

## Director's Word *June 2018*

Greetings from an unusually hot Oxford. It's a bizarre situation when the UK is more tropical than parts of the tropics. Maybe we need to be doing more research exploring issues in creation care!

I was recently asked, 'what's the five-year plan for OCMS?' Such an interesting question and reasonable question! I suggest, the answer given to such questions reveals more about personal and organisational spirituality than it does about clarity of vision and purpose. On the one hand, it's so appropriate to seek discernment not only for today but for overall direction. Choices we make today will impact the future, whether that is in the area of programmes, personnel, plans or priorities. So we reflect prayerfully, as best we can, on how current plans could lead us towards or away from God's call on the organisation.

At the same time, God has never shown me personally his plan for my life for more than a few months at a time and as a community I believe it is similar. This is what it means to live dependant, vulnerable, open, Spirit-sensitive lives

**as a community.** The commitment to prayerful discernment of the will of God, according to Ruth Haley-Barton (Pursuing the will of God together; IVP), can only happen when individuals bring their personal practices of waiting on God in silence, solitude, prayer, fasting and immersion in the Word of God into the community to be practiced together.

This organisational spirituality needs to permeate every level of the organisation (the way we do business together) and it begins with governance. It is a privilege to serve on the OCMS Board where this experience of corporate spirituality is being developed. At our gathering in May it shaped the way we looked at new programmes, the challenge of funding and the future building needs of OCMS in the light of what we see God developing among us.



Thank you for being part of the OCMS community. Please join us as we seek to develop God-honouring practices that grow a life-giving organisational spirituality.

Paul Bendor-Samuel

### Graduation day and the story of one Graduate

We now hold an annual graduation and this year, on a beautiful sunny day (June 8) seven of the successful 12 PhD graduates received their awards cheered on by over 100 guests and many more joining us on the live stream. It was a time of worship as well as a re-dedication of scholars and community to the ministry to which God has called each one. The Executive Director spoke of the need to go beyond academic study and make the fruit of



research accessible to the church. Graduation speaker, Professor Gerald Pillay, vice-chancellor of Liverpool Hope University reminded us that the work of an institution only blossoms when its students are sent out.



*I am a Palestinian Christian lawyer who lives in Nazareth, Israel.*

*My research dealt with the local causes and implications of intra-church conflict and the development of a culturally-compatible theological model of reconciliation in the Palestinian evangelical churches.*

*My vision is to reach my society by challenging the church to have a prophetic role in our conflicted land; encouraging interfaith dialogue aimed at building a culture of accepting the 'other'; engaging in peace-making by being committed to transformative teaching that seeks to engage participants in activism, public engagement and the practice of nonviolence. I plan to be involved in developing and training peace studies programs that seek to equip its participants with the academic and practical tools to approach conflict and its management, as well as reconciliation, all within the context of the challenges of my region.*

*I am thankful to God for OCMS and many others who supported me during my PhD journey.*

### OCMS Transfer Panel Intensive (TPI), Kampala, May 2018

Our four scholars from South Sudan were facing difficulties with their research projects, particularly given the social and political climate of their country. The crisis in South Sudan has displaced tens of thousands, including the families of our four students now located in parts of Uganda. All the scholars are in the MPhil stage of their research, aiming to transfer to the PhD stage but felt stuck.



The OCMS Senior Management Team responded to the need by organising a two-week intensive training at Kampala and Dr Brainerd Prince was deputed to go and conduct the 'Transfer Panel Intensive' (TPI) in Kampala for two weeks.

Group study was the main learning approach used. Each student had an opportunity to present the different elements of their project, with the group heavily engaged. This exercise was not only useful to the student, whose work was being probed, but also to the whole group as they practised the art of critical thinking. Dr Prince seized every moment to teach and guide the students individually and as a mini-cohort.

The main outcome was significant progress towards the writing up of the Transfer Panel portfolio by each participant. Other benefits include improved writing skills, critical thinking and greater self-confidence as a scholar. It was so successful our South Sudanese scholars suggested that OCMS organise these kinds of intensives in other parts of the world and possibly for other stages of the PhD journey. On completion of the Kampala intensive, the idea was immediately implemented in Oxford, where Dr Prince ran a one-week intensive for seven students.

The TPI was transformational for the students in that they grew in confidence and skills both as scholars and as leaders. While this was a first for OCMS, the Senior Management Team is convinced that this could be replicated as a strategic investment into its scholars, provided funding was available to enable these initiatives.

### Guided Study Programme (GSP)

OCMS is delighted to announce the launch of our Guided Study Programme (GSP). The GSP is a flexible, research-based (non-taught) programme that gives an opportunity for individuals to reflect, explore, investigate and produce a significant and meaningful research output, at their own speed and under the guidance of a personal tutor. For more information, download the brochure and application form from our website at <http://ocms.ac.uk> or email [gsp@ocms.ac.uk](mailto:gsp@ocms.ac.uk).

### Testimony from a Student

*I am a missionary with 30+ years of experience in cross-cultural work. A lot of the best things I learned, I learned by experience. But now I am at the point in my life where I need to articulate that experience, to make it available so that others can benefit. And not only that, I want to use what I write as a springboard into the next chapter of my life.*

*I didn't need a degree. But I needed help.*

*Enter OCMS. With their new Guided Study Program I can get the help I need, in the way that I need it. It is flexible so that it works with me toward the goals I have, and it is rigorous in the solid standards of research that OCMS is known for. What a combination!*

#### 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.