



Director's Update

LAWRENCE TONG



Living with change

Change is part and parcel of everyday life. It is impossible to exist without encountering change. God's people are not exempt: The Apostle Paul went through many changes, yet he could see how God refined and empowered him to accomplish far more. The Bible is full of stories of such people.

In fact, the heart of the gospel message – that which OM and the church exist to spread – is change: a change of master, of destiny, of life attitudes, and of purpose. Thank God for the ability to change, be changed, and change others. Change really is the good news! When our lives are surrendered to Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins a transformational, redeeming work to form us to be more like Jesus. That change is what the gospel is all about.

The changes we are making in OM will position us to remain relevant to the cultures we work in. Our Biblical convictions are the same, our core values remain unchanged, and our commitment has deepened. However, our method, our approach, and our strategy must adapt to changing cultures and trends. The changes underway in OM today are disruptive, but they are essential for our growth and effectiveness in the future. There is no other way to achieve that.

I am so grateful that OM at 60 is able and willing to make bold moves in evaluating everything we have done. A number of leaders have voluntarily stepped aside to allow space for a new generation of leaders.

Guidelines for effecting change

i) Start at the top. The International Director's leadership team must be committed to change. We cannot assume that everyone will agree and align. Our implementation process is ongoing to ensure that everyone moves forward together.

ii) Involve everyone. We spent 18 months engaging with frontline staff before settling on planning strategies. The task of rolling out change is much

smoother when people are engaged early for input on issues that will affect their ministries. Achieving broad involvement within our organisation saves untold headaches. We were able to hear confidentially from participants, and because they've had a hand in developing a plan, they are now more invested in it. In change management parlance: "You have to go slow to go fast."

iii) Engage, involve, participate. Sustaining effective change requires constant and creative communication. Many leaders mistakenly assume that an initial strong message of change will be sufficient. Such 'leaders' are deceived. The more other leaders are involved and participating, the greater the likelihood of successfully executing the change.

For Asians, having a voice is more important than having a vote. As the International Director, I presently vote on a number of issues. But my term is limited; in a relatively few years, I will move on and no longer have a vote. However, I want to still have a voice that people will listen to. There are those whose long service and wisdom merit respect; when they speak, people should listen.

Make change personal

Think of one or two things in your life that could be changed to help free you from the rut of 'tried and true'. It may be a regular routine, making new friends, or breaking a bad habit. You also can change for the better!

When I took on this role, I gained a lot of weight. I learned that I was a stress eater. A doctor gave grave news: change my lifestyle or else. So, I had motivation to change. My attitude towards food had to change, and it did. I learned to enjoy vigorous exercise. I also learned to not immediately answer every email.