

### Director's Word

Mar 2020

Dear friend,

Thankfully, mission is not ours but God's. Yes, God has a mission, to bring all things in heaven and earth under Christ as Lord. As a result, we follow Christ with joy, celebration and confidence. We live out of a place of rest, of shalom. If mission is 'God's mission', then surely the starting point for our participation is discernment.

In Matthew 16:1-3, the religious rulers challenge Jesus' authority. 'Show us a sign that you are who you say you are'. Jesus' response is forthright and, perhaps, filled with sadness. 'You know how to interpret the weather but you don't know how to interpret the signs of the times.' These leaders were so locked into their religious system that they failed to see what God was doing around them. They did not need further evidence because they had all the evidence they needed around them. Rather, they needed openness and discernment.

Discernment is a process that starts with data collection. The religious leaders of Jesus day failed right there. Discernment, far from being anti-intellectual, begins with gathering all the data relevant to the question, analysing it and seeking to make sense of what you find. This is rarely an individual activity but requires a community of committed explorers. When leaders engage in discernment they cannot accomplish it in isolation from the community being led. Discernment is a participatory process.

The research we do in OCMS is done in service of the church. It is not an end in itself but an attempt to gather data, analyse, and make sense of it. The supervisory process, seminars, and conversations with peers and faculty are all part of a communal process. This is not simply about knowledge generation, important as that is. A PhD must generate knowledge, but in our research, we are called to go beyond knowledge.

Dependent on the Spirit, we are called to gather data, analyse, and make sense of it in order to serve the church as it seeks to discern God's activities in his mission today. Discernment is a spiritual process, from start to finish.

OCMS is called to equip the church for discernment. This being so, we consider our work as *prophetic research and scholarship*. It is not that we alone make sense of or interpret the 'so what' of the work we produce. We certainly do not prescribe how our research and scholarship should shape decision making by others. But as scholars and researchers, our desire is to help the church make sense of our times. That's prophetic.

Thank you for being part of this prophetic community. Pray that we will grow in dependence and discernment through the Spirit of Jesus.

Paul Bendor-Samuel



### News from Our Alumnus

*A meeting with the Rt Revd Saw Maung Doe, Bishop of Hpa'an, Anglican Province of Myanmar*

*January 2020*

Hpa'an is a town in the south east of Myanmar (formerly Burma). The local people are mainly of Karen background. The Diocese straddles a major political boundary with a significant number of parishioners living in Thailand. Because of the troubled local history, many of these people are stateless.

There are 34 priests in Hpa'an Diocese, and a 'parish' can have up to a dozen churches. The church therefore depends on local leadership. St Paul's Bible school trains catechists. The Bishop travels widely, visiting and encouraging the churches.

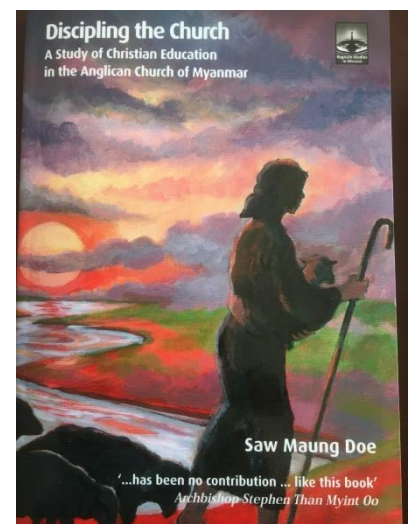
Poverty is widespread. However, the Bishop's wife Joanna Naw, an educationalist by profession, has founded a number of village schools, passing them over into the state system when possible.

Bishop Doe is a graduate of OCMS. Prior to his studies in the UK, he was on the teaching staff of the national seminary for 23 years. In 2015, his thesis 'Discipling the Church' was published by Regnum. Professor Andrew Walls comments: "Not the least of its many merits (is) the way it explores the realities behind ecclesiastical structures at local level ...".

We were privileged to meet Bishop Doe and Joanna. Clearly Bishop and wife share an important ongoing partnership in their care for people in this part of Myanmar. We wish them God's blessing!

*Godfrey & Dot Stone, February 2020*

*(Godfrey and Dot are retired, live locally in Oxford and for some years have made friendship visits to China and SEAsia.)*



### Meet Our New Staff Member

I am part of 1980s' Angolan diaspora displaced by civil war. I have experienced firsthand what is like to be a refugee, a migrant and a foreigner in other peoples' homeland. God has been merciful enough to have opened my heart and curiosity to want to know and follow Him. My journey as a Christian has now been more than thirty years, in which most than half of it were has a missionary. Through that time, I have lived in Portugal, Brazil, US and Britain.

I have also worked extensively in the charity and higher education sectors. Such opportunities have helped me develop organizational skills and an open and creative mind to deal with work in a wide variety of contexts and environments.

In 2013 I decided to pursue further studies from which I graduated with a BA in Social and Political Studies from Ruskin College in Oxford and a Master's in International Relations from Oxford Brookes. The academic environment has contributed to the development of my critical and analytic skills besides understanding the importance of owning my own opinions and ideas.

As I start my journey at OCMS, I hope to contribute actively with my skills and gifts to the local and global community in which the purpose to empower mission based on academic research is a priority. Serving God as part of His will is my upmost desire.

Elizabete Santos

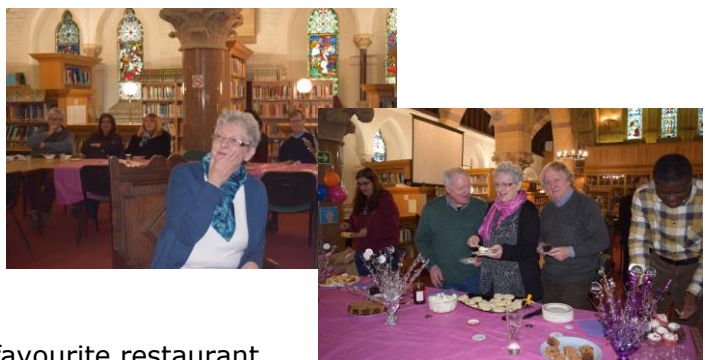


### Goodbye, Blanche!

After 17 years of dedicated service, Blanche Marslin retired from OCMS at the end of February. She was a committed member of the accounts team and had enthusiasm and passion for Regnum Books.

The OCMS female staff took Blanche to her favourite restaurant Mamma Mia for pizza one evening. Then we had a special community lunch on February 26, where people sang praises of Blanche on the open mic. Our executive director, Paul, skyped in as he was in self-isolation having just come back from South Korea. On her last day at work a special afternoon tea was laid on in her honour. Blanche was truly celebrated!!!

Her warmth and affection will be greatly missed by the staff and students.



### Professional Certificate in Integrated Mission Leadership

In our newsletter of December 2018, we told you about the launch of a new programme designed for senior leaders in mission. The programme integrates the four strands of spiritual formation, leadership development, organisational development, and mission. It is delivered through four, one-week intensive residential modules.

A cohort of 22 senior leaders from 10 international mission agencies participated in the first programme. They represented upwards of 15,000 cross-cultural workers. They came from every continent, with a third from Asia, a third from Europe and Africa, and a third from the Americas. Six of the 22 are women leaders. God gave us exceptional faculty, experts in their fields with deep spiritual experience, led by Dr Mee Yan Cheung-Judge as Dean.

Here is a little taste of some of the feedback:

- Rich, fulfilling and incredibly humbling.
- The make-up of the cohort is key to the experience. Appreciated the diversity in the room as well as the similarities of mission and role.
- Stretching, perplexing, aha moments, feeling left behind, frustrated, elated, challenged, moved by the honesty and brokenness, feeling in a safe space.
- I am going to borrow many of the active learning strategies.
- It was deep knowledge, dynamic spirituality, practical skill imparting and absolutely community building – delightful!
- Never felt so connected (to God) even in a course. A special gift from God.

We cannot fully assess the impact of the programme but one comment probably speaks for many, 'I don't know how I will apply all the learning but I know I have been transformed and I am confident that it will transform what I do'.

Cohort 2 starts at the end of March with 19 signed up currently. Please pray that the programme will be able to go ahead, despite the coronavirus situation, and for the funds needed to support the programme.

#### THANKS FOR READING

We hope you've enjoyed our updates. Even though we can only feature a few people and events 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.