coming'.

Over the last 15 years, the church has moved venues six times. This made it difficult to retain and attract church members. "We had to build new relationships and find ways to continue previous contacts," Danielle says. "Khmer people didn't see us as a church because we didn't have a permanent place of worship."

Nevertheless, today the church is a committed community of around 12 adults and young adults, plus a similar number of teenagers. The biggest group, however, is the 30 or so children who come with their families week by week.

Pray for God's provision for a long-term location to meet in and for opportunities to continue sharing the gospel.

A NEW FOCUS

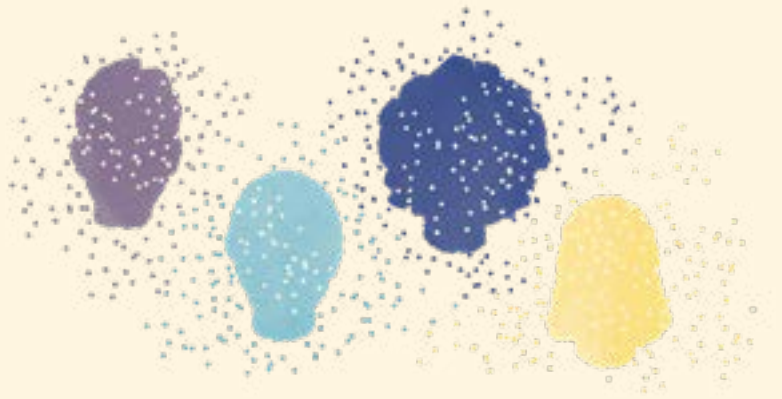
We caught up with global Field Directors James & Kirsty to find out more about Returnee Focus, the new name for Diaspora Returnee Ministries, and how we can get involved.

Tell us about the ministry of OMF Returnee Focus. What is exciting at the moment? What challenges are you facing?

The Bible is full of examples of God at work in the lives of people who were on the move such as Abraham, Jacob, the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, Onesimus and many others. It's exciting to see that he is still at work in similar ways today, in the lives of unprecedented numbers of international migrants (those who are living in a country different from the one they grew up in).

East Asian people who become followers of Jesus while overseas often find it challenging to integrate into the church if they return home. They may not be used to worshipping God in their native language. They may struggle to find a church, especially in contexts where churches cannot meet openly. The churches they do find may be very different from those they experienced in other countries. They may face opposition from family, friends and governments.

Returnee Focus doesn't just share the good news of Jesus with East Asians who are living outside of their home countries. We are passionate about preparing them to persevere in faith and to strengthen and enrich the church when they return to East Asia.



What kind of people do you work with?

We work with East Asian people who are studying internationally, but we also journey with those who are overseas for work, whether on placement for multinational companies or as migrant labour. Others are on the move to visit relatives or accompanying children who are studying overseas.

We minister to people who will return to five countries in East Asia. We seek to disciple them in a way that both equips them for the challenges they will face when they return home and inspires them to become catalysts for evangelism and cross-cultural mission in these diverse contexts.



Where do your teams work?

Our workers are currently spread out across 16 countries that stretch from Kenya to Japan, and from Canada to New Zealand. It's a challenge providing good care and support to colleagues so widely spread out, so we're grateful to have the support of a global leadership team and close partnerships with local OMF centres, churches and mission agencies.

Most of your teams work in urban areas, in East Asia and around the world. What have you been learning about ministry in cities?

Most international migration is happening in cities. Those cities all have unique challenges due to their contexts, but the similarities are far greater than the differences.

Most cities have a high turnover of international migrants, and some may only stay for relatively short periods of time. This provides opportunities to engage with large numbers of people, but there is often very limited time to witness to them and even less time to prepare them for returning to East Asia. In many cases, there is high uncertainty about who will eventually return to East Asia and when. Many would like to remain overseas, but issues of immigration, finance, employment or family often force them to leave at short notice.

Most cities are an international melting pot of ethnicities, which is not restricted to people from particular places in East Asia. How do you prepare Japanese people to return to Japan if you also have several Indian people turning up to your events? How do you disciple Thai people in their heart language, if others coming to your meetings only understand English?

We have been learning that urban ministry requires much flexibility. However, our

key question is always: How can we disciple this person so that they will be equipped to support the church back in East Asia, regardless of whether they will return long-term or for regular short-term visits?



How can the UK Church and individuals get involved?

Sharing the good news of Jesus with people outside their home countries is just the first step. We can all be doing more to prepare those on the move for what they will be doing next.

We can talk to people about their upcoming transitions and the challenges that may arise for them as a follower of Jesus. It will be helpful to intentionally expose them to a variety of biblical ways of doing church where there may be different practices, theologies or languages.

Pray for your East Asian friends to come to faith while they are in the UK, but also pray that they will make a significant contribution to church and mission in East Asia in the future.





A CHURCH IN THE CITY

Pastor Roat leads Jesus Village Church in Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia. A group of OMF workers started the church in 1998, but it is now thriving under Pastor Roat's leadership. This is his story:

Tell us a bit about yourself

My name is Sat Mony Roat. I was born in Phnom Penh in 1986. I am married to Phal Vanny, and we have two daughters: Charin is 10 and Monique is 5. I graduated from the Royal University of Phnom Penh with a major in Computer Science in 2009. I am the youngest son in a family of two sisters and one brother.

How did you become a Christian?

In 1999, I heard about the Christian church from my sister. My sister and some relatives were invited to a Sunday service by the church leader. I was so serious about Christianity at the time that I asked my sister and my brother to attend a service on the same day. At church, I felt warmly welcomed and loved by the church

members, leaders, and pastor and in a different way from my neighbourhood and the people I knew outside of the church. I received affection, support, hope, and encouragement to move forward from the church members, who also brought me the gospel of Jesus Christ. My family was going through a very hard time at that point. I was the only one still in school after my father was sent to jail, our family dispersed, and my siblings stopped going to school. As a young child of 11, I lived in poverty and lacked money, food, or hope, but since I entered the church, my life changed. After that, I began walking five kilometers on Sundays from my house to the church. Every week I joined the small group Bible class and baptism class, then I decided to accept Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord and got baptised.



My faith grew as I lived in the church's dormitory at middle school and benefited from daily Bible study. I got involved in some ministry on Sundays and later participated in campus ministry at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. I made the decision to devote a year of my post-college time to serving my church. I visited the university every Thursday to meet with students, share the Bible with them, and engage in fellowship. I have served in this ministry for more than five years.

How are you serving currently?

Currently, I am serving in Jesus Village Church and as the chair of Fellowship Churches of Cambodia (FCC).^{*} Being the chair of FCC, I and other committees, we serve 21 churches in Cambodia in different provinces for training, partnering and sending out missionaries from local churches to plant new churches where the gospel has not yet reached. We also have vision to send Cambodian missionaries to serve in other countries beyond Cambodia by God's grace and the leading of the Holy Spirit. I regularly make trips to sister churches in various districts and provinces of Phnom Penh to deliver the gospel as well as training and guiding church leaders. My vision and long-term goals are to equip 200 leaders and to plant 200 churches nationwide in Cambodia and beyond. I and my church want to see each new church also support a school, and we want to teach people according to the biblical perspective.

What happens at your church on a Sunday?

Every Sunday about 120-140 people attend the main worship service from 9:00-10:15am. The congregation is a mix of people from the area around the church, plus students, businesspeople, doctors.

There are four services on Sunday, starting at 8am with Bible study for adults, a main worship service, a service for teenagers and finally a Children's Sunday School, which finishes at 4pm.

How has God encouraged you recently?

As a full-time church worker, I have struggled with financial support. Last week I had to pay for the rental room for my mother on 10 May. I didn't have enough money, but I thanked God for his faithfulness and promised to pay on 10 May by 3:30 pm. Then I got a message from someone who I used to help with technology support; she sent 130 dollars to my bank account. That money was enough to pay for the house for my mother. So, I could pay the bill on time. Is it not a miracle?

Can you share a challenge you or your church are facing?

We have three daughter churches outside the city, and none of them have full-time staff; instead, they are led by volunteers. We want to see these churches open Monday through Sunday to teach, equip, and share the gospel with the community. Our challenge is to have people who are willing to serve and stay to care for the church.

Please pray for:

- Wisdom for my studying for Master's degree in seminary.
- Humility for serving God's church also my financial support for my children's education.
- Missionaries to partner with us to serve with more churches.

^{*} A grouping of churches started by OMF

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS?

Christmas away from home and extended family is hard, and with a growing number of internationals in our congregation in Manchester, the Platt Church staff team realised offering a church meal together on Christmas day could be a real blessing.

So in 2022 a wonderfully diverse group of guests gathered for Christmas dinner: from elderly British couples who could not spend the day with their families, to several international and British families as well as a good number of international students. Some people were new to church and it was such a great opportunity to get to know one another. Wonderfully, several of those who enjoyed Christmas lunch have since become Christians as relationships with church members grew over the following months.

As a family we got involved and wanted to be a blessing to others, but we had such a fun time ourselves. My husband Paul helped to carve the turkey and our daughters enjoyed setting out the crackers and Christmas napkins, carefully creating each place setting.

When the church was planning the meal for Christmas 2023, as the Intercultural Worker, I wondered if it should have a more international flavour like the intercultural bring-and-share meals we have throughout the year. I brought the idea to our Intercultural Team (8 men and women, from 7 countries ranging from ages 21-81), but they strongly felt we should stick with the traditional British Christmas feast. We're planning for that again this year!

Top tips

So, if this is something you're interested in doing, here are some of my top tips:

- Get a team together. We're blessed in our church with a large kitchen, but you still need a good team to help, and especially if you need several cooks to be bringing things in from home.
- Go simple with the main components– we bought frozen turkey crowns, frozen roast potatoes and parsnips and frozen veg! We also splashed out on ready-made gravy!
- Add some tasty homemade trimmings. A couple of slow cookers of festive red cabbage fed everyone as did one saucepan of bread sauce.
- Start cooking earlier than your plan says (Yes, do make a detailed timed plan). Everything always takes longer than you think!
- Bring some games and perhaps a jigsaw puzzle to occupy people as they wait for dinner to be ready.
- Watch the King's speech. This is a great way to bring the festivities to a natural end!
- And finally...don't forget to turn on the water heater. People definitely want a hot drink whilst they wait. (We learnt this the hard way!)

Grace Robinson

OMF (UK) / Intercultural Worker,
Platt Church Manchester

A Faithful WITNESS

Over the nearly 90 years of the China Inland Mission's work in that country, through famine, war and disease, thousands of men and women poured out their lives to tell the Chinese people of the Saviour who loved them and had died for them.

By 1925, about a thousand independent churches were started and 100,000 people baptised, I decided to investigate the archives of this magazine, then known as *China's Millions*, to see what else the CIM was doing around 100 years ago.

Education

The Diamond Jubilee issue of *China's Millions* in 1925 reported the opening of over 500 schools since 1865, with over 700 teachers. At a time when 80 per cent of the population was unable to read and write, schools started by the CIM and other mission organisations were often the first education provider in an area. Missionary education projects helped further the education of China, and as *China's Millions* often noted, teach that 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom' (Proverbs 9:10).

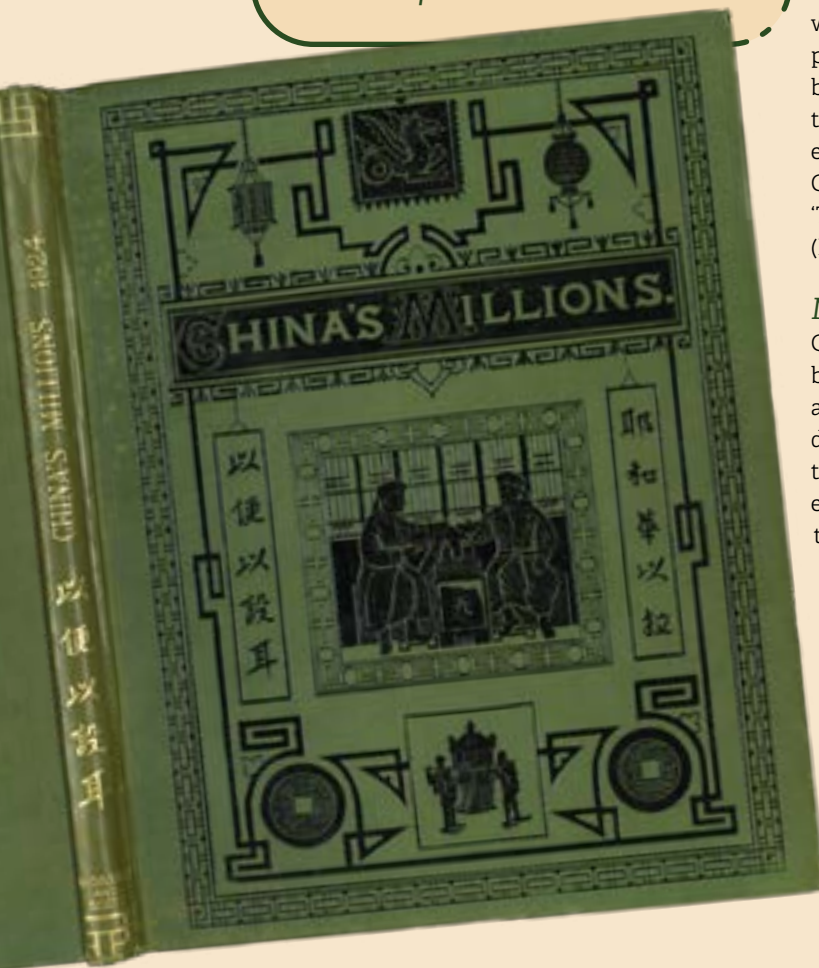
Medication

Given our founder Hudson Taylor's medical background, it was appropriate that between 1865 and 1925, the CIM opened 12 hospitals and over 90 dispensaries. This brought access to modern medical treatments and training for Chinese medical staff. For example, Canadian doctor Jessie McDonald (1888-1980), the CIM's first female doctor, served at Keifeng hospital for 26 years. In 1932 there were 304 missionary doctors from different agencies serving in China and over 400 Chinese doctors associated with Christian hospitals, the previous year treating about 200,000 patients.

Legacy

The work of the CIM and other missionary organisations in China in the 19th and 20th centuries not only pointed many Chinese people to Jesus Christ, but also brought significant benefits to Chinese society and the legacy of faithful communities of Christians loving God and their neighbours.

Reuben Grace
OMF (UK) Content & Books Coordinator



The callused hands of Christ

'In Christ a worker God is revealed. Ancient religions and philosophies [thought of] God as static and indifferent, or as a kind of Eastern ruler made into a god, who lay lazily in his high heavens...Christ draws back in himself the curtain of heaven and shows us...a God in shirtsleeves, a God busy with the hard work of guiding the destiny of a world in which the sinful and rebellious will of people creates infinite problems and difficulties. Jesus once said, "To this day my Father is working, and I also work." These strong and callused hands of Christ the worker are...a calling to cooperate with him.'

In his book *Las Manos de Cristo (The Hands of Christ)* Mexican pastor Gonzalo Báez Camargo uses this powerful image of Christ's callused hands to communicate work as biblically significant and to be brought under the Lordship of Christ. His hearers could look down at their own hands, marked by arduous work, and know their labour affirmed by Christ. Many Latin American Christians reject a divide between the spiritual and the secular, instead embracing the truth of Paul's word to slaves in pagan workplaces, 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.' (Colossians 3:23)

Latin America is a region that has relatively recently experienced marvellous church growth. Previously the largest Catholic nation in the world, now just over 30 per cent of Brazilians say they are evangelical believers. In the past the region welcomed missionaries, but now it sends missionaries.

In East Asia, tall buildings dominate the skylines of fast-moving, industrious cities, packed with office workers. Sprawling factories swallow vast numbers of

workers, producing clothing, electronics, medicines and more. In East Asian countries, far more people enter shops, factories and offices than churches. At times the best way (or the only way!) of spending time with such workers is to enter the marketplace as a fellow employee.

On one side of the world, increasing numbers of working Christians who see the workplace as an opportunity for intentional ministry. On the other side of the world, cities full of people working to satisfy the demands of worldly masters, while most have no knowledge of or relationship with their heavenly Father. Can these two realities be brought together for the glory of God?

How to grow a mission movement?

The remarkable growth of the Brazilian evangelical church is not yet matched by growth in Brazil's missions movement. Why might this be? Most church growth is not among the wealthier European diaspora here in Brazil. Rather, the Brazilian evangelical movement has mainly impacted the poorer sectors of society, especially working-class black women. Although Brazilian mega-churches may be highly visible, more than 95% of Brazilian evangelical churches have 100 members or less. The Brazilian currency sometimes experiences sudden changes in its value. Economic shocks caused by the pandemic have dramatically reduced the size of the middle class with millions slipping into poverty.

Such factors make it difficult for such churches to provide financially for their missionaries if they are sent through more traditional mission agencies. Instead, churches may be able to intentionally send marketplace workers abroad while their employer pays for them to be there! For example, one church in Brazil sent one of its members to coach a football club in north Africa. While he does not need financial support, his church prays for him, his players, his

employers and supports him in other ways. Could this approach see more working Brazilian Christians in the spiritual harvest fields of East Asia?

Also, Brazilian marketplace workers can find work abroad because of their ethnicity or specific skills. Around 200,000 Brazilians of Japanese-descent work in Japan as *dekasseguis* or “temporary migrant workers.” Obtaining visas for such work is simple. Japanese language classes are offered for free. The Japanese government wants to see Brazilian *dekasseguis* rise to 350,000 in the next five years. Specialised labourers from a Brazilian industrial cluster have moved internationally to a similar cluster in East Asia. Thousands of Brazilians work in the leather and footwear industrial cluster of Dongguan, China, sought because they offer relevant skills. A relatively high proportion of these Brazilian workers are likely to be evangelical Christians. But are they being intentionally equipped and supported by their churches?

What does this mean for OMF?

Specific international migration flows can be identified, and churches alerted to equip and commission those leaving from their congregations. Space, time and innovative support might be provided for such marketplace workers to gain the elements of culture, language and world view training before they plunge into marketplace ministry. OMF teams in East Asia may link marketplace workers together, providing fellowship, encouragement and guidance or running Bible studies and providing materials to those coming to faith through the witness of such workers.

How can OMF better enable international marketplace workers to advance not only the goal of the business but the cause of God’s kingdom through encouraging ‘whole-life discipleship - living, thinking, working, and speaking from a biblical worldview and with missional effectiveness in every place or circumstance of daily life and work.’?”

Steve Griffiths

OMF Brazil Strategy Coordinator



DAWNING HOPE

For many Filipinos in rural areas, cities are a place of hope for a better future. Sadly, they often end up living in difficult and dangerous conditions in slums, struggling to make ends meet and dealing with broken relationships, addictions and other issues.

In the 1990s, Canadian OMF workers Patrick & Pamela Hobbs saw these challenges in Manila and began working with young people in these areas. They realised the need to serve the whole person, meeting practical needs, sharing the hope Jesus brings, and equipping people to bring transformation in their own communities. This ministry is now called the Bukang Liwayway Foundation, or Dawn for the Poor in English.

The foundation's work has seen over a thousand students supported in their studies, successful healthcare programmes and livelihood projects as well as church planting. Today, Dawn for the Poor is led by Pastor Fred Dungganon, who himself benefited from the ministry growing up.

A life transformed; communities changed

'I grew up in a very poor family', Fred says. 'My parents were missionaries, but they were not Christians.' Fred explains his family were members of the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association, a controversial group, considered a cult by some. Practicing faith healing, group members believe in many spirits but also worship their human leaders.

'When I was ten my father died and so I learned to scavenge in a dumpsite in Metro Manila. I had to learn how to earn money for my family. My dream then was to finish my studies and give my family a better life.'

'At the age of 15, I worked in a construction site to help support my high school expenses. The summer after my graduation, I applied for



OMF worker Melanie Au in Manila



**"I PERFORMED MANY
MIRACLES AND HEALED
PEOPLE, THERE WAS ONE
THING THAT WAS LACKING.
Joy!"**

sponsorship at Bukang Liwayway and was accepted. Then I attended their summer youth camp, where I surrendered my life to Jesus.'

Sadly, with no pastor to follow up on him, Fred turned away from following Jesus after a year. Instead, he became a healer in the same organisation his father had been in.

'Even though I performed many miracles and healed people, there was one thing that was lacking. JOY!'

'That was when I started truly seeking God.' Fred cried out to God again, turned away from bad habits and turned to Jesus. 'I surrendered my dream and went to seminary. I declined many opportunities in life, because I know I can find the true meaning of life only in Christ.'

After returning to Christ and completing seminary Fred was appointed as leader of the ministry's youth programme. Then in 2007 he replaced the previous director of Dawn for the Poor.

Long-term vision

Fred has overseen significant changes since then: 'with my Board, we registered the organization as a legal organization in the Philippines that is locally led, and I became the first President and now Executive Director for 15 years since it became a foundation.'

'From being a recipient of the holistic ministry of Dawn for the Poor, I am now serving the ministry,' Fred reflects.

There are currently over 167 house churches, but Fred has a big vision to plant many more churches.

Project 25, Dawn for the Poor's new vision in obedience to the Great Commission, aims to plant churches in 25 new locations in the next 25 years, bringing transformation to communities where there are major

challenges. Fred explains: 'Children cannot go to school due to lack of transportation or support, poverty pushed them to quit school early because they need to support their big family or siblings who are sick.' Three years in to the project, they have already planted house churches in four locations and two more are on the way.

Growing independence

Although Dawn for the Poor started out as an OMF ministry, the organisation is becoming increasingly independent. OMF worker Melanie Au, who supports Dawn for the Poor leaders with coaching and training, explains that the foundation is already 'essentially operationally independent - taking care of all daily operations and making decisions on their own... local Filipinos are leading the ministry with the freedom to make decisions for the ministry and reaching out to their own people.'

'At the end of 2024, OMF will completely turn over all projects to Dawn for the Poor, and they will officially be independent from OMF.'

'The staff and leaders have substantial knowledge and skills to minister to the poor and are able to teach others. We hope that the future relationship of OMF and Dawn for the Poor will be one of interdependence and collaboration where we work together to reach those in the Philippines, but also send Filipinos as missionaries both in the Philippines and to other countries.'

Pray for:

- House church and project leaders to persevere in the midst of many trials.
- The student sponsorship programme, for students to finish their studies, more sponsors to support the scholars, more alumni from the programme to actively participate in sponsoring others.
- More partners and volunteers in the healthcare and livelihood projects.

Hear testimonies from Dawn for the Poor church leaders at omf.org/uk/billions



Pastor Fred and his wife Emie

Kian

Returnee Focus Ministry

Kian and his wife Liza moved to Australia with a vision to reach out to southeast Asians abroad, share the gospel, and prepare them to return to serve the Lord in southeast Asia.

I became a follower of Jesus at an evangelistic rally in southeast Asian, at the age of 15. Later, while I was studying in the US, Jesus called me 5—the same Jesus who called me while I was studying in the US to pick up my cross and follow Him for a life of work for His kingdom. I returned to southeast Asia to teach at a Bible college for seven years.

My wife Liza and I moved to Australia in 2007 with a vision to reach out to southeast Asians living abroad, share the gospel, and prepare them to return to serve the Lord in southeast Asia. There are more than 35,000 of the nationality of people I work among in Sydney, and many stay temporarily in Australia. We have found believe that whenever people are away from their community and their country, they are more open to the gospel. Liza and I were once international students ourselves, and benefited from this kind of ministry. I served for 15 years in ministry among international students in Sydney, with a particular focus on southeast Asian students.

I maintain connections with student groups at several universities, a fellowship of workers, and people from various churches. I also continue to connect with alumni who have returned to southeast Asia who are keen to welcome returnees and help them settle into local churches. I look forward to building further connections within different contexts in Australia as I serve in full-time ministry with OMF.



For further information about Kian's ministry, please contact drm.enquiry@omfmail.com



Pray for Kian, his family and returnee focus ministry

- Pray for many southeast Asians in Sydney to be open to becoming part of this ministry of training and equipping Christians to return to southeast Asia.
- Pray for Kian as he seeks to build further connections within the particular southeast Asian diaspora community in Australia, and for helpful collaborative relationships.
- Pray for Kian's ministry partnerships with other church leaders, and as he pastors a southeast Asian congregation alongside his OMF role.
- Pray for Kian's family—his wife Liza in her ministry among international students, and their two adult sons.

Scott Brown

National Communications Lead with OMF Australia

"We're taking a team on a short-term mission trip. Want to join us?"

"Sure, sounds exciting," I said. Twenty-five year-old me was keen to explore another country!

In that pivotal moment, my decision to go on a short-term mission trip ignited a lifelong passion for missions. At the time, reading Romans also revealed to me that Jesus desires disciples from all over the world, not just in Australia (Romans 10:10-15). I returned home with enthusiasm, eager for my church to become more involved. I even inquired about serving overseas long-term.

Nonetheless, there spanned 18 years from my initial short-term mission experience to eventually joining OMF. In between, God orchestrated years of preparation and testing, shaping my resilience.

Family support, especially from my wife Ruth and our daughters Alicia and Hope, has been invaluable. I have also been experiencing the truth of Hebrews 13:20-21 on a personal level; His peace, His equipping, His work in my life for the glory of Christ. "May He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever."

First steps at OMF

In 2019, I stepped into a part-time role as Communications Coordinator with OMF Australia, a leap of faith that led to full-time ministry. Despite challenges along the way, the years God spent building up my resilience has helped get me through.

I'm also continually learning to cast all my anxieties aside (Philippians 4:6-7) and focus on Christ, akin to Peter walking on water towards Jesus (Matthew 14:28-33). When I'm focused on God and His plans, the journey ahead feels much easier.

I've done a lot of different things and learned a lot of skills, yet never felt that there was one thing I

specifically excelled at. I now see that God doesn't waste a thing. Through these diverse experiences, God has shaped me for my current role.

A new season

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Like the apostle Paul, Hudson Taylor was a pioneer of cross-cultural mission. I believe if he were alive today to see a shifting mission landscape, he would look to embrace new ways to reach others for the sake of the gospel. As I continue my journey with OMF, I hope to enable other followers of Christ to explore how their different gifts can be used for God's Mission also.



Pray for Scott and the OMF Creatives community

- Pray that each member of the Creatives community will be engaged and encouraged as they pursue mission amidst work, study, church and family commitments.
- Pray for openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance as Scott leads the Creatives community and the OMF Australia communications team.
- Pray for strength and balance for Scott and his wife Ruth, and daughters Alicia and Hope, as they navigate the complexities of ministry, work, school, and family life.

Peema Duque

Theological education and missionary training in the Philippines

It was the middle of the pandemic when my term began, and so I spent 14 months working remotely from Australia. I returned to the Philippines in November 2021 to find the streets of Quezon City, once bustling with activity, quite sombre. The OMF guest house that once had a continuous flow of guests was quiet, and some colleagues were still stuck in their home countries.

Classes at ATS remained fully online for another year. The next academic year which began in August 2023 gave me a taste of teaching hybrid. I had students on campus with me, while others who lived outside of Manila or were in different countries joined our class online. Teaching hybrid classes was a challenging learning experience.

Prior to learning to teach hybrid classes, I was learning a new role. In January 2022, I stepped down from serving as Serve Asia Coordinator (SAC) to take on the Daniel Learning Coordinator (DLC) role. However, I continued to oversee Serve Asia for another seven months because there was no one to take over. It was during this extended period that Serve Asia Workers (SAW) arrived—our first SAWs since the pandemic started. It was exciting to have short-term workers again.

The highlight of my term was an unexpected trip to South Asia where I attended the Language Learning Encourager Course. This truly was God's provision that came at such a perfect time. The course taught skills that I needed in my role as DLC. When I returned to the Philippines, I immediately put into practice what I learned. I taught the Daniel learners how to use the Growing Redemptive Participator Approach to language and culture learning and trained their language nurturers as well. As DLC, I also learned to do Oral Proficiency Evaluations and train others to facilitate this. I thank God for my predecessors who taught and coached me, patiently.

To God be the glory for a fulfilling term.



Pray for Peema and the Philippines

- Pray for a Serve Asia Coordinator. This role still has not been filled and there are other key roles that have been left vacant when colleagues retired or left to take on ministries in their home countries.
- Pray for more workers. While the Philippines boasts of being the only Christian nation in Asia, over 88% of the population do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior, and close to 6 million are still unreached.
- Pray for Peema's rest in the Lord. It was difficult for her to leave the Philippines as there was no one to take her place as DLC. Pray that she would rest in the Lord, knowing that it is His work and that He will fill the need according to His perfect time and plan.



Peema's hats

- Adjunct Faculty with Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) teaching World Missions and coordinating the Intercultural and Urban Studies Internship.
- Daniel Learning Coordinator with OMF Philippines, coordinating the work of Daniel Learning Facilitators.
- Daniel Learning Facilitator with OMF Philippines, working directly with specific co-workers in their language, culture and worldview learning.
- Function Group leader with OMF Philippines, recommending culture and language learning policies, and overseeing learning programs and people.

Will & Edna McKelleher

Ministry among the marginalized in Taiwan

For our final term of service with OMF, it was most encouraging to be a part of significant milestones in the OMF-supported Pearl Family Garden's (PFG) ministry that reaches out to women who work in Taipei's red-light district. Last year, PFG released its first book, which contains powerful stories of twelve women whose lives have been transformed as they encountered God. This year, PFG was registered to become a Taiwanese association. PFG has gained government recognition for its care and support of marginalized groups, and Edna was involved in training police, social workers and employment services staff as part of a government initiative to support female sex workers to leave the trade.

I (Will) been involved in prison visitation, nursing home ministry and coming alongside various men with addiction issues. It's a ministry I find so rewarding—that is, meeting people and sharing life and faith with them. The men I meet with appreciate the time we spend together. They may not necessarily be long conversations (like in prison), some may not even be particularly interested in the gospel (including those with addictions)—but they are all grateful for concern, care and friendship. Some people are just very lonely.

In ministry among those on the margins of society, it takes much time to build trust, so relationships are key. I share best about faith when I know the person I'm talking with and we already have a connection—sharing Christ then becomes a natural part of the conversation.

As a family, we have grown in our relationship with God and blessed to have many precious Taiwanese friends. We thank God for enabling us to finish well in Taiwan.



Pray for the McKellehers

- Give thanks for all who have supported the McKellehers in prayer, encouragement and finances these past 14 years
- Give thanks that Will and Edna can be in Australia during this season of life to support their ageing parents and transition together as a family. Pray for their son, Joshua, who has just completed high school in Taiwan and hopes to study at a university in Sydney next year.
- Pray for strength and refreshment during stressful transitions. Pray for direction for the family as they seek God for the next season of their lives.

Greg & Shireen Seymour

Returnee Focus Ministry among Japanese

Our ministry focuses on Japanese people who are in Australia for a time before returning to Japan—this is the thrust of OMF's Returnee Focus Ministry. We also serve at a new Japanese church plant in the center of Melbourne. Additionally, Greg leads the Returnee Focus team in Oceania, a role that involves coordinating the ministry of OMF workers serving among Japanese, Chinese and Indonesian returnees in Australia and New Zealand.

Highlights: Japanese people coming to faith and gathering with others

A highlight definitely was seeing a number of young Japanese people go from almost no knowledge of Christianity, to having Bible studies, and then being baptized and returning as Christians to Japan. Furthermore, it was encouraging to see a number of them make the jump of attending church back in Japan. Another highlight was the Asian Region Returnee Focus conference in Sydney earlier this year, where we could meet other OMF members involved in returnee work among a number of different nationalities and in a variety of ministries.

Things we've learned during our term

Ministering as a family. I think I (Greg) have learned the importance of ministering as family. When our children were younger, I may have done much of the "outside work." These days, Shireen has a number of Bible studies with seekers and new Christians, both locally and online with people in Japan—and my role is at times to support her in this and look after our family at home.

Partnership with a local church. Another learning experience was seeing the importance of being linked to a local church when reaching out to young Japanese folk. There are quite a number of highly effective and trained volunteers we have with us now at CrossCulture Church (Melbourne), and the ministry is so much more productive with more people serving and praying.

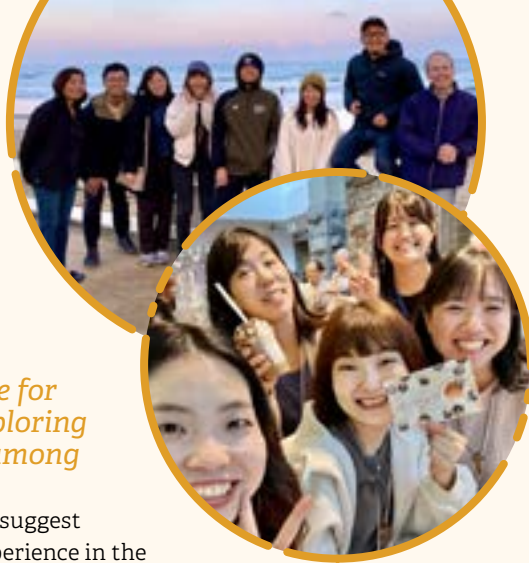
Our advice for people exploring ministry among Japanese

We'd always suggest ministry experience in the country of the people you're hoping to reach to deepen your knowledge of language and culture. For example, there was a couple who wanted to do outreach to Japanese students in their Australian city. They've spent four years in Japan learning Japanese and getting to know the culture. Now they've finished this season in Japan and are set up for more effective ministry in their home city.



Pray for Greg, Shireen and Japanese returnees

- Pray that Greg and Shireen can do a good job catching up, informing and praying with their mission partners during home assignment.
- Give thanks for an effective partnership with CrossCulture Church in Melbourne in reaching out to Japanese returnees. Pray that this may flourish and be a mutual blessing.
- Pray for Japanese Christians who have returned to Japan; that they may connect with churches in which they can grow in maturity in Christ as they learn and obey His Word.
- Pray for the Bible studies Shireen runs with Japanese women; pray for fruitfulness, and that each seeker will come to repentance and faith.



Phil & Irene Nicholson

Leadership with OMF Taiwan

This term of service started with quarantine as we returned to Taiwan in 2021; thankfully, within six months we were able to start traveling again.

One of the highlights for Phil has been seeing the work of Langham Preaching flourish as pandemic restrictions have ended. He is now responsible for ten countries, so the last two years have been extremely busy with travel throughout East Asia—and sometimes beyond.

We're now even more enthusiastic for people to be well equipped to preach well. In many places the work is now being taken forward by local pastors, the church is growing and people are hungry to know God's Word. Some of the people we work with were led to Christ or disciplined by a previous generation of missionaries. We are seeing the fruit of these missionaries' ministry in the lives of people who are now mature Christian leaders. Training them contributes to their growth as they continue to disciple and teach another generation.

I (Irene) lead OMF's Pre-Home Assignment Workshop, which equips cross-cultural workers to have a productive home assignment. I serve with a team of 12 facilitators, with whom I help workers "pack their home assignment suitcase" with stories they have written, photos they plan to share, a plan for connecting with churches and mission partners and activities for teaching about God's global mission. The workshop also deepens workers' understanding of the process of transition they will undergo as they leave their ministry or country of service to go to a "home" which might not feel so much like home after a few years away!

A highlight is always the last day when participants present their talks. It's a joy to hear stories from all across Asia, usually including challenges to listeners on how they can be involved in missions whether they stay or go.

I also help with our mobilization ministry—this includes training new mobilizers and working on a team to run mobilization events. This term I had the privilege of speaking at mission conferences in Chile and India.



Training others is not something we can do without having our own life and ministry experiences first. But it is a joy to see that God uses these not only for our own benefit, but to enable us to pass on what we have learned to others. And when we return to Asia for our next (and possibly final) term before retirement, we hope to continue doing this.



Pray for Phil and Irene

- Pray for Phil and Irene during their home assignment in Sydney July 2024-February 2025. They are looking forward to time with their home church and family. Three of their parents, most of their siblings and two of their adult sons live in Sydney.
- Give thanks for the joy of catching up with a younger generation of nephews and nieces during their home assignment.
- Phil and Irene plan to share at Bible colleges and OMF and student conferences. Pray that they will be effective in helping younger people to be excited about missions and overcome the fears that many have.
- Pray for God's provision of their ongoing needs.

Jim & Linda McIntosh

J.O. Fraser Center Coordinators



We are coordinators of the James O. Fraser Center, a strategic ministry to train local gospel workers in Thailand and elsewhere in southeast Asia from Lisu, Lahu and other minority peoples. We are involved in teaching theology, training church leaders, discipling national staff and students, overseeing two translation projects (theological courses), providing Lisu Bibles and encouraging graduates in places of ministry in two countries. In addition, we support and oversee the Word Minister Training Center in another part of southeast Asia, a similar ministry to that of JOFC, which is now coordinated by two of our graduates.

Highlights: local leadership and deepened discipleship

Jim: My highlight is seeing God raise up men for leadership at JOFC and in local churches. Particularly over this term, I have seen young, single men study, be discipled and then mature into men who can teach theology, translate theological materials, disciple others, grow into husbands and fathers and preach in local churches—and have an impact on the maturity of the church.

Linda: My highlight is becoming grandparents –

having two grandsons, watching all my children grow in their faith, biblical convictions and desire to study the Bible and walk in godliness. They are my crown, my highlight and joy. At JOFC I have seen God maturing young women into wives and/or mothers who are able to teach and disciple their children and other women.

Things we've learned: the sufficiency and power of God

Jim: God's Word is powerful and sufficient to do the work God requires in His church and among His people. We don't need clever programs or techniques to share the gospel. We were told to make disciples – and that is done by preaching, teaching, and applying God's Word.

Linda: I have learnt that though pain and loss God is faithful. He calls us to suffer, to love Him more than we love our comfort, our reputation and the people closest to us. I have learnt that the best gift I can give to my children, staff, students and other Christians is my trust and obedience to God. I have learnt in deeper ways than before that God provides all we need – God's best gift are His people

and the unity we have around His Word. I have learnt that I have not yet exhausted God's presence, love or joy.

Our top 3 tips for those considering mission

1. Godly character can never replace degrees, knowledge and skills.

These things are tools in the hand of the Lord, but they never replace Christ in us. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 is true of us, and we indeed boast in the Lord. We pursue God first and the life Jesus teaches us to live from His Word.

2. Part of having godly character is the discipline to learn language and participate in the culture around us.

Learning language and culture are values of OMF and of great importance. We are not called to assimilate culture nor find our belonging there—we belong to a heavenly kingdom—but we need language to communicate God's Word and we need culture to understand how to apply it to the people we serve. It takes years to learn and we always feel like infants, but we do have great joy when we see God's Word penetrate deeply into people's lives.

3. Know that the One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

The Lord called us to the ministry at JOFC. It was not something we were looking for, planned or even felt a desire to do. We know all that has happened in the last 16 years have been because of His calling, His faithfulness and grace in our lives and in others.



Pray for Jim, Linda and JOFC

- Pray for the team looking after JOFC while Jim and Linda are home assignment.
- Give thanks for His enabling through 16 years of home-schooling five children through to Year 12.
- Pray for renewal and refreshment in the Lord and that He will prepare Jim and Linda for the next stage of ministry and family life as they return to ministry without their children with them.
- Pray that as parents and grandparents Jim and Linda can help and support their family through transitions and life changes in work, study and ministry. Pray too that they can bless and care for their parents.

ADVENTURES IN TRUSTING GOD:

25 years with OMF



Author and mobilizer Christine Dillon shares highlights and the ways she's seen God work over her last 25 years of ministry with OMF—and tips for those considering mission.

In what ways have you served with OMF?

From February, 1999, I spent 22 years in Taiwan with a focus on the south, as I felt that was an area more needy for the gospel. I returned to Australia in April 2021, spent a year in SMBC as missionary-in-residence, then worked for the homeside in NSW in mobilization.

Please share some of your ministry highlights from the last 25 years.

Seeing transformed lives is huge—folk come to know Jesus, and I'm still in contact with some of them. The 150 year anniversary celebrations for OMF in Thailand with thousands of us. The trainings for the MEED course (Multiplying Effective Evangelists and Disciples) were always highlights and allowed me to get to know our different fields and meet many from different countries. The OMF book writing workshop - many of us who went have written books since - was also significant.

What were some of the hard times you experienced?

It never gets easier to be away from family and there's an awful lot you miss out on such as my nephews and nieces. Being a single person, I feel it keenly. Disaster events—four months after I arrived, we had a major earthquake. At every place I moved, there was a major flood or earthquake or some disaster. Your own sin and conflict on your team are stressful. Lots of goodbyes...too many goodbyes.

How have you seen God at work?

Often through small things. One of the things that was very difficult in the last town I lived in Taiwan was the level of pollution; there were times when I begged God for rain to clean the skies because I didn't think I could cope anymore. I've also seen tons of answered prayer in people's lives. Really small things, lots of small things that show a Father's care for his children.

Please share some words of wisdom you'd pass on to those considering mission.

Go for it. If you want to be in a place where God is going to work, you will be forced to go where you'll be out of your comfort zone. Keep persevering. Keep trusting when things get overwhelming. Keep turning to the Lord. I've just seen God's sovereign control in everything. There have been times when I've been completely blocked, and people have advised me to leave OMF—and I just said, "No. God can be trusted. He knows what He's doing." And it's always been that! Learn to trust now, keep trusting—and it's a great adventure.

We will continue to share more details on the website at omf.org/nz/event/storytelling-2024



TWO SIDES OF A COIN: MARKETPLACE MINISTRY & THE GREAT COMMISSION



Many missionaries have two jobs. Some are doctors, some are dentists, some are business consultants for global organisations. While carrying out their day-to-day occupational activities, they share their Christian faith with their colleagues.

In a way, what I am describing is marketplace ministry. It is not just a great way to serve our God with all the skills that He has equipped us with—for some contexts, marketplace ministry might be the only way to reach people with the gospel.

A difficult mandate

What about Christians who aren't sent overseas? Shouldn't all Christians be testifying to the work of Christ on the cross and making disciples of all nations in their workplaces? While "marketplace ministry" sounds more missional, this should be a way of life for all Christians. Biblically speaking, the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) is not only for those who are sent overseas.

Some of us though find it difficult to blend evangelism and discipleship into our working lives. Speaking from personal experience—being someone who worked as an accountant for twenty years—it is not always easy to find time out of a busy deadline-driven work schedule to do anything other than performing our tasks.

Sometimes the stakeholders involved in our work or the culture of our working environment make it hard to initiate a conversation about our faith. Sometimes we're afraid of jeopardising our career path, if we are seen as not focusing entirely on our work.

It can feel like our working hours belong entirely to our secular employers—and sharing the gospel and church ministries should be done after hours or on the weekend.

On call at all hours

Interestingly, Jesus did not specifically mention the hours during which Christian should go and make disciples of all nations—but He did say that He would surely be with us always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20). Meanwhile, in Luke, Jesus also said that in order to follow Him as disciples, we must deny ourselves and take up His cross daily (Luke 9:23).

The Great Commission highlights that Jesus has ultimate authority over heaven and earth, including all our lives. It also encapsulates Jesus' purpose for coming to earth—that is, to inaugurate the kingdom of God by bringing us into a saving relationship with God. Our lives are changed, and throughout our lives as Christians we should continue to be transformed. Our lives and our career should take on an eternal perspective; our priorities of time and finances and success fall in line with God's will for our lives.

Dangerous—yet safe

While we want to carry out our work duties professionally and responsibly, there is no need to be fearful about sharing our faith with people we work with. Jesus is our Lord, our God and our Master. We must be ready to worship Him and proclaim His name whether we are at school, a market or a workplace. Jesus asks us to be prepared for whatever He calls us to be and to do. Even when He disrupts our comfort zone, He is there to create a new safe space for us within His loving arms.

As we continue to live as faithful servants of Jesus Christ our Lord, let us pray that He will continue to use our skills and bless our work. I pray that He will also place us in the right roles and working environment, not just to serve Him with our work, but in a community where He wants us to testify His name and make disciples of all nations. Amen!

Edwin Lee

OMF Australia Finance Manager

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