



January – April 2024

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People

A Female Asian Mobiliser
in Australia

The Woman Who Opened
My Eyes to Mission



Places

China's First Female
Missionary

From Enemy to Friend



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Created to Create
Making the Most of
Every Opportunity



여성과 하나님나라의 전파

Women in God's Mission



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

Women have been involved in OMF from the very start – when it was China Inland Mission (CIM). In 1861, the first CIM missionaries left together on boat from England. More than half of them were women, including nine unmarried women. And today, there are still more women than men serving with OMF.

The Gospel Coalition reports that these days, across the world, about twice as many women as men serve as on the mission field.

I've served in Japan for 23 years with my husband David. As an editor and writer, I'm passionate about showing people that missionaries are ordinary Christians serving God in not-so-ordinary places. This edition of *Billions* features stories of missionary women who may not have been as visible in our churches and wider communities. I pray that these stories will open your eyes about how you can pray for women in mission, but also maybe consider how you can serve, wherever you are.

Blessings in Christ,

Wendy Marshall

Managing Editor of Japan Harvest

Guest Editor

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THE THOUSAND THINGS SEEN AND UNSEEN

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HOW TO LIVE A WORTHY AND MEANINGFUL LIFE

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News Updates



OMF welcomes new General Director Dr Joseph Chang

At a special gathering in Thailand on Monday 27 November Dr Patrick Fung handed over the role of General Director of OMF International to Dr Joseph Chang. Joseph is OMF International's 11th General Director in the organisation's almost 160-year history.

Trained as a medical doctor, Joseph started his ministries in community health development. Later, he became involved in diaspora and returnee ministries, reaching out to Thai and Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan and assisting them in church planting back home. Subsequently, Joseph became the Executive Director of a ministry where he oversaw non-governmental organisations and marketplace ministries, as well as missional businesses. Most recently, Joseph has been an International Director and a member of OMF's International Leadership Team since January 2020.

As Joseph takes on the role, we thank Patrick and Jennie Fung for their dedication and work with OMF. Patrick has served as General Director since 2006 and will be moving into a new role as OMF Global Ambassador.

A new era for Pearl Family Garden in Taiwan

Passing leadership onto local Christians – that's OMF Taiwan's vision for pioneering ministry.

"A dream that doesn't come easily," social worker Edna McKelleher admits. For over ten years, Edna been ministering to marginalised women with Pearl Family Garden in Taiwan. She's met courageous women who are willing to share their personal experiences of God's help to establish a new life.

It has taken many years, but Pearl Family Garden (PFG) has recently been registered as an independent local association. PFG is the umbrella association for three teams -- in Taipei, Keelung and Taichung. Local Christians now form the leadership and membership of PFG – and sent their first overseas missionary last September!

Today, Edna is involved in training people working in policing, social and employment services in relevant skills such as conducting interviews, assessments and referrals. Government initiatives to support female sex workers to find alternative employment have opened opportunities for Christians to serve in this space.



A fruitful ministry by local Taiwanese Christians

Pearl Family Garden branched out in recent years to Taichung, pioneered by missionary Audrey Chan.

"Before the Taichung work started, there was

a lot of prayer and meetings with local Christians and, especially, PFG founder Tera van Twillert. These conversations convinced me that I needed to be deliberate about focusing on mobilising local Christians,” Audrey says. Audrey, Tera and a local Christian from the Keelung team continue to pray every week over the phone for PFG’s ministry.

“We didn’t want to keep new missionaries from going out to more remote areas, which is a BIG need in Taiwan. But I also felt [focusing on local Christians] was important in light of our end goal of seeing it become an indigenous, Taiwanese-led work.” Aside from Audrey, all members of the team were born and raised in Taiwan.

The deliberate focus on local Taiwanese Christians spearheading and undertaking the work has borne fruit.

“God seemed to bring the right people to the team at just the right time, to do something that was needed at that phase.”

PFG Taichung’s newest volunteer joined at a time when Audrey had been asking God to provide a strong listener.

“It was so obvious God was answering that prayer,” Audrey says. A woman she’d been praying to see again suddenly reappeared that day. “She was so touched by the gentle listening of this volunteer and opened her heart to the Lord in prayer.”

Recently, the pastor of Audrey’s church took the initiative to ask how the church can help.

“The Lord truly is the one who builds the house in spite of the odds,” Audrey says. The PFG is praying for “church partnerships where the churches get invested with heart and hands and see God work not just in the women, but also in the church.”

Long term, PFG seeks to see every branch of the ministry become fully led by local Christians backed by local churches. Their vision is not only to share the gospel with women in red light districts, but to see a “string of pearls” — churches throughout Taiwan joining God in this work.

Audrey is seeing Christians in two other major cities start to take steps in sharing the gospel – and many responding with hope to PFG’s recently published book, *Serving Tea: Stories from Wanhua’s Red-Light District*, as they read the stories of how God has been doing a work that seemed ‘impossible.’



How can you pray

- Pray for the Lord to continue to work powerfully in and through the ministry of Pearl Family Garden.
- Pray for the three PFG teams in Taipei, Keelung and Taichung; it can be challenging and often lonely in a ministry that often inspires anxiety in pastors when they hear about the work.
- Pray for Pearl to become a sustainable ministry and for Taiwanese churches to reach out and share the gospel with women in red-light districts all over the island.



New Book : Learn more about Pearl Family Garden’s ministry through their newly released book *Serving Tea: Stories from Wanhua’s Red-Light District*, featuring stories of women who met Jesus and saw their lives transformed. pearlfamilygarden.weebly.com

THE THOUSAND THINGS SEEN AND UNSEEN

During my first trip to Japan the last thing I expected was to fall in love. I was still somewhat fresh out of university and working in Canberra when a mate emailed me about a 2 for 1 airfare deal to Japan. I was young and game and so not long after we headed off to enjoy the sushi, samurai and sweltering summer heat.

Part of our itinerary included visiting a mutual uni friend, Mel. It was on a hot, humid day trip with her to Nara that my heart was strangely warmed and from that moment on there was only ever one girl who held my affections. (Fortunately she said yes, and we have now been happily married for almost 15 years.)

The cheap air fares were not the only 2 for 1 deal those holidays though. Despite no prior interest in Japan, my heart was also moved for that beautiful country. Japan and my wife were a package deal.

After we finished uni at a similar time, Mel moved straight to Japan to start mission work. As we dated and eventually married, I understood that mission to Japan was a driving passion for Mel.

It was her influence and example that led me to be involved in mission.

And her influence has not stopped there.

I remember the tough and sometimes dark days during our first year in Japan. I felt swamped by the Japanese language study and overwhelmed by the weight of parenting young children, culture shock and all the other stresses that come in a missionary's first term.

Without Mel's ceaseless prayer, support and encouragement, I simply would not have made it. She was a pillar of strength and a means of grace the Lord provided.

In our journey through various seasons of life and ministry, Mel and I have always viewed ourselves as

a team. We serve together, pray together and parent together. We make decisions together and share a united vision.

Sometimes this means one of us plays more of a support role (especially with the kids), while the other can serve more effectively.

In many ways, I served out of weakness in Japan so that Mel could serve in a ministry and place where she flourished. Now in Australia, Mel primarily is focused on raising our children while I work in an area more suited to my gifting.

And yet through it all we serve together. We are a team.

As Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says:

*Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:
If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up...
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

When I think of women in mission, I think of the thousand things – seen and unseen – that are faithfully done.

I think of humble and sacrificial service, leading by example and inspiring others to do likewise. I think of selfless acts and bravery. I think of a certain kind of courage that goes beyond human strength and wisdom to obey the call of Christ.

I think of my wife and the invaluable and immeasurable impact she has had on me, our children and the Japanese.

I think about the kingdom of God growing and Christ being honored as each part does its work.

When I think of women in ministry I am inspired, humbled and thankful.

Paul Jessop

OMF Australia National Director

**SHE WAS A
PILLAR OF
STRENGTH
AND A MEANS
OF GRACE THE
LORD PROVIDED.**

HOW TO LIVE A WORTHY & MEANINGFUL LIFE



Over the years, my ministry involvement has changed from being a single missionary in Japan, working in women's ministry in Australia, serving again in Japan (as a married woman with children) and now as the primary carer of our children (back in Australia).

Throughout all of these changes, especially when we faced the very difficult decision to not return to Japan as long-term missionaries, I have tried to remember that who I am is more important than what I do.

As Christian women, we can each live worthy and meaningful lives, regardless of where we are and the particular role we find ourselves in.

Let's be women who fear the Lord above all else

Proverbs is full of verses reminding us, challenging us, teaching us to fear the Lord.

Proverbs 31 says that a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised – and while Proverbs 31 is particularly speaking about married women, I would say the same is true for unmarried women. Let us fear the Lord, in humility and faith, in awe and reverence. We need to be careful not to fear people, lack of status or wealth, or the

absence of a Pinterest-perfect life.

May we keep our priorities in order, fleeing from evil as we fear the Lord, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. May we follow His ways and not our own or those of the world.

Let's be women who live for the glory of God

Social media, the adoration of fame, wealth and influence, tell us that we should live for our glory – that we are the main characters of our stories.

But we must be women who live our lives – not for the glory of our own reputations, the success of our ministry, or even the glory of our own families – but for the glory of the Lord.

We need to examine our hearts, asking ourselves, “Who does this glorify? Me – or God?”

Let's be women who love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength

We need to remember that it is the Lord God who is to be our first love – not our family, husband and certainly not our ministry.

Love God with all of your heart and with all of your mind. Spend time growing in understanding of His word.

May your soul and strength be completely devoted to the Lord our God.

Women in ministry face changing roles, seasons and expectations. Whether you are a paid ministry worker, a missionary overseas, or a mission-minded woman serving in her local church – focus more on who you are and less on what you do.

May we all remember to be women who fear the Lord, live for the glory of God, and love God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength.

Mel Jessop

OMF Australia Prayer Coordinator





Diciptakan untuk berkarya

CREATED TO CREATE: LIVING OUT THE IMAGE OF GOD

How might you use your creativity in mission? OMF New Zealand Missions Mobiliser and Mentor Debbie Linder shares how she has learned to live out God's image as a created being as she exercises her artistic gifts in both work and rest for His kingdom purposes.

Creating to heal

My creative journey restarted (after 20 dormant years) with a local community drawing class once a week for an hour – a precious pool of sunshine in my week. It grew into a hunger to seek creative space more and more as I realised it fed something deep within me that had got lost in living and working cross-culturally. That was 16 years ago and my healing journey continues today as I live with depression and anxiety. Art is my quiet retreat space and continues to feed my soul and mind.

Creating to open doors

As I reflect on our 14 years in Thailand, I see how creative gifts opened doors that drew people towards Jesus. Short-term teams with drama and

music gifts helped us communicate the message of the gospel. Other teams created English camp programs to build communication skills, providing a fun context for relationships to be built and natural opportunities to share the good news. Looking back, I wish I had known how my art could have opened doors and built relationships too.

Creating to bless local churches and communities

Back in Australia, my local church played a big part in helping me see how my artistic gifts could bless others. I became part of a team who put together an Art Installation each year around a theme such as “Jesus is...” or “Creation Speaks His Name.” Church members contributed writing, drawing, photos, sculpture, jewellery...any creation that helped people explore the theme. For two weeks, the space would be open for a few hours a day, featuring quiet music, reflective interactive stations and space to sit and read the stories behind the art. The Art Installation was a way of encouraging others and sharing our faith.

Creativity in mission: Use your creative gifts in East Asia. Check out OMF's opportunities page and enter “arts” or “creative” (or your own area of interest): opportunities.omf.org



Creating as work and rest

I have come to see creating art as both work and rest. Work, in the sense that it requires thought, discipline and practice, and can be used for ministry to others. Rest, in the sense of recreation, joyful play and unity with my Creator who also delights in the beauty of creation. A large part of my inspiration comes from our holidays and day-off walks in nature. These times with God feed me, fill me and inspire me. (The pastel picture below was made in response to the light on a beautiful morning walking near Mudgee, NSW.)



Creating as an image-bearer

I have also come to see that the creative part of me is a God-given reflection of his image, and *not using it* actually ate away a deep part of who I am in Christ. I am an image bearer. If I hide or ignore my creativity I am not fully living as God intended. When I create meaningfully, it celebrates the joy I

3 ideas/tips for Christian creatives

- Delight in God as Creator and take time to be awed and inspired by His creativity as you explore, observe and discover His wonders (Psalm 35:9)
- Acknowledge your creative gifts are from God and for His purposes, and that using them is part of living life to the full in Christ (Ephesians 2:10)
- Connect with a Christian creative community for friendship, prayer and spurring each other on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25)

experience in creation, fills up my tank and enables me to keep giving to others.

Creating as a ministry of generosity.

As I continued to exercise my God-given creative gifts, I found I was creating too much to keep or give away as gifts, so I began to sell my work and give the profits to an OMF Thailand evangelistic project. Friends and family were happy to buy knowing that their purchase also supported ministry and I was happy to have my costs recovered so I could make more! It gave me another way of making my art a ministry.

Creating as a way to grow in Christian community

I recently moved to New Zealand. I have been part of a small group at church who love art and need friendship, and we meet together to create and chat and pray once a week.



Debbie Linder lives in New Zealand with her husband Johan. Johan is OMF New Zealand's National Director and Debbie works in mobilisation, mentoring and equipping young people for mission. They have been in ministry with OMF since 1993.



A FEMALE ASIAN *Mobiliser*

Can an Asian woman preach in a white church? Luba shares the challenges and opportunities of being an Asian female mission mobiliser in Australia.

Luba has found mobilisation challenging for reasons she can't control. "I have a double barrier. One being a woman and one being Asian."

A male pastor from a church once called and said, "Do you have people who can preach?"

Luba replied, "Yeah sure, when do you want us?" He asked, "Who's going to preach?"

When Luba replied that she would, he said, "Do you have a qualified male preacher?"

"There are a lot of others who don't voice it but you know it's there," Luba says.

She does get opportunities to preach – most of which are in Chinese churches.

Some Chinese churches invite Luba every year to preach during mission month. But even when she's invited at other times of the year, Luba is clear about her intentions.

"I tell them if I preach, I'll be preaching about missions." The churches in effect get a bonus sermon: Luba preaches first in English, then a translation in Chinese.

Such opportunities have resulted in some surprises for Luba.

"Sometimes you'll hear from pastors who are going through a difficult thing in their church and they would come up and share with you. And

that's quite a privilege I feel...Pastors don't have a lot of places where they can share openly about their struggles."

Sometimes the surprises aren't quite so personal, but they're just as God-given. Once, a Chinese church had an invitation for Luba. "They just said, 'It's a mission thing.' So of course I went. I thought I was going to one church, but I was actually talking to ten!"

She's also been invited to speak at women's conferences, including as a keynote speaker.

In addition to preaching, Luba runs mission workshops that give participants a glimpse of real-life mission. So far, Luba has run 30 such workshops at churches and student groups, catered to various audiences.

One pastor told her, "This is the best mission workshop I've ever done! It's so hands on and you really get a taste of mission." He then went on to take a short-term mission team to Cambodia.

After three sets of workshops, one church invited Luba and her husband Seng Hock to share their mission journey. "They wanted to hear our story from beginning to end and they had lots of questions. That was really encouraging."

"I get a lot of good feedback [from churches] about the workshops. Having them invite me is encouraging. When you're invited back again, that's even more encouraging! Many sign up to pray for mission too."

Through all the challenges, Luba has experienced God's care and encouragement as He has shown her glimpses of Christians taking next steps in discipleship and mission.

Trix Wilkins

OMF Australia Content Writer & Editor

ONE PASTOR TOLD HER, "THIS IS THE BEST MISSION WORKSHOP I'VE EVER DONE! IT'S SO HANDS ON AND YOU REALLY GET A TASTE OF MISSION."

3 TIPS FOR WOMEN IN MINISTRY

1 *Work hard to reflect on culture shock and challenges*

Feeling safe enough to be honest about struggles is a good thing – but it's best done with God and in a one-on-one session with a mentor, not a group setting. Work hard to reflect on what you're finding challenging or frustrating and allow God to shape you through them.

"There's no way you can reflect Christ well when you don't work through cross-cultural challenges at a deeper level," Luba says. "So do the hard work. Otherwise the stuff that oozes out of you ain't pretty!"

2 *Embrace the blessing of your season*

Luba admits that when her children were very young and she couldn't do much ministry outside the home, she felt like she was missing out. She advises, "Really enjoy those years with your kids because that is your ministry as well. Disciple your kids."

For women with children, Luba says, "Don't see changing nappies as a waste of time. It's character building! It's character building for dads too... When they grow up all you'll think about will be how cute they were when they were little."

3 *Expect character building*

"For women, there's less opportunity to be considered for leadership. If you're a married woman with kids, you're not considered for anything whether you like it or not," Luba says frankly. "And sometimes you do like it! But sometimes you're like, 'I have a voice too!'"

"At any stage of ministry, there will always be parts you really like and parts you will have to endure," Luba says. She is quiet for a moment, then finishes, "And there will be parts that are just character building, forming you more like Jesus."

In the Sandwich Space: **BEING AN ASIAN WOMAN IN DIASPORA MINISTRY**

“Definitely being a woman – a single [middle-aged] woman and my age – is super helpful,” Holly* says, with no hint of sarcasm. She explains, “It helps to be a woman, particularly ministering to East Asians. It makes so much sense: younger generations feel comfortable talking to me, I’m like their aunty or older sister. Older generations see me as their child.” She pauses, then adds, laughing, “And they always they want to set me up.”

Open doors in the sandwich space

For Holly, being an Asian woman in ministry among East Asians in Australia makes it easier to connect with people.

“I’m in the sandwich space,” Holly says, of the way she is accepted by both young and old.

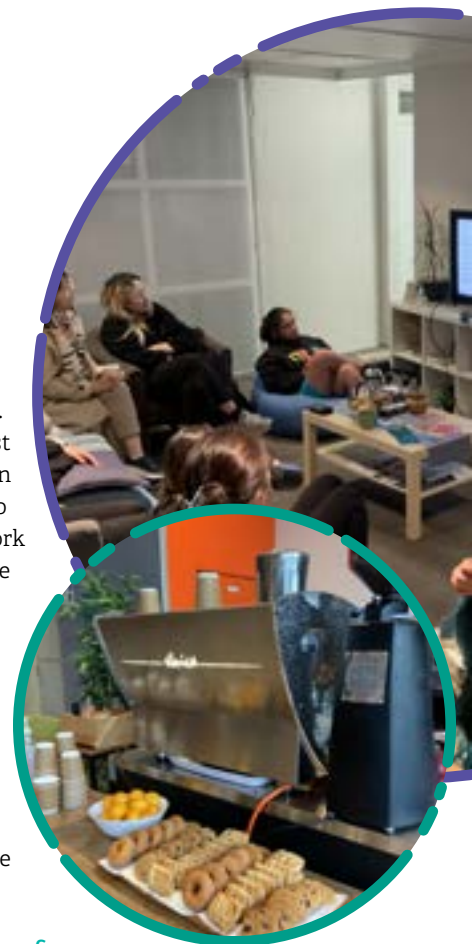
For international students from East Asia, Holly is someone comfortable. “I don’t know how it happens – they warm up to me,” Holly admits. “I think they miss mum! The home away from home feeling of safety I think is very important...I feel I’m able to speak into their lives as a more mature Christian, particularly those I follow up with week by week.”

Holly leads a Bible study at her local church with a group of women of varied ages and cultures, a mixture that reflects her local community. Some are students, some young workers and some taking their gap year. “It’s stretching my mind,

understanding the different generations of people,” Holly says. “God is in the midst definitely. We listen and pray and try to help each other work through things...We can include people who are feeling a bit awkward.” She feels that the group is a special place in particular for single women in a church that is quite family-oriented.

God’s provision of complementary teams

Holly sees the ways men and women complement each other in ministry teams. “I’m very thankful for male leaders around me who I don’t feel like I need to compensate around...God has placed around me teams that are competent, reliable and trustworthy Christians and willing to step up.” She described a situation in which a male student messaged her;



Holly was able to help with the university side of his question, and a male colleague at church followed up with the pastoral side.

The reverse also works. A leader at Holly's church confessed to her that he would usually avoid getting young women's contact details when they visit, but having her as part of the team means that the church as a whole is able to better care for the women who walk into church. Holly says, "His comment really encourages me to see the value of being a woman in ministry serving with a team of people."

Joys and opportunities of diaspora returnee ministry

The team she works with is part of the joy of ministry for Holly. Another joy is that she can be with her family while her parents are aging. "I'm in a season of life where I want to contribute to support my family. It's a joy that God allows me to do that while doing ministry."

Then there is just the freedom to serve as God leads. "I have joy in the flexibility that OMF gives that I can just be Holly... I have the freedom to just be able to respond to ministry opportunities, and the more that I [do this ministry] the more I realize that it is very effective."

But diaspora ministry is not well known. Holly wonders why we don't do more of this, especially in cities such as Sydney that attract thousands of people from East Asia for study and work each year. Holly says, "There's a need to think about this ministry." In her apartment block alone, Holly would estimate about 70% are from East Asia.



"This is a great opportunity. We should send missionaries overseas yes, but we can also be strategic about maturing Christians here, so that they really know the gospel and are willing to take the cross and gospel back home," Holly says.

"With Australia being an open, safe country and well-resourced, why don't we do [more ministry with diaspora] to enrich the churches of our brothers and sisters in places that are less resourced?"

Trix Wilkins

OMF Australia Content Writer & Editor

*Names changed for security purposes

"WE SHOULD SEND MISSIONARIES OVERSEAS, YES, BUT WE CAN ALSO BE STRATEGIC ABOUT maturing Christians HERE, SO THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO TAKE THE CROSS AND THE GOSPEL BACK HOME."



MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. Colossians 4:5-6 (NIV)”

I am thankful to God for faithfully opening doors for me to be involved in diaspora returnee ministry (DRM). Here are some of the things God’s taught me over the last thirty years about effective DRM – from my days at university through to the present – that you might find helpful as you engage in ministry in your own local community.

Ideas for local diaspora returnee ministry

No matter your location or stage in life - pray, be alert and be ready

Pray consistently for alertness and courage to take up the opportunities that God provides and for the people you are seeking to connect with whatever stage in life or location. As a local university student, God led me to join the Overseas Christian Fellowship (OCF), live in a residential college of mostly overseas students and serve as

the vice president of an overseas student society. By invitation of the Singaporean High Commission I even got to share at a pre-departure talk for Singaporean students going to Australia for university.

Get involved and adapt (for people with children)

Whether it be home school, international school or the local school, there are many ways to be in contact with diaspora and returnee families with your children. During the years we home schooled our kids, we connected with diaspora families through running group activities, such as hip-hop classes in Mandarin. At international school, I was often the first person that new families contacted when they arrived in the country. I interacted with families who would ordinarily be out of reach because of social or cultural barriers.

In the holidays, my children would join me at a refugee center, helping with English lessons, Bible stories and songs for the children. Each school has different opportunities—I've been involved in school prayer groups and parent support groups for sport and co-curricular activities. One of the most fruitful places to repeatedly meet a cross-section of cultures and year groups is the second-hand uniform shop.

Work with others

DRM should not be a solo effort. When you meet people, connect them with others so that several

people can be praying and building relationship with them. At church, it is a team effort to raise diaspora awareness, welcome people who may be part of the diaspora community and integrate them into church fellowship.

Prepare to be patient and persistent

One day, after greeting a school mum (who I had known for over a year) with my usual "Hello, how are you today?" she asked why I always started with such a personal question in public and first thing in the morning. That opened the door for regular meetups to learn and understand each other's customs, values and ultimately

beliefs that were so different despite a shared ethnic heritage.

We talked about these topics through English-Mandarin language exchanges.

It took many months, there were lots of last-minute cancellations and there was a lot of preparation involved. For the gospel to take root however, we need to trust in God's timing and plan as there are often many barriers because of misunderstanding, fear and mistrust.

Connect through mutual interest

Be genuinely interested in learning about peoples' interests and felt needs for their stage in life. Does your new neighbor from overseas need help finding the closest ethnic grocery store or the plumber's number? Would the parents from your child's sporting team be interested in playing in in the adult competition with you? Meeting felt needs and connecting through mutual interest helps to quickly cut across cultural barriers.

Kat Lau

OMF Candidate Coordinator



Alex & Naomi Fung

Church planting in Japan

We've spent the last four years working in Yokohama in Japan, involved in community outreach through personal relationships, a local church, and as part of a church planting team. Alex also serves as a mobiliser with OMF Japan and I (Naomi) have been involved in facilitating OMF's international training courses. Our daughter Eliana has made friends in the park, at church, and at local Japanese preschool.

It has been interesting to see how God has redirected us. Time and again, we might have thought we were going to be doing one thing, but then He's led us to something else that he has prepared us for!

We've been amazed by the way He has brought us into contact with new people. Online connections during the pandemic have led to opportunities for Alex to mutually encourage and serve with Christian creatives – for instance, in filming testimonies of Japanese Christians for use in evangelism, and producing media for Japanese artists. I have found that conversations with mothers at the park can lead to a continuing relationship and even their visiting church or church events!

Admittedly, relationship and trust-building in Japan is slow-going. There are strong social expectations of conformity and reserve. Sometimes we've been disappointed by people who showed interest in Jesus

suddenly relocating. We've been learning to listen to God's leading and to trust His timing. We trust God to work through us for a time, then others later; that God will keep drawing Japanese people to Himself.

We've had some special opportunities to communicate God's grace in our community, where people feel weighed down by others' expectations or pressured to try harder. There have been times when people have shared struggles with us

that they would have been uncomfortable sharing with fellow Japanese people. This has given us opportunity to share our hope in Jesus, who walks with us through our struggles.



Pray for the Fungs and their ministry in Japan

- Pray for Alex and Naomi during their home assignment in Australia. Pray as they connect with their church and mission partners, and for refreshment and insights as they reflect on the past and make plans for their next term.
- Give thanks for the church Alex and Naomi served with in Yokohama, and all they were able to learn from the Japanese pastoral team. Pray for the church as they continue outreaches for children, the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as discipling and growing their members.
- Pray for OMF's training and development program to effectively equip workers. Pray for mobilisation initiatives in Japan and beyond as people are invited to join in mission.

Nicole Harvey

Guest Home Manager, Philippines

My role is hard to describe. No two days are the same. There are rhythms and routines – guests arrive and depart, meals are prepared, washing is done, and staff schedules confirmed. Maintenance and repairs are never-ending in a humid, polluted megacity. I often say, “My people group are missionaries. I am a person with a heart to serve people in ministry.”

Hospitality ministry also comes with an element of unpredictability. As I write, two co-workers come by my office at different times, wanting to debrief their day. I stop what I’m doing and fight the urge to get things

done. I practice being present and choose to pray with them. I am reminded of the guest home’s mission to resource people to thrive in ministry and Christian community.

There is a need to care for those who labor to meet the varied and vast spiritual needs of this island nation. I have recently been encouraged by Philippians 2:25, in which Paul expresses his thanks to the church for sending Epaphroditus to tend his needs. Likewise, God sent me to care for the needs of our co-workers, our fellow soldiers, our siblings-in-Christ living and serving in the Philippines.

This poem about Nicole’s ministry was written by Miriam Dale, a friend of Nicole’s who, in her words, “has been playing with words, rhythm, and the big questions of life for over a decade.”

The Guest House

*Creation of a home away from home:
Trav’ling far from shapes and lines that define
We bring snippets of familiar things we’ve known
Hold tight our sense of self in place and time.*

*The Traveller is lost and found each day
By all the new and same things that they see
The more things change, the more they stay the same
But strangeness cuts us all adrift, fearf’ly.*

*Some thrive, others crave rest for weary feet
And all need space to hide away awhile
Seeking the urgencies of food and sleep
And no less urgent, words to seed a smile*

*The hostess holds them all in tender hand:
Makes home away from home, in a new land.*

3 tips for serving in the Philippines

- Embrace celebrations which invest time and speaks to the value of relationships
- Practice a posture of prayer
- Always choose to collaborate in ministry (and life)



Pray for Nicole and the Philippines

- Millions of Filipinos are young Christians who need to be discipled. Pray for the Lord to send workers to disciple Filipinos in their faith.
- 82% of Filipinos still need to hear the gospel in a meaningful way. Half of the Philippines’ 42,000 communities lack a church. Pray for thriving churches that reach out to others.
- Pray for Nicole on home assignment in Melbourne, as she seeks to discern God’s gifting in those around her and encourage them to live for His glory.

Simon & Angeline Porter

Church planting in rural Cambodia; training and development and TCK care for OMF Cambodia

Simon and Angeline have been leading a church-planting team in Kep, Cambodia – re-establishing a small Khmer fellowship and developing ministry skills in church members. Simon has also been overseeing training and development for OMF Cambodia whilst Angeline is responsible for care of children and families on the team.

Joys of rural ministry

“We’ve really enjoyed being involved in rural church ministry once again over the last two years,” Angeline

says. “It’s been a blessing to see Kep Fellowship Church through a period of slow and steady growth, in numbers and in strength.”

“Savun is one man we’ve been delighted to see grow,” Simon adds. Savun is a metalworker who had almost no knowledge of Jesus two years ago. He came to faith early in 2022 and chose to be baptized a year later. Savun has clung to God through challenging times, including struggling for income and food, drug

addiction in the family, and seeing a relative sent to prison. He’s found God to be faithful throughout these challenges and speaks clearly of the freedom he now enjoys in Christ.

Srey has also been a great encouragement to the Porters. Srey is married to Roat and has attended church for many years, but only recently made her own commitment to Jesus and was baptised. Srey and Roat made a clear break with their past, burning their altars and other idols.

New discipleship and training ministries

In July 2024, Simon and Angeline plan to move to Phnom Penh in time for the start of the Hope International School academic year, since their sons’ current school does not go beyond Year 8. They will continue with their current roles on the OMF Cambodia team, and are seeking the Lord to discern in what capacity they might best serve the wider Cambodian church in discipleship and training.



Pray for the Porters and Cambodian Christians

- Pray for Simon and Angeline, and their sons Reuben and Gabriel, on home assignment in Australia for six months before relocating to Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- Pray for Savun and for his wife Sophat, who is struggling with the mockery that becoming a Christian can bring from family and neighbours.
- Pray for Srey and Roat, as Srey wrestles with health issues. Give thanks for the way Srey testifies with joy of how Jesus has freed her from her life-long fear of ghosts.



Kalos and Aggie Chan

Evangelism and church planting in Japan

People are often surprised to learn that Japanese people are the second largest unreached people group in the world. During a six month internship in Japan, Aggie was heartbroken to see the reality of this for her herself. In Japan, most are happy to practice more than one religion or pray to several gods – yet many have never heard of the name of Jesus and the hope of the gospel. God revealed to Aggie Japan's deep needs and that "the harvest is abundant, but the workers are few." (Matthew 9:37)

Step by step, through meeting missionaries and serving at a local house church, God led Aggie to serve with an OMF media team during her final two months in Japan. This opened her eyes to creative ministries; as our God is a creative God, He calls us to reflect His creativity in the way we show His love to others.

The singular power of the gospel

Kalos and Aggie went on a second mission trip – this time, among indigenous communities in outback Australia. They saw how people's needs were repeatedly unmet,

their suffering deepened by human interventions and policies, and the hopelessness felt across various tribes. Then, through meeting with a number of indigenous Christians, Kalos and Aggie witnessed that only the gospel has the power to heal hurt, brokenness and pain that has been experienced over generations. They became burdened to reach the unreached with the gospel.

Offering 'two small fish'

Jesus calls Christians to be the salt of the earth. Kalos and Aggie seek to offer their two small fish for God to feed Japanese people with the rich flavors of the gospel. They hope to use their time and talents in creative outreach, and cultivate relationships with local communities by being a Christian friend to them. "Follow Me," Jesus told His disciples, "and I will make you fish for people!" (Matthew 4:19)



Pray for Japan, Kalos and Aggie

- For Kalos and Aggie's transitions from November 2023 Orientation Course in Singapore, to language and culture learning, and to their local ministry in Japan. Pray they will hold firm onto God's all-sustaining power and sovereign plan in His work in humility, love and wisdom as they share the gospel.
- For the Japanese people to experience the richness and joy of the gospel so that one day soon missionaries will no longer be needed in Japan.
- For the Japanese church to not be discouraged and to continue to serve faithfully, knowing all growth happens in God's timing; pray for growth in their desire for and understanding of Christ.



Zechariah and Elizabeth*

*From Homeside Ministry to
Diaspora Returnee Ministry
with East Asians in Japan*

From 2003-2016, Zechariah and Elizabeth* served with OMF in East Asia as a project coordinator and an English teacher at a university. They were also involved in discipleship and evangelism.

They went on to serve in Australia, mobilizing for mission and mentoring young people exploring cross-cultural service. During this season, they helped transition their children, Jesse and Isabel, who had spent several years in boarding school in India, into university life.



In 2022, Zechariah and Elizabeth came across a remarkable discovery: Japan is one of the most sought-after education destinations in the world for East Asian students!

They also knew that only 0.3% of Japanese people identify themselves as evangelical Christian and so they wondered, "Is anyone sharing Jesus with international Asian students in Japan?"

Upon approaching OMF leadership, Zechariah and Elizabeth found that leaders had been fervently praying for a dedicated team to initiate this outreach for some time. There is an immense need for outreach among the international student community in Japan.

They received encouragement from their family, friends, and OMF to pursue the clear sense of calling from the Lord to embark on a new mission journey. They are stepping out in faith to share the gospel with East Asian students and equip them to be steadfast disciples who will share their hope and faith in Jesus in their home countries.



Pray for Zechariah and Elizabeth, and for East Asian students in Japan

- Pray for God's enabling grace as Zechariah and Elizabeth embark on full-time language learning in their first year in Japan in 2024. Pray for good language helpers and effective learning methods, and for the strength to persevere during challenging times.
- Pray for international students in Japan to seek the Lord.
- Pray for Zechariah and Elizabeth to have the wisdom and strength to connect with East Asian students. Pray that their passion for Jesus will deepen and that they will keep the Lord and His Word central.
- Pray for Zechariah and Elizabeth's adult children as they navigate a new season. Pray that they will discern God's individual plans for them and follow His direction wholeheartedly.

*Names changed for security purposes

THE WOMAN WHO OPENED MY EYES TO MISSION

God planted a seed in my heart for mission. Not long after I became a Christian, I started to have opportunities to listen to missionaries sharing about their lives and ministries. One day, a missionary* came to our church to share about her evangelical work in East Asia.

Her sharing baffled me. It wasn't that I didn't understand what she was doing, but I just simply couldn't understand why. Why would someone choose to leave behind her family to live in another country and learn a new language and culture, simply to tell people about Jesus? At the time my accounting-focused mind could not comprehend why anyone would spend time and effort doing something that did not deliver financial benefit.

I praise the Lord for this missionary, who inadvertently taught me my very first lesson about cross-cultural ministry. I saw how narrow my mind was, how little faith I had, and how I wanted to put a dollar sign next to the work of God's kingdom.

Her humble and faithful testimony had a simple yet powerful impact on my life: my eyes were opened to the real world of mission.

It has been 10 years since I first heard her share about God's work in East Asia. God has graciously brought me to serve with the very organisation that missionary serves with — OMF. As I lead the OMF Australia finance team, God has given me the chance to support her, and others too — men and women who love the Lord and seek to see others come into His kingdom. It is clear to me now that numbers too can show the love and grace of God.

Edwin Lee

OMF Australia Finance Manager



MOTHERHOOD AND MINISTRY

For the past 10 years, my husband and I, along with our three children, have been working with OMF Mekong Minorities in Thailand. But our cross-cultural work experience began years before that when we moved to Sweden to serve at a Bible school. At that time we had two young children, our eldest son aged 2 years and our second son aged 2 months. God used the time in Sweden to teach me important lessons and shape my understanding of my role in our ministry.

Where does ministry really happen?

Early on in Sweden, I felt like ministry opportunities were 'out there' seemingly just beyond my reach since I had two young children to care for. My responsibilities at home, which often revolved around naptimes, feedings, and bedtime seemed to hold me down and keep me from much 'real' ministry. But God began to open my eyes to see that investing in my children was also a very worthwhile ministry. In fact, for that season it was to be my main ministry focus. God ignited in me a real excitement and passion to invest in my two sons, and he was gracious to show me little glimmers of the impact that effort was having in their lives.

When our sons were 2 and 4 years old, my husband and I organised a mission trip for the Bible school students over spring break. After months of preparation with the students, we went to Italy to help a cross-cultural worker there put

on a week-long gospel children's programme in a public park. How precious to watch our little boys help with set-up each day, dragging cushions from the van, carrying puppets to the puppet set, and helping model new games for the Italian children who participated. On the last day, bad weather prevented us from running the programme, so we decided to break up into small groups and walk through the rainy streets of the city, praying for the people living in the homes we passed. I distinctly remember as we walked and prayed aloud together, I invited one of our sons to pray with us, and his tiny little voice replied, 'I already did.' It touched my heart to hear that, at such a young age, he was picking up a desire to see others come to salvation, and that he felt part of what we were doing.

The lessons God taught me

Part of the investment in our children in our case has involved their education. God gave me the





GOD CHANGED MY HEART
AND ATTITUDE AND GAVE
ME THE EYES TO SEE
the treasures
HE HAD GIVEN ME
IN MY CHILDREN.



desire and confidence to home school them without knowing the future, and we only saw later that we couldn't have done what we did or been where we were otherwise. There have definitely been bumps along the way and it hasn't always been easy, but it has been worth it! As a friend of mine often says, 'Most worthwhile things are hard.' Especially now as we prepare our oldest son for his gap year, I treasure the time we've spent together studying. From memorising Bible passages, working our way through world history, discussing scientific theories, to studying logic and apologetics, and maybe even the tough maths lessons! I'm so thankful that God changed my heart and attitude and gave me the eyes to see the treasures he had given me in my children.

The lessons God taught me in those early days of cross-cultural work actually apply to many other areas of life. He was teaching me to abide in him, to resist the temptation to get my value from what other people think of me or from what I do, but instead to receive that sense of identity and worth from him. I was learning to rest in him and bloom where I'm planted rather than always wanting to be in the next place, the next phase. Those are valuable lessons that I've taken with me (and occasionally have to relearn!) through the years as different phases of life have afforded a variety of other ministry opportunities. I'm thankful that God has been faithful to minister to me and also to use me for his eternal purposes in every season of life.



Deborah

A Canadian, Deborah has served with OMF's Mekong Minorities team since 2013, together with her husband, Oliver, who is from Germany. They serve among the S'gaw Karen people in the hills of North Thailand, working to see S'gaw Karen believers inspired and equipped to share the good news of Jesus with other Karen villages, near-culture people groups, and beyond.

GIVING UP *Control*

Samantha looked at me one more time. Our intern, Julia, was now fifteen minutes late for our planning meeting. This was our first attempt at running a vision trip to inspire Christians from this country towards ministry among ethnic minorities. Julia, a native of this country, was joining us to learn how to run vision trips herself. That was going to be rather challenging if she didn't arrive.*

In this country, most Christians belong to a majority people group and live in well-developed cities. Most people from minority ethnic backgrounds live in remote areas. They have little opportunity to ever meet a Christian or hear the good news about Jesus in a language that makes sense to them. Local Christians are essential to God's kingdom growth in these distant parts of the country.

But I'm getting a bit carried away with the theory behind starting locally-led church movements.

So, I was sitting with my teammate in a hotel room in a remote city, hoping that Julia would show up. Should I go to look for her? The hotel layout was complicated, and I wasn't entirely sure I could find my way back to this room if I went out of it.

Julia's knock finally came at the door. The double corridor setup in the hotel had completely flummoxed her. Right away, I rearranged the meeting agenda in my mind. First order of business: navigation.

We were about to lead a group to five different locations, visiting gospel workers and major sites

in each place for prayer and cultural learning. At this point, I wasn't entirely confident that our small planning team could find our way out of the hotel, let alone handle maps and other logistics for the five local Christians who were due to join us.

We decided to ask one of the vision trip participants to be our leader for navigation. The participant who volunteered for the job did it fantastically. We all rejoiced. So what was my first real action as a leader for locally led missions? To lay down control.

Navigating breakfast

Several days later we were in a small city, home to a people group who don't yet have a formal written script for their language. Even now, no part of the Bible is available for them. We talked with a gospel worker and prayed together for God's love to reach these people. We stayed overnight and the time came for breakfast.

Growing up in the UK, my stomach has strict rules about breakfast foods, but no such rules exist for most Asian cultures. 8am found me with Julia and several of the vision trip participants in a spicy



I WASN'T ENTIRELY
confident THAT OUR
SMALL PLANNING TEAM
COULD *find our way*
OUT OF THE HOTEL, LET
ALONE HANDLE MAPS

noodle restaurant. For these brothers and sisters to embrace the vision of God's kingdom among these ethnic minority peoples, I needed to embrace them in genuine friendship. During the trip, that meant sharing hotel rooms, answering questions about my daily habits and speaking so much of the national language I kind of forgot how to form sentences in English. That morning, genuine friendship meant spicy noodles for breakfast. My brain was rebelling loudly, but my heart was fixed on God's kingdom. I ate, my tongue burned, and I was thankful.

At the end of our trip, we had debriefing conversations with each participant: what had gone well or badly; what had God said to them through the trip? Julia sat in on one of my debriefs, and she was markedly unimpressed. I didn't handle the time well; my questions were too vague.

Yet again, my weakness became God's strength. After seeing my level of skills, Julia felt able to lead debrief conversations. She also felt ready to lead vision trips.

In the years since that trip, Julia has brought groups of local Christians each year to pray, learn and catch the vision for God's kingdom among these

Pray for local gospel workers:

- Pray for Julia and many others like her. Pray that they too will lay down personal comfort for the sake of genuine relationships.
- Pray that God's kingdom among these people will be the first and last thing in their hearts.
- Pray that that God will help each one to embrace weakness for the blessing of others and the honour of his name.

people. She brought her boyfriend along on these visits. Soon he and others were leading vision trips too. Today hundreds of local Christians are carrying forward the vision of God glorifying his name among these ethnic minority people. How did it all start? With spicy noodles, ropey debriefs and getting a bit lost. In other words, it started with God's great love that welcomes us in our weakness and binds us tight to each other.

Now, Julia and her husband are preparing to move with their young child to one of the cities we visited on that first vision trip.

*Rose Scott**

Rose and her husband both grew up in the UK and joined OMF together in 2006. Since then, God has led them on a series of exciting adventures. Their greatest joy is doing whatever it takes to see God's kingdom grow among people who have the least opportunity to hear.

*Names changed for security purposes



中國第一位女性傳教士

China's First Female Missionary

You might have heard of the twentieth century Chinese pastor and author Watchman Nee, but did you know he came to faith through one of China's first female cross-cultural missionaries?

Dora Yu was born in 1873 in Hangzhou at the American Presbyterian Mission, where her father was training for pastoral ministry. She went on to have a series of 'firsts' to her name. Dora was one of three women in the first class to graduate from the very first women's medical college in China. This opened doors to care for and share the gospel with upper-class women who were traditionally separated from the rest of society.

In 1897 Dora became one of the first missionaries sent out from China. She accompanied Josephine Campbell, a widowed American missionary, to Korea. She served in Bible teaching and medicine as well as translating and compiling textbooks. In 1903 together with a colleague they visited 2,540 women across the city, sharing the gospel with them. A heavy workload, poor health, and ultimately the prompting of the Holy Spirit, led Dora to return to China in September 1903.

In China, Dora ended up following in the steps of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, establishing what was probably China's first faith mission. She became increasingly well known for her revival meetings in Shanghai and travelled widely across the country, calling Christians to pursue holiness.

In 1920 Watchman Nee came to faith through Dora's ministry. He dedicated the rest of his life to serving Jesus Christ and his early theological education came through the Bible school Dora founded.

In 1913, Dora was invited to England by the China Inland Mission and in 1927 she was one of the main speakers at the Keswick Convention. When she died in 1931, she left a legacy of spiritual revival in the Chinese Church. At her memorial service Hu Yunlin, a female evangelist of the 1930s and 40s, was moved by Dora's example to dedicate her whole life to the Lord.

Reuben Grace

OMF (UK) Content & Books Coordinator

SERVING TOGETHER

Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, advised some single missionaries who were considering marriage: 'Unless you intend your wife to be a true missionary, not merely a wife, homemaker and friend, do not join us.' From the very beginnings of our organisation, women, including single women, were actively recruited and sent to remote regions of China. Hudson Taylor described women as 'the most powerful agency' for carrying the gospel into China's homes.



For David & Sue Pickard, knowing that both husband and wife were expected to be individually suited and qualified for cross-cultural ministry was important when they joined OMF in 1970. This continued to be a theme of their ministry together. They would go on to spend 25 years in leadership, first in Thailand and later in Singapore, where David served as General Director of OMF International from 1991 to 2001.

Sue has served through different seasons of ministry life as a mother, doctor, and leader's wife. She used her gifts and skills whilst contributing to and supporting David's leadership responsibilities. Her understanding of the challenge for women to engage in ministry in an equal way led her to research the

experiences of wives of leaders at a time when all married leaders in OMF were men. Sue's 1987 paper 'The Couple in Leadership' showed that while some women felt satisfied in their balanced contribution to life and ministry, others were frustrated when their own gifts were side-lined. Sue explains: 'I felt a need to clarify the importance that gifted women, wives, married to leaders could exercise an appropriate ministry together with their spouse.' This impactful paper provoked a wide discussion of the role of women in leadership. When the OMF directors affirmed the contents of the paper, Sue says women across the organisation 'had a sense of great gratitude to the Lord with much joy and gladness'.

Gaining missing perspectives

In Thailand as a church planter, field leader and later in Singapore as General Director, David served alongside many women whose 'absolutely outstanding' contributions left a deep impression. As a field leader, David says he valued not only their contributions in ministry but also their insights in decision making that 'we were not getting because we were men missing these [perspectives]'. From his time as General Director, he reflects that Stroma Beattie and Rosemary Aldis in particular were 'two outstanding women whose ways of discussing and

**I FELT A NEED TO CLARIFY
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THEIR SPOUSE**



constructing arguments and the ways they would phrase the things we ought to do were actually hugely valuable. The way in which they presented the arguments were not just rounded but they allowed other things to intervene in the rather hard-line directions that men tend to set.'

During their time in leadership David & Sue saw OMF grow into a more intercultural and diverse community. From a predominantly Western organisation it began to include many more people from East Asian countries and cultures. This diversity of voices within the organisation, and non-Western male leaders and theologians beyond OMF, opened many new areas of thought. One such area was

women in leadership, which had become a vital topic to address. As David explains, 'it is undeniable that God has given gifts to women, and in OMF we have had the astonishing benefit of many, many gifted women capable of leadership in OMF.'

I was curious to find out how David approached the issue of women in leadership, especially since, as General Director, he led the 2001 International Council in introducing a statement on the matter. I am aware there was and continues to be, a challenge in discussing women in leadership as an area of theology and mission practice where there are a wide variety of perspectives. And, as an interdenominational organisation, OMF brings together workers and churches from different theological views to serve together in mission. So how was OMF's value of celebrating diversity in unity worked out in this discussion?



David shared a helpful image that shaped how the International Council worked on the statement: they aimed to define a circle within which people could comfortably work together and respect different positions rather than trying to all agree on a small dot. He explained that there was a deliberate emphasis on consensus, working hard to have everyone 'sign up' even without complete agreement. They sought an attitude of 'maintaining unity in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4.3).



**"WE AFFIRM THAT GOD
CREATED MEN AND WOMEN
TO WORK TOGETHER IN
EQUAL, COMPLEMENTARY
PARTNERSHIP"**

Moving forward together

OMF International's statement on women in leadership has been adapted since 2001. The current statement includes the following:

'We affirm that God created men and women to work together in equal, complementary partnership, to fulfil their God-given ministries. We also affirm our need to maintain the unity of the Spirit within OMF, and our calling as servants within the Asian church. We recognise that divine calling and gifting should be more important than gender in the selection of members for leadership within the Fellowship. While we acknowledge that members, supporting churches, and receiving churches may differ on the role of women in the church, we affirm that leadership within the Fellowship should include both men and women. We will therefore give due consideration to one's calling and giftedness when making appointments to leadership, with the aim of maintaining unity within the Fellowship and being culturally appropriate in the local church context.'

As a woman recently appointed to a senior leadership role in OMF, I was encouraged and affirmed by talking to David & Sue. The legacy of their thoughtful work means I am able to fully use the gifts, skills and experience God has given me. Their journey reminds me to also be committed to recognise and create opportunities for my colleagues in OMF, whether women or men, to also have the freedom to serve according to their calling and gifting - for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Sarah Hoskins

OMF International Director
for Africa and Europe



Read a reflection from Charissa Bulos, Co-Executive Director of the Philippine Home Council of OMF, on celebrating diversity in unity in OMF today at go.omf.org/diversityinunity

FROM ENEMY to Friend

Pearl, an OMF worker from the Philippines, shares her experience of mentoring in church planting.*

21 years ago, aged 21, I began my full-time commitment to cross-cultural work. As a young, single woman serving the Lord in Asia, I often felt vulnerable. Many times my life was in danger. However, in God's mercy I remained determined, passionate, and focused on the vision he had given to me.

'I thank God for not answering my prayer!'

My first assignment was in the mountains of the Southern Philippines among the Umayamnon people. The vision was for them to read the Bible themselves and experience the power of God's word, eventually leading to planting locally led churches. These all came into reality in God's own time.

My view of mentoring has been shaped by the risks, joy and pain of the people I have served, the leadership I worked with, and particular individuals who patiently journeyed with me in different seasons of life. Over the years, this has looked like taking prayerful risks when the potential benefit is worthwhile and intentionality in all that I do, asking if what I am doing is connected to or contributing to the vision.

Later, I moved to another village. I designed and taught an adult literacy class through Bible stories translated into the local language.

One of the women in the class was in her late 40s and would always say, 'Oh I am sleepy and bored with your stories'. She kept on saying this week after week. I struggled every time I saw her in the

class. I remember how many times I prayed, asking God to stop this woman from coming.

As time passed and I prayed on, I was amazed at how this woman changed. Instead of discouraging me, she started listening. We became the best of friends, though she was much older than me. I would see her weekly to study Bible stories. Five months later, the literacy class became a church – and she was one of 10 people who were baptised.

After two years, the Lord guided the choice of three people to lead the church and growth continued. My friend was always present at small groups, outreach and church events and, by the God's grace, her reading skills improved. Finally, she was invited to join the leadership team after seeing her commitment to learning, serving, and actively sharing the gospel with people in the neighbouring mountains.

I regularly spent time with this new leader on

*'I THANK God FOR
NOT ANSWERING
MY prayer!'*

her farm, at her house, and visiting her relatives on the other side of the mountains sharing Bible stories. In the third year, I slowly lessened my presence in the village along with the ongoing leadership mentoring, and support in the church.

She would share Bible stories by herself, walking for long hours, visiting people including some of her married children. She turned out to be the strongest messenger of the gospel in their village. Her whole family came to know the Lord, plus other families from different areas, and they joined the church.

She never complained about her difficult life or asked for money. Instead, she was one of those who provided for me when I didn't have enough support, giving me chickens and vegetables from her farm. I thank God for not answering my prayer!

A growing mentoring ministry

After 10 years with the Umayamnon villagers, I prepared for my next ministry assignment. The village church continues, independent of outside help. For almost nine years in Vietnam, my love and burden for mentoring and walking alongside others continued to grow. Today, I'm based in Cambodia, focused on training and development, coaching, and mentoring with OMF internationally and locally.

'Mentoring is life-to-life investment that takes place in many ways. 'To leave your mark, you are going to have to do it personally by constantly communicating your values and sense of mission'. I didn't think God would choose and use me so people would know him. Yet the Lord has blessed me with many opportunities to be a part of his mighty work in the lives many people through mentoring.

*Name changed to protect identities and ministries.

Pray for Pearl and mentoring ministry for:*

- Ongoing learning as she provides input to church planters and develops leaders
- Wisdom in how to use her time
- Sensitivity to the Spirit's leading to be in the place of his choosing at any given time

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