



Dear partners in prayer,

Greetings in our Lord's name from the historic Keswick Convention where thousands are gathering to hear God's word and where mission is one of the great priorities. Thousands have heard the call of God to mission involvement in this place over the years. It was my privilege to preach on the evening dedicated to mission in the first week and to see people coming forward at the close of the message to commit their lives to our Lord's service—always a thrilling and challenging moment.

Another busy summer is in full swing in OM. Many short-term programmes are taking place. Pray for **Teen Street** as thousands gather to be challenged in discipleship and missions; hundreds will then join TIM teams (Teens in Missions) to share Christ with their peers.

On 1 August, we are launching **a year of focused prayer** around OM with many specific things to bring before the Lord, not least the appointment of the next International Coordinator. Be part of this by visiting www.pray.om.org

Transform 2012: With a challenge to "get dirty" for the gospel, 300 participants representing 35 nationalities gathered in Rome from 16-20 July to pray, learn and prepare for one-week to six-month outreaches across the Mediterranean. "Your life is the message," said Transform Director **Gary Witherall** in his opening challenge. "We want to get dirty with those who are suffering, and we invite you to get messy, to come with us, to join us."

While waiting for conference arrivals at the train station, holding a sign that read *Messengers of Hope* (Transform's strapline) someone approached Marvin and said, "What's the message?" **Marvin** then shared God's love with the stranger, now a new friend.

Pray for the Mediterranean region to be forever changed with the gospel. For more information on how to get involved in Transform 2013, visit www.transform.om.org

pioneering initiatives

SportsLink: Run for The World is a one-day event centered on a 5 km run to raise awareness of mission and support worthy projects such as developing young leaders. In

2011, there were 13 runs worldwide; RFTW aims to set up at least 24 events in different time zones so staggered as to literally run around the world together, passing a virtual baton from one zone to the next. Every cumulative 40,000 km equals the circumference of the world. Bring your community together for one day promoting healthy activity, prayer and fun on 29 September.

For more information and to register, visit www.r4tw.org

Ukraine: Saron Mack (USA) has contributed to OM's sport ministries for seven years, helping to develop soccer, rugby, volleyball, ultimate Frisbee, challenge courses and adventure sports like climbing/rappelling. She also runs a weekly fitness class for ladies of all ages.

"In this culture, most young women in their teens and 20s are extremely underweight," she says. "Trying to stay model-thin by not eating much, many are physically weak. There are also old wives tales and superstitions to overcome, which hinder girls being physically fit. God has given me a passion to help young women gain a healthier understanding and appreciation of their bodies and womanhood in Christ. We talk about how to live more healthily. The class is a 'neutral' place where non-believers and believers mingle freely."

Saron and her team have many opportunities this summer to combine sports and witness. Pray for lasting community impact.



Peter Maiden
OM's International
Co-ordinator

ships

Praise God for **Logos Hope's** successful refloating! Outstanding work includes getting overhauled systems operational again, training for personnel and surveys necessary for the Passenger Ship Safety Certificate.

Continue to pray for God's protection and blessing in the technical work that will prepare Logos Hope to sail for ports in Thailand and Hong Kong later this year.

Critical need: Pray for a long-term chief engineer from September, as well as an additional maintenance engineer.

Electricians, plumbers and other skilled individuals are needed to complete work on board in preparation for the Power Up project, now scheduled for early 2014. If you have technical skills or know someone who could help, please contact projectworker.mosbach@gbaships.org

While work continues, there have been no shortage of ministry opportunities. Crewmembers took initiative to distribute Gospel literature on the streets. On two Saturdays, they gave out more than 1,000 copies of the *Gospel of John* and 600 of *The Most Important Story Ever Told* booklet. Through praying with people, they saw many start a relationship with Jesus. When **Nick Bechvaia** (Georgia) met a mother and her children who were begging, he explained how Jesus loves them and asked if he could pray for them. "They didn't ask for money," he remembered. "They were so happy that I gave them my time and prayed for them. I could see in the woman's eyes that she had hope in God."

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muslim peoples

Australia: As Ben* read the Book of Isaiah over a cup of chai latte, a man from Djibouti sat down next to him. He had been watching Ben and said that he had a Christian friend. He had a lot of questions and felt the pull of the Scriptures. He asked if Ben believed he was going to paradise. Ben told him he was 100% certain because of Jesus. The man told Ben that wasn't so, because he called Jesus the Son of God. "That's what the Qur'an says," replied Ben, smiling.

Teams all over Australia connect with Muslim neighbours and share God's love. An Australian from a Maltese Catholic background became a Muslim through the influence of friends. He had studied in a *madrassa* and could recite most of the Qur'an. He spoke about a spiritual force holding him in Islam. He was overjoyed to find that things he hated about Australian culture were rebuked in the Scriptures, and said that if someone could explain why God had planned to put His son on the cross from the beginning of creation, he would become a Christian.

Pray for the Ministry to Australian People (MAP) team and for Muslims as they confront modern life, Islam and Scripture. Pray that God would speak to them as they read the Scriptures. For more information and a DVD about the MAP team in Australia, contact map.au@om.org

Caucasus: Three years ago, an OMER and co-workers sat by the Caspian Sea planning a small, part-time Bible school for national believers. In this Muslim country, there was no training available for lay leaders, particularly from house churches.

Every three months, two subjects would be covered during four days of training tailored to the local context and language. The students would be from outlying towns and cities where only tiny groups of believers exist.

The school began with just seven students. The leadership and teachers, though mostly foreign, were committed to encourage and train local people to become teachers. They were glad to see Central Asian teachers from a neighbouring country present two subjects.

Each year, the school has grown and the main coordinator and five members of the leadership team are national believers. The school has a core curriculum of eight subjects, only one currently taught by a foreigner. Praise God for this advance of Christ's kingdom in the Caucasus region.

emerging mission movements

Africa: The L.I.F.E. Development Programme (Learning + Influencing + Following + Encouraging) walks a road of discipleship with a small group of rural Christian leaders. The long-term vision is to begin a discipleship and leadership movement within each country.

Over three years, trainers meet with small groups twice a year for five days to equip the students to multiply the training with the next generation of believers. By applying key truths of Christ to daily living, they hope to reverse the problem of an overly-evangelised but under-discipled continent.

In **Zimbabwe**, the team works with **Vicky Graham**, a Zimbabwean OMER in a rural community near Lake Kariba. After three years, the fruit of this faithful labour is ripe: three generations of disciples and disciple-makers to date. Vicky came to the valley of Siabuwa in March 2001 and has served the local community as a nurse, treating up to 120 people per day. A Bible translation into Tonga is being explored, which would allow the discipleship process to grow further. This would be done in partnership with local believers and Wycliffe Bible Translators and would reach 140,000 Tonga people. info.africa@om.org

Philippines: In May 2011, OM ran a Vacation Bible School for three days in Sunrise Village, Rizal. Working alongside Fishport Christian Alliance Church (FCAC), the team challenged them to do house visitation; within three months, a house fellowship had started.

A Korean OM couple visited the community regularly and ran a weekly children's club and bi-monthly feeding programme with FCAC. OM attended the first official worship service of Alliance Christian Center on 3 June, and witnessed the baptism of eight new believers two weeks later!

Praise God for the seeds planted during the VBS in Sunrise Village last year, and for the house fellowship that has emerged. Pray that as Fishport Christian Alliance Church guides this new church plant, many Filipinos would come to know of His love and truth.

relief & development

Zambia: It's difficult to care for a paralytic husband when you can't see clearly. For two years, cataracts had grown in **Pauline's** left eye until the problem could no longer be ignored.

Since February 2010, Pauline has been a regular attendee of OM's Tabitha Sewing Ministry, which meets three times a week in Kabwe. She has learnt how to sew bags, purses and men's shirts to provide income for her family. Moses, her husband, was paralysed after a car crash in 1995.

Though she walks an hour and a half each way, Pauline looks forward to the meetings. "God has changed me," declares Pauline as she describes how she has been affected by the ministry. "If you stay at home, maybe your friends come talking rubbish. Here, someone is teaching you the Bible. Then you are growing."

Pauline is thankful for the Bible lesson and songs that take place before each meeting and has even led teaching. On 21 May, Pauline travelled to the Lusaka Eye Hospital where her cataracts were successfully surgically removed, thanks to funds in the Tabitha Sewing Ministry account.

next generation

Japan: OM recently launched a contemporary worship ministry called *Worship Here* creating an atmosphere of worship compelling for a younger generation. "The ultimate goal of world mission is worshippers praising and God's glory," says **Pomyoung Kim**. The average age of churchgoers in Japan is 50+ years

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old, making it difficult for the younger generation to engage, even as churches face decreasing numbers (less than 1% Christian). *"There is no sound of worshipping God here. Offering a worship service would be very significant,"* says Pomyoung. Pray that a drummer, keyboard player and guitarist would join and that the team would find a suitable place for regular worship in central Kanazawa. Pray that many young people would come to know God personally through worship and that the church in Japan would be strengthened.

europa

Moldova: A group of 20 young people stood near the **Bus4Life**, parked in the village of Tarigrad. As it started to rain, the loud and restless group entered the bus. The team put on a programme but found the teens distracted easily. **Ana** thought, *"What's the use? They are not listening at all!"*

As they finished, the team prayed for the teens. By then, the rain had turned to hail, which meant the young people could not leave. The team put on a drama, followed by a film. At this point, the group started to open up. One team member shared a testimony, and they read from the Bible.

When the young people were challenged to give their lives to God, 14 responded. In the end, they didn't want to leave the bus. They had sought shelter from the rain but had found Jesus. Praise God for their new lives in Christ. Pray that they will connect with a local church and grow in faith.

France: Bruay-la-Buissière is a town in the northeast of France, not far from Belgium. There, a 20-member church and a volunteer pastor actively share the gospel with their community of 24,000 people. Through clothing and food drives, holiday kids' clubs, gospel concerts and open-air evangelism, they share God's love with those around them. Recently, they asked that OM send a team of people to spend a year in Bruay doing full-time ministry.

Pastor Yann Piatowski explains, *"I'm a part-time pastor: I teach full-time in an elementary school. It's frustrating not to be able to spend enough time in evangelism or in contact with Bruay residents. I need helpers with time to spend in friendship evangelism, regular distribution of Christian literature, setting up evangelistic events and developing a children's ministry."*

Sending a team could make a difference for Christ in the town and in the lives of those they befriend. Do you know someone who would be interested in joining this team? Is God calling you? Please pray that God would send workers to Bruay-la-Buissière. www.om.org/en/job/s2777

resourcing

Taiwan: Although 93% of the population are adherents of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, 4.5% consider themselves Christian (3% Evangelical). Thus the focus of missions remains on local church planting and expansion. Challenges include a lack of understanding for the importance of cooperation among church, mission organisations and workers; lack of integration in mission among different denominations and lack of human and financial resources. In response, OM is hosting its first Mandarin missions conference called *Zan4 Taiwan* from 4–13 August to promote cross-cultural missions and encourage churches to invest in world missions.

OM is also pioneering long-term ministry in the form of the 'Community Transformation Movement' (CTM) with a focus on evangelism, spiritual formation, mercy ministry, community development and ecological stewardship. CTM leads initiatives to form Christian communities, catalyse community development, help in church planting and strengthen churches where the gospel has rarely been heard. www.om.org.tw/ctm

world faiths

Southeast Asia: John* (Papua New Guinea) has benefitted from Asia Challenge Team's (ACT) Scholarship Programme which enables him to experience cross-cultural missions despite his sending church's limited resources. *"Being on ACT has challenged me by living with people from different cultures and languages. I have learnt many new things in understanding the big long-term picture of missions. Recently I shared about God with two friends en route to a pagoda—they were going to pay respect to Buddha, and asked if I would join. I told them that I pay respect to and worship only Jesus. I asked several questions about Buddhism and their beliefs, shared some of God's principles and my testimony with them...right there in the pagoda."*

ACT has worked in Asia for more than 20 years. Participants typically join for one or two years, spending at least six months in one South East Asia location at a time. Through exposure to diverse cultures, languages and peoples, team members discover their gifts, abilities and interests on the mission field. www.act.om.org

Thailand: Over 93% of Thailand's 65 million people are Buddhist; only 1% are Christian. OM's goal is to develop youth and young adults into future workers and leaders for local churches and overseas.

Country Leader **Woody Kim** has started a church near the campus a technical university in Bangkok, running two campus clubs which teach English and develop leadership in different groups of students. With the help of international teams, OM also hosts English camps in the summer, in partnership with universities and the Federation of Christian Business Professionals. During the school year, OM staff take themed English lessons to local Thai schools.

Please pray for OM's small team of four and for God to touch the hearts of students with whom they interact.

Once again, on behalf of the OM family of ministries, with 6,100 workers representing over 100 nations in more than 110 countries, I thank you for your prayers and support.

Your brother in Christ,

Peter Maiden

** names changed for security reasons*

Think again

Disability: a crack in the ruling worldviews

J U L Y A N L I D S T O N E

Since Operation Mercy started serving the poor and marginalised of the Muslim world, we have often engaged with disabled children and their families and have developed expertise in relevant therapies with a focus on community integration and rehabilitation. It has been a joy and privilege to make a difference in the lives of these neglected, vulnerable people.

I was therefore interested to learn of the work of **Stanley Hauerwas**, a theologian and advocate for people with disabilities. In 2001, Time magazine declared him, whose first wife had bipolar disorder, to be 'America's best theologian.' Disability is important for Hauerwas because he realised "it was the crack I desperately needed to give concreteness to my critique of modernity."¹ Western modernity values deep individualism, independence and rationality, the ability to care for self, to speak out for self and to be economically productive. Disability challenges all this: people with disabilities need a community to care for them, to speak for them, to befriend them.

Their existence belies the conceit that we are autonomous authors of our own meaning, and instead is a constant statement that being created in the image of God means we have value in ourselves, not in performance or status. It means we are all inherently dependent, and that independence is an illusion. It means we are created for community, with God and with each other, and that individualism makes self into an idol. Disability undermines the ideology of Western civilisation and exposes its contradictions.

The radical otherness of Jesus

Could disability have a similar significance for Eastern civilisation and the Muslim world? Cultures which value family and community are often regulated by shame and honour. We have often met families so overwhelmed by the disgrace of their disabled child that she is hidden away in a back room, her disability compounded by a lack of affection and attention. Actually she is a gracious gift of God, who in giving her has honoured the family by calling them to care for those unable to care for themselves, just as he cares for the poor and needy.

Muslim families not seduced by Western materialism have a God-shaped worldview and tend to interpret the birth of a disabled child as God's punishment (like the disciples in John 9:2). They need to be helped to understand the good news that God is not a harsh, vindictive judge standing against them, but a loving father ready to display his gracious work on their behalf. It is precisely through the disabled child that God wants to display his merciful compassion and power, both in works of healing and in the contradiction of

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power being perfected in weakness, as supremely demonstrated in the cross of Christ.

Many families cope magnificently with the disappointment of a child with exceptional support needs. Nevertheless, the fact of disability challenges cultures with questions that expose their inherent failings, the points at which their strengths become their weaknesses.

The gospels reveal how often Jesus encounters and heals disabled people. When John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask if Jesus is the Messiah, his answer is to draw attention to the miracles that are happening, "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matt 12:5). Whether it is a paralysed man with four friends to help him through the roof, or a man crippled since birth 38 years ago with no help into the pool, Jesus unfailingly engages with compassion and healing power.

These healings of the disabled are vitally significant signs of the kingdom of God. Handicapped from birth, they eloquently symbolise the human condition. Like all poor and weak, they suffer exclusion and abuse at the hands of the powerful. In any culture the disabled fall through the cracks, thereby exposing the weaknesses of the prevailing worldview. In the West they suffer the consequences of the individualism that glorifies independence, whereas in the East they become the victims of social shame. The wonderful news is that, in Christ, these cracks become openings of opportunity for the gospel and God's transforming grace.

Hauerwas is concerned that, by basing his critique of modernity on the plight of the disabled, he may be accused of using them as mere means to accomplish his theological ends. Yet he has a valid point that we should be careful we do not allow our integrity to become compromised when clients we are caring for become tools of our gospel agenda.

In presenting his rationale for the care of the disabled, his intention is not calling the unbelieving world to faith, but calling the church to become the community of faith that God intended. Caring for the disabled teaches us how to care for each other. Learning how to be 'present to the disabled, as well as with them,' develops the communal Christian imagination of how God intends the world to be. His respondent Jeff McNair sadly points to the failure of most churches to engage with the disabled in this way, wryly wondering if they have ever really read the gospels and seen how much of Jesus' ministry was to the handicapped! ■

Julyan Lidstone is Area Leader for West and Central Asia and is on the board of partner organisation Operation Mercy. Comments are welcome care of research@om.org

1. *Critical Reflections on Stanley Hauerwas' Theology of Disability*. John Swinton (ed); New York, Haworth Press, 2004, p.14

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