

## Director's Word *Dec* 2018

How do you learn?

I often find it's through having to do something I am not familiar with. A few months ago I was asked to give a series of lectures in Korea on the subject 'Christianity in an age of artificial intelligence (AI)'. I responded to the invitation with a list of people I thought could do a great job, but the gracious response came back, 'No, we would like you.' It proved to be a great learning experience.

Not only did I learn a lot about technology, processing speeds and robotics, I became aware of the significant ethical issues related to the incredible developments in computing, machine learning and so-called artificial neuronal networks. These issues include questions of power and control, of wealth generation and inequality, of impact on work, communication and relationships, to say nothing of weapons technology, sex industry and surveillance of populations. Today, visual software is so sophisticated that a country like China is within reach of being able to track the place of every one of its citizens within minutes.

Even more challenging is the underlying atheistic, materialistic worldview that underpins the development of so much AI:

the religion of humanism and transhumanism. Proponents of these worldviews speak of a rapidly approaching moment when human beings will have developed the capacity to upload our brains and achieve immortality. Since humans are merely highly developed blobs of mud, there is ultimately no significant difference between machine and human beings.

As Christians we need to be well informed about all these advances and speak to the issues. The message of scripture, with its affirmation of what it means to be human, of suffering and limitation, of death and resurrection, this message is one of life and hope. I concluded my preparations for Korea thankful for being forced to read in new areas and convinced that the world of AI represents a major mission frontier.

In a post-Christendom world, mission frontiers are less and less matters of geography or ethnicity. We are still learning what these 'strongholds of the mind' are (2 Cor 10:4, 5) that resist the Lordship of Christ. Pray for us in OCMS as we seek to be responsive to the new frontiers of our time.



### ICETE, Panama City, November 2018

OCMS was represented by Academic Dean Thomas Harvey at the International Conference of Evangelical Theological Education. The conference brought together over 800 leaders and scholars from around world. The purpose of the conference is to:

- To promote the enhancement of evangelical theological education worldwide.
- To serve as a forum for contact and collaboration among those worldwide involved in evangelical theological education, for mutual assistance, stimulation and enrichment.
- To provide networking and support services for regional associations of evangelical theological schools worldwide.
- To facilitate among these bodies the enhancement of their services to evangelical theological education within their regions.



OCMS students, alumni & council members

At the opening ceremony, OCMS was honoured as an Affiliate Member of the ICETE in light of the role we and our alumni play in developing evangelical faculty and education internationally and particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Tom met with two educational leaders in Latin America who represent their denominations' over 1200 seminaries in the continent (not including Brazil) with over 100,000 students, yet these schools lack accreditation and certification. They are keen to see some of their key people do research at OCMS to facilitate their mission in Latin America. A very different set of issues was addressed with those engaged in theological training in places where the church is growing exponentially, yet training for pastors is either impeded by political powers or illegal. Again, OCMS's programme and connections were seen as strategic for mission and the development of theological education in these settings. Tom also met with representatives from Pakistan, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt to consider ways that OCMS could assist their own pursuit of relevant research into mission and ministry in their regions.

### Visit to the Romanian Orthodox Church

In early November Marina Behera and Paul Woods spent a few days in Romania as guests of the Romanian Orthodox Church. They attended two academic events, a conference in Cluj and a symposium in Sibiu. Marina gave papers in both and Paul presented in Cluj only.

It was a very positive experience and they were able to spend time with Orthodox scholars and leaders to begin to explore how OCMS might work together with our friends in Romania, especially in the area of mission practice and theology. Although we represent different 'flavours' of Christianity, the feeling on both sides was that academic exchange and cooperation would bless both sides and advance the cause of God's kingdom.

For Paul, the highlight of the time in Romania was attending the Divine Liturgy at the Orthodox Cathedral in Sibiu. It was a remarkable experience and he came away with a great sense of blessing. Marina was able to meet a number of old friends and former students.

### **'Integrated Mission Leadership' Certificate**

Most people involved in the global mission movement are aware that the current language, structures and systems supporting cross-cultural mission are largely unfit for purpose. In the last couple of years there has been an increasing stream of consultations, workshops and events aimed at rethinking mission. Most of the significant mission agencies that I am in touch with have either done or are in the process of major restructuring. In the light of this, we are delighted to announce the launch of a new programme for 2019, a Certificate in Professional Development in Integrated Mission Leadership (IML).

Our intention is to serve senior leaders in mission. Simply, we have tried to design a programme that integrates spiritual formation, leadership and organisational development in the context of mission. We believe the programme is very unusual not just because of the elements we are trying to weave together, but also because we are seeking to provide a context and resources in which senior leaders in mission can reflect critically on what kind of leadership and organisational systems and structures are needed in order for us to align ourselves with what God is doing at this moment.

We believe this programme brings its own wisdom around leadership and OD, shot through with a profound commitment to personal and group spiritual development, and in a way that will make a contribution to the questions we are all asking about the reimagining of mission today. The Programme Dean, Dr Mee Yan Cheung-Judge, is a global leader in organisational development, and the other faculty, brought in from outside OCMS, are all highly experienced in their fields.

The first one-week intensive module starts in March 2019 with subsequent modules in June, September and January 2020. Cohort size is limited, but if you are interested or know someone who might be interested in joining the programme, please visit our website for details <http://www.ocms.ac.uk/prospective/IML-certificate> or write to us at [iml@ocms.ac.uk](mailto:iml@ocms.ac.uk) Scholarships are available for OCMS alumni!

### Letter from an Alumnus

Very warm greetings from the Diocese of Hpa-an, Myanmar! I did research at OCMS from 2000 to 2008. I miss the OCMS community very much, but there is no chance for me to visit any time soon. I taught at Holy Cross Theological College, Yangon, from 1990 until September 2017, when I was elected as the diocesan bishop of Hpa-an diocese in the Church of the Province of Myanmar. On 8th October 2017, I was consecrated and started working as a diocesan bishop.

The first thing I did as a bishop was travelling and making pastoral visits to all the parishes. There are altogether 17 parishes in the diocese of Hpa-an. Within six months I managed to visit them all.

One thing which I noticed from my pastoral visits was that the majority of our parishioners needed a lot of teaching. Although many are illiterate, they are very faithful to the Gospel. Due to the long conflict between the government and the Karen National Union, more than one generation did not have a chance to go to school. As a result, they can speak the Karen language but could neither read nor write their own language. Many could not speak Burmese, the official language of Myanmar. I am struggling to think how to teach them effectively. Although we are all Karens, I did not understand their dialect. I am trying very hard to learn it, but I haven't managed yet. It gave me a headache every time I visited them. When I talked to them, I needed an interpreter to translate their dialect to the dialect I know and understand. I could not use either English or Burmese with them. During my ministry as a teacher and priest at Holy Cross Theological College, I could use both English and Burmese. I try not to be discouraged, but I am human and I have to confess that sometimes I really want to run away from this job. It is the words of Jesus "I am with you until the end of this age" that sustain me day by day. God also told Joshua not to be discouraged by saying to him, "As I was with Moses I will be with you."



Sincerely yours,

Mark Saw Maung Doe  
Bishop of Hpa, a Diocese in Myanmar

### THANKS FOR READING

We hope you've enjoyed our updates. Even though we can only feature a few people each time, we love sharing glimpses into the work here at OCMS. Do send us your own news; we love hearing from you.

OCMS is a charity and depends on the generosity of God's people. Let us know if you would like to support the work of OCMS, sponsor a student or become part of the team support for a faculty member.

God bless you abundantly.