A missions newsletter by OMF Singapore

GO ASIA

JAN-APR 2026

Mobilising Singapore for the Urgent Evangelisation of East Asia's Millions



SO RICH YET SO POOR

Insights into the Lazarus Ministry in Tokyo, Japan

Most people imagine Japan as an affluent country and many tourists love the country for its amazing scenery and delicious cuisine. However, did you know there are homeless groups of people in the country? They could be homeless for different reasons – economic displacement from the 1990s recession, not being able to pay their gambling debts or getting laid off from their jobs during the pandemic.

Origins of the ministry to the homeless

In January 2012, James, a short-term Serve Asia worker from the UK, suggested to Louis Lau, an OMF missionary to Japan, to start distributing food and reach out to the homeless scattered around the busy Ikebukuro Station in Tokyo. At that time, nearly 2.5 million commuters pass through the station daily but in the evening, over 30 people sleep in and around the station area.

Just three days after James' suggestion, Louis and his wife Chris prayed about it and got to work immediately – Chris prepared 15 bags consisting of a hot nikuman (meat bun), bread, a banana and a bottle of Japanese tea and they started

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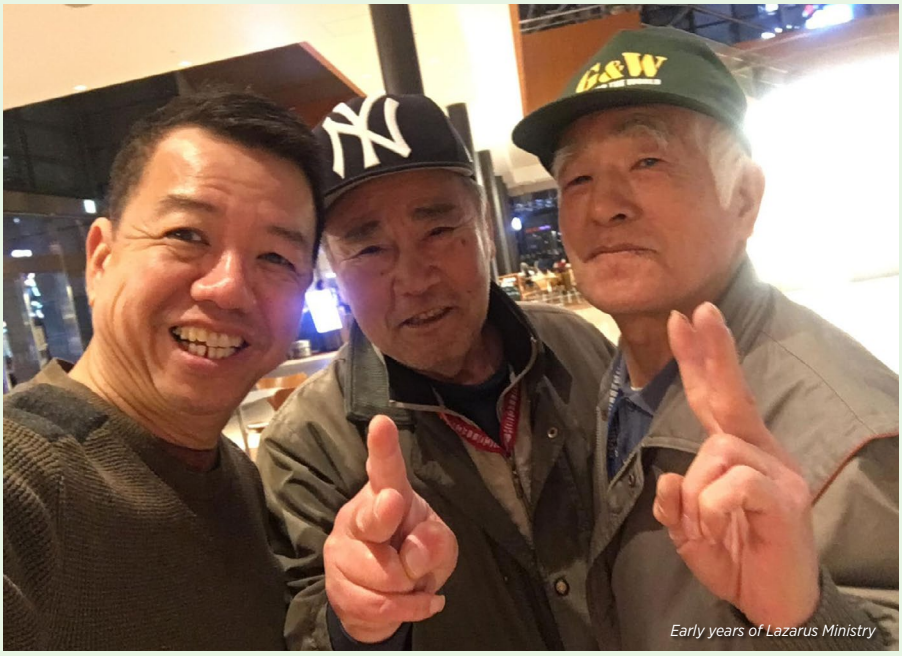
distributing them. After distributing the packages, Louis and Chris spend time chatting with them and they added a one-page Bible story to engage with the people they met around the station.

The Laus and their team continued doing this every Thursday evening since then for 14 years, even through the difficult Covid-19 pandemic period. Today, the ministry, now known as Lazarus Ministry since 2016 (originally called the Homeless Ministry @ Ikebukuro), has grown to a team of over 15 regular helpers, including some who have become Christians through this ministry.

Louis explained, "At the beginning of the ministry, we were purely reaching out to the homeless on the streets but we realized over time, poor people started to join the groups, so it was hard to distinguish between the homeless and the poor. The term "Lazarus Ministry" reflects this changing demographic to embrace the homeless, poor and needy."

In terms of demographics, Louis observed that the age range of the group was mostly men from their 30s to 70 years old and noticed that up to one-quarter of the homeless group consist of women.

He is also thankful to God for His protection even as he and his team



Early years of Lazarus Ministry

continued this ministry through the pandemic, "For three years, none of the 15 of us who ministered fell sick with Covid-19 and neither did we see the spread of Covid-19 when large gatherings took place."

The heroes behind the Lazarus Ministry

One of the core helpers of the ministry is Yoshino-san, who is a professionally trained chef originally from the Tohoku region of the country. He moved to Tokyo after the 3.11 earthquake and tsunami in 2011 destroyed his restaurant.

In Tokyo, he came across Nakayoshi Church founded by Ogura Susumu, who have been reaching out to the homeless and poor since 1979.

Yoshino-san became a Christian and decided to use his professional skills in ministry. Nakayoshi Church, located near Ikebukuro, is run by lay people and leaders and has over 30 people who attend their regular Sunday service. Lunch is served after the service and there will be up to 40 people as some of the homeless and poor would join in.



Chris sharing

"Yoshino-san would cook a full meal for Sunday worship service single-handedly. He also makes onigiris (rice balls with meat or vegetable filling) every week and once every three weeks, he also makes bentos (meal boxes) for the homeless, all in the kitchen of Ogura-san's home," said Louis.

Another core ministry worker, Arai-san first met the Laus in 2012 and they passed him a Bible to read. He met them again unexpectedly 2 years later when he was getting baptised at Nakayoshi church – it was the Laus' first Sunday worship service in Japan after being away in Singapore for 2 years due to their son's National Service in the army.

Arai-san was initially homeless but now he serves as a lay leader in Nakayoshi church and now manages the logistics of the Lazarus Ministry every Thursday.

Although the Laus were away for 2 periods of 2 years, the Lord raised up different helpers, local Japanese and missionaries from different mission agencies to support the ministry. The Lord raised his people into action when the needs beckoned for workers.

Looking back

As Louis reflected on the origins of the Lazarus Ministry, he added, "Actually the idea of distributing food to the poor also came from our sons (who grew up in Japan) – when they were schooling, they would leave an onigiri and banana in a packet on the streets once a year for the homeless."

Over the years of working with the Lazarus Ministry, he also did not experience any issues with the police or authorities, except for the occasional fighting or noise caused by the homeless and poor queuing near a local department store, in which the police came and politely asked Louis and his team to leave after they had finished distributing the food.

"As the homeless in Japan are mostly literate, our ministry is a great opportunity as we share Bible stories and tracts and they can understand these stories. Imagine the Gospel being shared almost weekly to these groups of people for years," Louis quipped.

If you felt led to support this ministry, OMF International has set up a Lazarus Fund for monies donated to this ministry. Check with your OMF office in your country to give to this ministry. For Singaporeans, you can write to Louis at louislaujp@gmail.com who will provide you the link to donate to this Lazarus Fund.



Food and clothes distribution


Covid days of distribution

SEEING TAIWAN WITH NEW EYES THROUGH SERVE ASIA



Jeffery Long had a 2-week stint with Serve Asia in Taiwan, and it transformed the way he saw the country and how God is working there.

In June 2024, Jeffery Long thought of taking a break from work for up to 2 weeks – Taiwan came to mind as he enjoyed travelling there, from his past trips in Taiwan from work, leisure and military service. However, instead of going for a holiday, Jeffery had the idea to go for a short-term mission trip.

Having accepted Christ in late 2019, Jeffery considered himself to be a young Christian and had no idea how mission trips were like, although he heard of stories of mission trips by churches where the trippers helped to do building projects and share the Gospel in rural areas overseas.

He went online and googled "mission trip Taiwan" – OMF was the first result that returned. Jeffery went to OMF website and searched for opportunities, filtered by duration "2 to 6 weeks" and location "Taiwan". He saw an opportunity listed in Taiwan for 2 to 6 weeks, with the role stated as "Administration and Finance."

"This seemed to fit me as I read the (role) description. Although I am neither an accountant nor in finance, the role seems to be administrative as well since it was stated as Administration and Finance. The description fitted what I think I was able to do," he thought.

The duration of the role also fitted Jeffery's schedule and although he was interested, he did not take any action. However, he was reminded about Taiwan from his care group leader who shared about her recent short-term mission trip to Taiwan and Korea.

At that point, he had already met the Serve Asia coordinators from OMF Singapore and continued the application process of getting references and filling up the forms.

Jeffery recalled: "There was a lot of waiting. The wait for the programme to be firmed up and for dates to be confirmed by the OMF Taiwan field. During the wait for Taiwan, I was also waiting on my end for my referees to write the references. I also had to get my church endorsement and coming from a mega-church where I am an unknown, it was a lot of navigation through the organisation to get the endorsement."

The Serve Asia experience in Taiwan

When he finally arrived in Taiwan in early March 2025, the work involved was an office-based role he was familiar with. Jeffery went to the OMF Taipei office daily to work with the Serve Asia Taiwan coordinator and Finance Manager.

The Serve Asia coordinator orientated Jeffery to the local culture in Taiwan while the Finance Manager discussed finance-related topics with him, such







as managing missionaries' finances, project finances and challenges on the field.

"It was a paradigm shift in mindset. What I used to think of was solely in economic terms. In the corporate setting - if sending one staff member is cheaper, why do we have to send a family? But in the missional context, the family is there because the spouse and their children are also important parts of ministry," reflected Jeffery.

Another highlight for Jeffery was getting to meet long-term missionaries up-close and understanding their work:

"I got to meet the missionaries in the field. I talked to them, heard their challenges first-hand leaving their families behind to do God's work thousands of miles away. I can now put faces to the term missionaries. It was my first time coming into close contact with missionaries."

He also had a taste of the local church in Taiwan:

"I was greatly humbled to see the local churches when I attended the Sunday services. In a mega church, I attend service in comfort. Cushioned chairs in an auditorium, with live band and state-of-the-art media systems for worship. In Taipei, I sat on plastic stools, worship songs were played from a laptop. But I could still feel the presence of the Lord even in such spartan conditions as we worshipped.

God's kingdom is so much bigger than the church I attend, even if the church I attend is already a mega church in Singapore. I got to see Taiwan with a different lens."

Serve Asia is OMF's short-term missions programme for those who want to serve East Asia's peoples for up to 12 months.

Scan the QR code below to check out Serve Asia opportunities:



WHY WE DO **CNY VISITATIONS** TO FAMILIES OF MISSIONARIES

Joylyn Lau, Assistant Member Care Coordinator, shares about the member care team's yearly 'tradition' of doing Chinese New Year (CNY) visitations to families of missionaries during the CNY period.



Chinese New Year (CNY) visitations are one of the main highlights for the member care team every year as it provides a good opportunity to connect with the parents and family members of our missionaries on the field. In Singapore, about 75% of the resident population are ethnic Chinese, so CNY is considered one of the major local festivals and public holidays in the country.

It is always a great time of fellowship and catching up with them. Through these visits, we hope to see how we can better support and pray for the parents and family back home. For our pre-believing parents, it is a good chance to pray for them as they share how they are doing. Many of them are willing to be prayed for and are appreciative of our prayers.

For one of the missionaries serving in Japan, I was able to visit the family together with some of the cell group members from the missionary's home church. One of the couples in the cell group has been tasked to reach out to the pre-believing parents and brother. I felt very happy that this couple has been very proactive and brought the mother out for meals to bless her when her daughter is serving on the field and is missing her very much. They have also tried to invite the mother and brother for church events.

It is so encouraging when the home church can work and partner together with OMF to support and provide good member care to the family in Singapore. Hopefully, the parents and brother will come the Lord. We hope that we can share Jesus' love with them and that they will come to know Him personally.

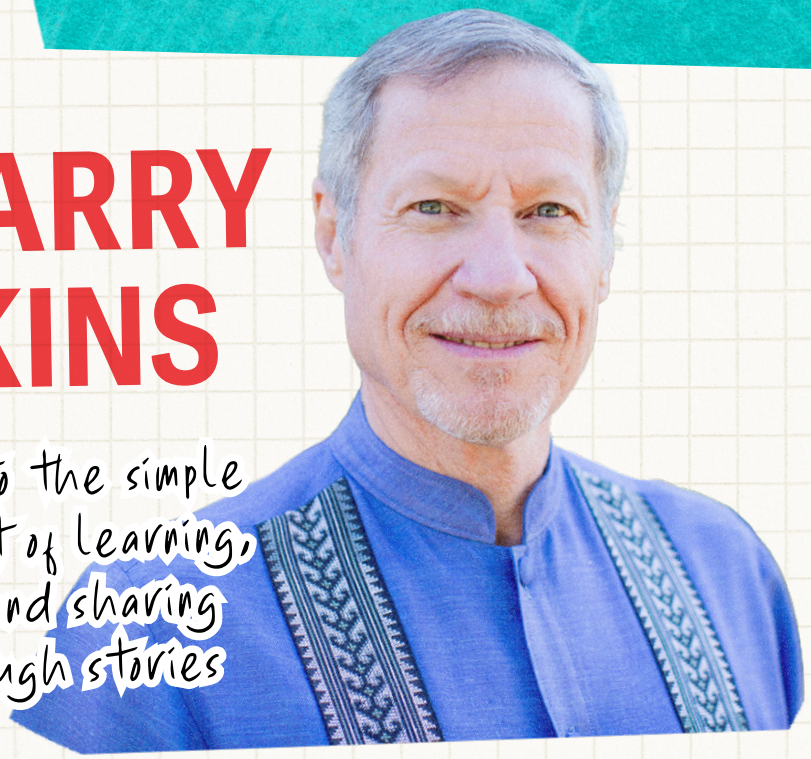
Do pray together with us.



A STORYTELLING WORKSHOP

with

DR. LARRY DINKINS



Be introduced to the simple and effective art of learning, remembering, and sharing Scripture through stories

DATE	26 Apr 2026 (Sunday)
TIME	2:00pm to 4:30pm
PLACE	OMF Singapore @ 2 Cluny Rd

REGISTER
(CLOSING DATE: 19 APR)

bit.ly/StorywithLarry

CO-ORGANISED BY ARTS RELEASE × OMF



Brothers and sisters across different ethnicities and nations praying with each other at the East Asia Praise and Prayer event on 7 Feb 2026

Have a Heart for Missions in East Asia?



Connect with us
(linktr.ee/omf_singapore)

to stay up-to-date on East Asia focused events, prayer meetings, and mission opportunities.

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Let's journey together in God's mission!



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