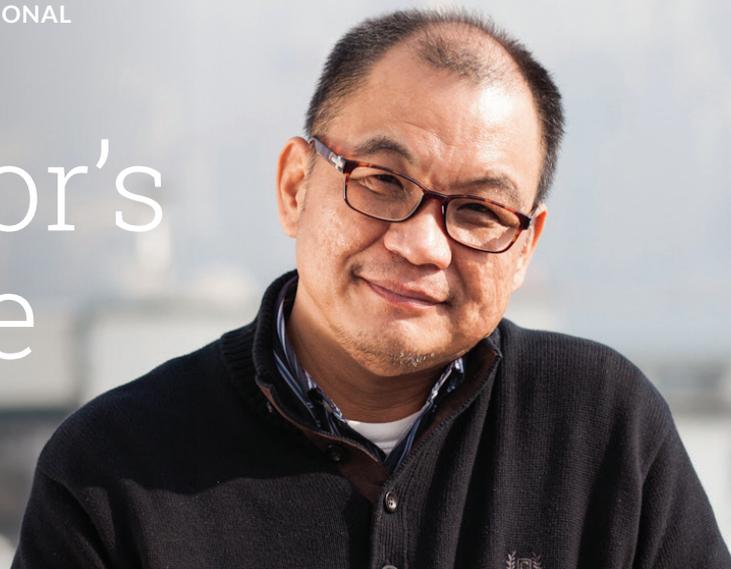


# Director's Update

LAWRENCE TONG



## A new focus on the Kingdom of God

Looking at church history and organisational and mission history over the past two centuries, we learn that organisations—and missions—come and go, but the Kingdom of God and its values will remain until Jesus comes. Thus it would be unwise for us to root our identity in our or any organisation; it is at best temporary, while God's Kingdom is eternal. Anything we create in our organisations is solely to direct and guide us toward eternal values. Such a perspective realises that there are many other 'workers in the vineyard' and thus collaboration, rather than competition, is the path God lays for us. Assenting to this in principle is easy; putting it into practice, day in and day out, is much harder. Yet God calls us to seek first His Kingdom and righteousness, which will re-orient us to bless others also working for the Kingdom.

We need to evaluate whether we build relationships primarily for their potential to advance our own ministry. After all, don't we believe that our efforts and needs are the most important? Jesus chastised His followers about this, saying that if they love those who love them, they are no better than pagans (Matt. 5:46–48). God expects us to have higher values than them; to exhibit an eagerness to bless, to be

generous, to esteem others as better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3–4). All that we have been entrusted with—our experience, our resources, our insight, our passion—is to be shared with God's people. This makes for a compelling testimony to John 17:21–23, where Jesus says that the world will judge the truth of Jesus, as sent from the Father, based on their observation of our love for one another. That's a sobering qualifier.

The body of Christ is the reflection of Jesus. However, as Christians, we are very selective people: We decide whom we like and don't like, and whom we'll cooperate with and whom not. If we fail to demonstrate to a watching world our eagerness to share our best with one another, to encourage one another, to seek the best for one another in tangible ways that even pagans can recognise, then repenting of and rectifying that should be our immediate priority. Even within OM, what would happen if we embraced generosity to the point that it became a core value for our organisation?

### Investing by faith

From OM's earliest days, we invested in all kinds of people for one or two years, knowing that they would return to their churches or go to other organisations—or even start new ones. Many went to Bible school for training and onto leadership in

ministry. Of course, we could benefit from hanging onto such people, and yet God has shown us that we should not object when people take their experience and training and do new things with them. I regularly hear from heads of Bible colleges and universities who love having former OMers as students, because they come ready to learn and positively influence the student body. A number of other missions have welcomed OMers because they are teachable and grounded in the Word and in cross-cultural relationships.

As one of our contributions to the Kingdom, 25,000 Christians and mission leaders today trace their roots back to OM. Yet how can we do this more? For one thing, we can commit to not holding back from investing in anyone for the Kingdom of God, whether or not they remain with us. Our primary criterion should not be what an individual can offer us, but rather how we can invest in people while they are with us, knowing that when they leave us they will be a blessing—and a testimony.

Thank you for joining with us in the work of the Kingdom.

PRAY  
GIVE  
GO

## IN THIS ISSUE...

• Russia • Moldova • Near East • Serbia • Czech Republic • Mozambique • Singapore

EVANGELISM **RUSSIA: BREAKTHROUGH CAMP**

Winter holidays last 10 days, a favourite time of year for teenagers and kids who enjoy winter sports like sledging, skiing and skating.



For many years, OM and local churches have organised a camp for young people to learn more about God. This year, the theme was the Olympics. Students reflected on biblical topics through the analogy with sports, such as 'Who is your Coach?', 'What will cause a foul?', etc. They also enjoyed outdoor excursions, adventures, and sports games.

Thirty young people aged 11–12 took part, in a picturesque place in Siberia. Some had been to such camps many times but, for several, it was their first Christian camp. Among participants were some 'children at risk'. **Kate\*** always tried to avoid people, but this camp was special for her. "This time she wanted to talk more to people," shared **Oksana Bekina**, of the *Children at Risk* ministry. "Kate had many questions about God, church and repentance. She has heard a lot about God." Pray that Kate and the other kids in the camp will find peace and purpose for life through faith in Christ. Pray as they return, to often difficult homes, that their changed lives will impact their families and communities.

RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT **MOLDOVA: CHANGING FAMILIES**

No food, no education, no love, no future: This is reality for hundreds of children who attend OM's day centres all over the country. A majority of these children suffer neglect, violence and poverty as a consequence of family alcoholism. The centres give them a chance to break out of this lifestyle, introducing them to God and allowing them to experience respect and love, and even education.

**Dana\*** and her siblings attend one of OM's day centres. An outreach team



stayed in her village over the summer, and visited Dana's home with the local pastor and day centre leader. When they arrived, they found a police officer and a local social worker in the yard and the children's mother, **Tania\***, drunk and unable to move. Neither the house nor her four children received any care. The children were taken to a state home, and the legal process started to take parental rights away from Tania and her husband, who was in prison.

Soon after, Tania turned up at the church asking for prayer because she did not want to drink any more. She had stayed 'dry' for two weeks, but felt vulnerable. She sought the support of local believers and of the God whom her children talked about at the day centre and the God who had worked a similar miracle in the pastor of this church; **Pastor Viorel** had himself been an alcoholic and criminal before God completely changed his life.

Tania started regularly attending church and came to faith. She did not drink anymore and cleaned and refurbished her house. She soon looked much healthier, so that others found it difficult to recognise her.

Viorel, who owns greenhouses, gave Tania work, knowing her need for an income as well as having something useful to do. The mayor and social worker began to talk about getting Tania's rights to her children back. A few days later, the mayor had to go to Chisinau and offered to take Tania so she could pick up her daughter and take her home. God can change even the most hopeless situations. Pray for more transformed lives through the day centres.

CHURCH PLANTING **NEAR EAST: SERVING A PEOPLE**

OM workers **Henry\*** and **Christine\*** recently moved to Europe, after 23 years in the Near East. Before they moved, they attended a farewell service held by the local Kurdish fellowship where they'd mentored, discipled and encouraged Syrian believers. "Some of the fellowship has left to Europe...It's on their heart to see ministry there. They were excited to send us off," Christine said. Kurds from all over the Middle East have headed to Europe, fleeing on-going conflict but also leaving the kind

of training and support Henry offered. "We don't want to leave them alone," he said, referencing their relocation. "We [will] try to help them and the churches."

Originally, Henry and Christine's vision was for Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, not Kurds. But after being kidnapped and forced to leave the city in which they intended to stay long-term, the couple relocated to a Kurdish area. When they moved countries again, a Kurdish pastor contacted Henry. "He had a vision to train Syrian Kurds, so we started to train with him," Henry said. The group grew to about 40 people. In 2012, they started to see hundreds and hundreds of Syrian Kurdish families involved. The couple encouraged the Kurdish believers with literature, to do outreach and to start Bible studies.



About 250 Kurds now attend weekly meetings at local churches.

"Henry and Christine leaving creates a very big hole, both relationally and in terms of ministry for us as a field," stated the OM Near East Field Leader. "They'll still be involved with the Kurds, and we see how their move to Europe and focus on mobilising churches there is a really good fit for them. We're excited for them to take advantage of this opportunity."

Pray that God will use Henry's and Christine's cultural and ministry experience to reach many Syrians for Christ. Pray for more workers and churches in Europe to join the work among refugees.

JUSTICE **SERBIA: BOW AND LOOK UP**

**Christina** reflects on cleaning trash in a refugee camp in Šid.

"A group of us sat around a table after a simple meal. We had two things in common: loving Jesus, and time spent cleaning up rubbish at a nearby refugee camp. A few weeks prior, the leader had spent the day cleaning up disgusting filth, only to be invited to preach at a church the following morning—from a position of lowliness to a place of honour in a matter of hours! When I'm serving food or playing with children, the refugees approach me to talk. But when I don the gloves, grab



the dustpan and broom, it is like I become an entirely different person. I become the lowest of the low at that moment.

“Though angry that I’m treated differently, I try to redeem the humanity of a person of lowly stature. The porta-potty cleaners have become my friends. Most people don’t acknowledge them or even look their way, as if we are afraid that the unclean will contaminate us or our reputation. I think of Christ, becoming like a trash cleaner in a refugee camp when He left heaven for our redemption. Christ in all His glory, perfection and holiness came to our vile, sin-ridden planet to live among us in suffering, need and brokenness.



“As we wrapped up our discussion, the leader shared that rubbish cleaning has been one of the most powerful times of worship for him. The song, “Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down...”, plays repeatedly in his head. What a picture of worship: bowing down to clean the filth of another—a sweet picture of Christ!”

An OM project, called *Safe Passage*, focuses on meeting refugees at their initial entry points, providing information as well as water, food and essentials. To give to OM’s relief efforts, or for more information about how to get involved, please contact your local OM office.

**CZECH REPUBLIC: RESTORATION**

In what has been called Europe’s third-worst slave state (after Albania and Montenegro), **Natasha Shultz** has shared the love of Jesus with sex workers in Prague for five years. She stresses that God calls His people to join in bringing freedom to the enslaved. Many people are not aware that modern-day slavery still exists. The sad reality, however, is that there is a very serious problem with prostitution and human trafficking. Through hundreds of conversations with different women, she has come to believe that many women have been trafficked. She relates:

“Many ask why the women don’t leave. Some have pimps; some don’t.

Each woman has a different ‘contract’ with those who get her into the sex industry, and some have no contract at all, just hoping to survive.” Most women in brothels have reached the end of their options and are trapped within an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. There is a brokenness and darkness to the sex industry: heavy chains on those engaged in the sex industry, some psychological some physical.

“A first step in creating awareness in your sphere of influence is to share the message of what is happening in the nightclubs around us. The question that believers in Jesus need to ask is whether it is an act of justice and kindness to allow the sex industry and its exploitation of lives to continue. The women in the nightclubs do not have a platform from which to share their desperation and sadness over the injustices they face. Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV) tells us to, ‘Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.’”

For more information on how to get involved in OM’s human trafficking ministry, go to [www.cz.om.org](http://www.cz.om.org) or [thefreedomchallenge.com](http://thefreedomchallenge.com).

**MENTORING & DISCIPLESHIP** 👤

**LOGOS HOPE: NIGHT OF PRAYER**

One highly significant event held on board in Maputo, Mozambique, was a night of prayer where 200 pastors and members from various churches put aside their personal agendas and came together as a united body to pray from eight in the evening until dawn the next day. Apart from prayer, there were messages shared by local pastors and *Logos Hope* leaders, as well as a number of choirs whose contributions created a reverent atmosphere through the night. Participants prayed fervently with the anticipation of seeing the situation in their lives and country changed. It was a powerful image to see the unity of Christians

“There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer.” A.T. Pierson

gathered in one place, praying with and for one another. “The churches in



*Africa still believe in the simple things; they believe in prayer, in miracles, in healing and in the Holy Spirit,”* shared Mareike Fritschen (Germany), one of the Maputo advance preparation team members. “These things have got lost along the way in some other countries.”

**SINGAPORE: A HETHNE VISION**

When **Ashok Kumar** was 22 years old, he bicycled 18,000 km across India in one year. He joined OM in 1983 and, for the last 30 years, has primarily been involved in reaching out to the Hethne (Hindu) community in India and abroad with the Gospel. Globally, one in every seven people is part of the Hethne community. God led Ashok to start Hethne Net Consultation, a global strategic network that shares the best experiences and ways to reach Hethne communities.

As a result, OM collaborated with the Singapore Centre for Global Missions, the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission, and Serving In Mission to hold the first consultation in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in November last year. Organisations represented included the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies Bangalore, Union Biblical Seminary (Pune), Philippines Missions Association, Interserve UK, Interserve India, Youth With A Mission, Lausanne, Cornerstone Foundation, Allahabad Bible College, Methodist Missions Society and others. “This gathering is historically pioneering to the growing influence of Hethne around the world,” Ashok emphasised. “The network will give a new impetus to Christ-believing communities and churches.” The Hethne Net Consultation is a ministry of OM East Asia Pacific. For more information, contact [Ashok.Kumar@om.org](mailto:Ashok.Kumar@om.org)

Thank you for your prayers and support of all OM ministries worldwide.

\* name changed



# The way I see it

IN TRANSITION, I CHOOSE... • BY SUE PRIESTLEY



I was once telling a wise person about changes I was facing and remarked that I must be having a mid-life crisis. He replied, “*You are not going through a crisis; it is just a transition. If you don’t handle it well, then it could become a crisis.*” This has helped me to face various transitions ever since.

All of OM will experience transition as a result of the Global Planning Process. During the International Leaders Meetings (ILM) in Panama, I met with a number of people who will be impacted. Some do not see a role for themselves in the new structure, or will be affected by changes in governance. Most of us will need to evaluate how our ministry aligns with the mission statement and leadership changes. Hopefully, this transition will sharpen our vision for the future.

A key to handling transitions is prayer. With a special ILM team praying and worshipping God during the sessions, along with people around the world praying for us, it should be no surprise that God’s presence and leading was evident to all, and that there was overwhelming support of the direction OM is going.

God has been showing me several ways to handle this transition well:

- **Love people.** Of course, we already love and appreciate OM folks very much, but let us actively consider how we can improve. In all our travels and interactions (face-to-face, email, Skype, etc), let love be practically evident such that people feel it after we are together. A ‘default’ love will help us to handle changes together.
- **Be excited about this process** and wholeheartedly support the direction we are heading. Choose to trust the leaders who are steering us on this change, whose understanding of the bigger picture is greater than our own.

“We can open our eyes and hearts. God relishes surprise. We want lives of simple, predictable ease—smooth, even trails as far as the eye can see—but God likes to go off-road. He provokes us with twists and turns. He places us in predicaments that seem to defy our endurance and comprehension—and yet don’t. By his love and grace, we persevere. The challenges that make our hearts leap and stomachs churn invariably strengthen our faith and grant measures of wisdom and joy we would not experience otherwise.” *Tony Snow, journalist*

- **Actively support this process** by engaging positively in discussions, and not passively waiting for a moment when something is not done ‘right’ (which usually means not done the way we would do it or said the way we would say it). It might mean letting go of the status quo, routines, traditions, habits, roles and responsibilities. Jesus is our great example of letting go of what was His for the sake of God’s kingdom (Philippians 2).

- **Be at peace, despite the unanswered questions** or lack of details. Peace comes from spending time in the Word and prayer, finding appropriate ways to talk matters through.

- **Don’t take it personally** when a decision or direction appears to affect us negatively. Let us believe the best and allow the truths learnt over the years to take root in our hearts. Recognise (and celebrate) that we are part of something much greater than our own perspectives or our wishes. How can we be a positive influence and provide practical support?

- **Follow Jesus** (as He commanded), even when we cannot see the way—

through fields, forests, mosquito-ridden land, twisty roads, trials and challenges, in or out of OM. Go deep in the Word, and pay attention to what God wants us to hear and learn. Re-read John 21 whenever we are tempted to say “What about this?” or “What about him?” Remember that He said, “You must follow me.” His calling on our lives is much greater than what we do through OM—that’s very exciting!

For all that we are experiencing, this is not a crisis; it is a transition. I pray that we will walk closely together—and even more so with Him who holds it all together.

*Sue Priestley, an Associate International Director of OM, says: After 36 years with OM, living in a number of different countries and visiting many more, I am constantly asked ‘Which country is your favourite?’ And the short answer is, all of them! Right now, I am enjoying a season of being based in Canada (my home country) while continuing the ministry God has given me to love OMers and share with them the things God has been teaching me.*

