

Director's Word *Mar* 2019

Dear friend,

China is much in the news as the government tightens its control over any of its population deemed to be connected to foreign influence or a threat to party rule. Different parts of the church are experiencing pressure, including arrest and imprisonment. As mentioned in the last edition of *Inspired*, surveillance capability is now at a completely different level to that of previous clamp-downs. As the Body of Christ we are called to stand with our sisters and brothers in prayer.

Against this backdrop, it was a remarkable privilege to spend three days recently with a group of 18 pastors, field workers and leaders of young mission agencies from that great nation. At their request, Paul Woods and I were joined by the principals of Redcliffe and All Nations Christian College to explore what kind of mission training they desire as the Chinese mission movement grows in size and maturity.

Why was OCMS approached? It's not as if there is no training going on already. In fact, all the participants were very familiar with the *Perspectives* and *Kairos* courses. These programmes have much excellent content and clearly reflect a North American perspective on the

nature of mission. The leaders we are talking with are now looking for something that takes them deeper and enables them to grow their own capacity to think missiologically. The three days passed quickly as we facilitated conversations around training needs and engaged in 'taster' sessions on Mission and the Bible, contextualisation and different historic approaches to mission. By the end they were urging us to start a programme as quickly as possible.

Since its inception, OCMS has sought to strengthen church and mission leaders to develop their own understanding of the church's participation in God's mission, out of the richness of their own contexts. Please pray for us, along with Redcliffe and All Nations, as we develop a certificate programme in missiology that can serve the growing Chinese mission movement. Who knows, the programme may be helpful in other contexts too.

Thank you for being part of the OCMS community.

Paul Bendor-Samuel



IJAC Symposium, Chennai, January 2019



David Singh participated in his second IJAC International symposium on 'Interdisciplinary Research on Asian Christianities'. The symposium took place in Chennai (Madras) from 7-10 January (including travel in and out). Unlike last year when *the International Journal of Asian Christianity* (IJAC, a Brill Journal) was officially released under the auspices of the Department of Christian Studies of the University of Madras, the symposium this year took place at a resort and away from campus. It featured nineteen research papers by internationally renowned scholars on the theme of interdisciplinary research on Asian Christianities. The papers presented here are expected to be developed for the peer review process leading to their possible publication in the forthcoming issues of IJAC. David presented his second paper (the first paper was published in IJAC [1] 2, 2018, 198-224) based on a 19th century primary source, *kulliyat-e arya musafir*. He highlighted the two-fold strategy adopted by a leading Hindu reformer towards persuading Indian Christians to reconvert to Hinduism; this reflects similar movements under the BJP today: i. critique of Christian missionaries/Christianity (building on the previous paper) and importantly also a proposal for the ii. reformation of Hinduism for those reconsidering reconversion. There is much that missiologists and Christian professionals can learn from these ongoing researches on Christianity done by scholars from across the world using a diverse set of methodologies often absent in the existing missiological discourse.

International Harmony Conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Dr Thomas Harvey, OCMS Academic Dean, was a Keynote Speaker at the International Harmony Conference in Colombo Sri Lanka. The theme of the conference was on the role of the church and mission in harmony and reconciliation. Dr. Harvey's Talk was entitled *Harmony of Heaven & Humankind: Rediscovering the Tie that Binds*. The conference was held in Sri Lanka to honour the work of the churches in Sri Lanka to end the civil war and to forge a lasting peace between warring Sinhalese and Tamil forces. The conference promotes a vision of civil and religious harmony and non-violence. Fellow Keynote Speakers included Professor Dr Daniel Jeyaraj, Bishop Professor Dr Dennis T.W. Ng, Professor Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria and the late Dr Lamin Sanneh. Dr Sanneh's keynote address was read in absentia after a period of silence to honour of this great Christian scholar who had planned to address the conference as well.



Mission Research and Applied Scholarship (MRAS):

Many of you are aware that for 18 months OCMS and the Akrophi Christaller Institute, along with a small steering group, have been discussing a project to bring together mission research institutes through an on-line platform. The challenges driving this project include:

Imbalance in mission research capacity: While great strides have been made in developing theological education globally, the capacity for rigorous mission research and applied scholarship remains largely located in North America, Europe and Oceania.

Ignorance of mission research agenda: There is limited data on what mission research is being done nationally, regionally or globally. We can only speculate on the strengths, weaknesses and trends within the global mission research world.

Lack of agreed strategic priorities: Mission research is driven by the interests of individual scholars or institutions. There is limited connection between researchers. One consequence is that the voice of the majority church is insufficiently shaping the research agenda.

At the end of February, 19 participants from 14 institutions gathered in OCMS. Three other institutions were unable to send a representative. We came from seminaries, university departments and mission research institutes from the Philippines, Indonesia, Korea, Lebanon, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Netherlands, Columbia, Brazil, USA and OCMS! By the end of two engaged and energised days of discussion the MRAS Core Alliance had been forged. The consultation provided the opportunity to work over all these areas at considerable depth. At the end of the event participants agreed the following purpose and objectives:

To establish and sustain a community of institutions and individuals engaged in mission research, facilitated through a secure online platform (hereafter called MRAS).

Objectives

- To increase capability and capacity of all parts of the mission research community worldwide to participate in mission research, interdisciplinary scholarship and publication
- To facilitate the identification and prioritization of mission research needs at national, regional and global levels
- To foster relationship and collaboration between research institutions, scholars and practitioners

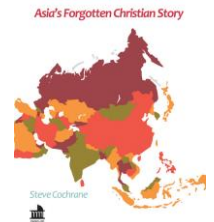
The ambition of these objectives reflects the strength of the felt needs of the participants as well as their excitement at the potential for deepening connection and collaboration in mission research. Please pray for the steering group as they work with the Core Alliance members to take the wealth of material provided by the consultation and use it to shape a project document that IT developers will be able to work with.

New Regnum Books

Asia's Forgotten Christian Story

This book seeks to bring light to the Eastern Churches under early Islam, in order to reveal something of the vigour of Christianity where it has been overlooked or unexpected.

Prof David Thomas, University of Birmingham



Mission in Secularised Contexts of Europe



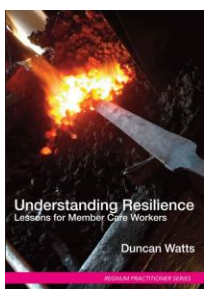
This volume deals with religion and Church today focused on secularised contexts in Europe. It poses a challenge to the Church to discern the times and rethink its mission. The new situations everywhere demand careful study. This book prompts the Church to belong to the age by re-telling and re-casting the meaning of the Gospel in different contexts.

John S Sadananda, Bishop Emeritus, Master of the Senate of Serampore College

It is high time for the missionary imagination to be captured by the secular direction currently being taken by West European societies. This book offers a sensitive, nuanced, contextually informed, richly textured and theologically profound exploration of this new frontier for Christian mission.

Kenneth Ross, parish minister at Netherlorn, Argyll, Scotland

Understanding Resilience



Resilience has become something of a buzz word in recent years, especially in the field of member care, but what is it? This book aims to answer this and other important questions. Part one evaluates over forty years of resilience research, exploring how it has been understood in different contexts, and what it looks like in context of cross-cultural mission. Part two reviews methods used for assessing resilience and suggests different means by which it may be enhanced. A thorough and detailed account of what resilience encompasses, especially in the context of member care.

Dr Debbie Hawker, Clinical Psychologist, Executive Committee of Global Member Care Network

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. To make a donation to OCMS, please use account number: 12043799; sort code: 16-10-15; IBAN: GB84 RBOS 1610 1512 0437 99; swift code: RBOS GB 2L.

God bless you abundantly.