

# Step by Step in Missions

by Sam Goh

A friend asked if I knew where I wanted to serve, when he found out I was keen to spend a few months abroad in the mission field next year.

"No particular place, no particular people group," I said.

"That's kind of general, isn't it? You should be specific," he suggested. "Otherwise you may waste the skills with which God has equipped you."

"Well, I think God hasn't laid anything specific on my heart yet, so it's general for now," I replied.

When we went our separate ways, I wondered about his advice.

Two weeks is the maximum that I have ever been on a mission trip out of Singapore, although God gave me the opportunity to study and live in Boston, USA for four years as an undergraduate previously.

And when I returned to Singapore, an uncle in my church – a former missionary and a grey-haired thinker who was also good with his hands – took me on weekend visits to Batam, Indonesia, where a Singaporean missionary was ministering among villagers and islanders.

In subsequent years I joined my church members in mission trips to Akha villages in Thailand, arranged by a missions organisation here.



Playing with Cambodian kids together with church mates from Eternal Life Baptist Church



Sam (3rd from left) visiting a family during a Cambodia Serve Asia trip

Then in 2008, we were in Cambodia under OMF's Serve Asia Programme, and have been back there every year.

These trips taught me many lessons, among them the importance of prayerful dependence on God, and understanding and appreciating people of a different culture from mine. These lessons I applied – and learnt again – as I joined my church members to teach English to people from China on Wednesday nights, and as I started to know them more.

A turning point for me was to take the lead in missions and evangelism for my church in 2008. I had said no initially to my pastor, feeling it was beyond me, in addition to the youth ministry I was involved in and my work commitments.

But I said yes a week later, and again last year and this year.

In retrospect, the responsibilities have often been beyond me, but I learnt more about my limitations as I strived with whatever I had, and saw God's providence.

Being put in charge also meant I had to think about missions in my church and not just for myself. My church of about 200 people has not sent out any missionary in the past decade and is not supporting anyone at the moment.

So it was a blessing to have OMF partner with us in several ways, one of which was a partnership with our church to send teams to Cambodia for three years. OMF staff walked alongside us and asked us provoking questions as we trained for

our mission trips to Cambodia. We still remember them as Serene or Yong Hong, people who knew us by our first names too and who listened to us.

A few of us learnt more about the needs in Asian countries from its monthly prayer meetings in the evenings at the Cluny Road office, a five-minute walk from Botanic Gardens. We spent a weekend with other people also keen on missions through STEPS, where we were guided in exploring how we could be more involved. I also appreciate the time OMF mentors took to talk to each one of us privately.

And this year OMF missionaries spoke to my church in our missions month, including a grandmother who encouraged older church members to join her to minister among the Shan people in Thailand.



At a mentoring session during the STEPS Missions Weekend in October 2009

I see this flurry of activities ultimately as planting seeds for which only God can grow. I can't wait to see the harvest, and I sometimes wonder if it will happen, but I also know growth is in His time.

It's the same for me, I reckon. So here I am, years after those weekend trips to Batam, reminded of that call to avail myself to be sent.

It sounds all too grand for me, really. So I'm taking another small step, by availing myself beyond just two weeks on yearly mission trips.

Sam Goh works in the publishing industry and engages actively with OMF. He can sometimes be seen playing the piano for worship at the monthly OMF Prayer Meetings. OMF

# Special Events

In June and July, OMF had 2 significant events – Dinner & Dialogue with Sending & Supporting Churches on 22 June 2010 and the OMF Building Project Thanksgiving & Dedication Service on 16 July 2010. We are full of praise to God for His provision of all things - good partnerships with churches and the smooth renovation of our premises!

## Dinner & Dialogue

OMF Singapore organises a Dinner & Dialogue (D&D) with the sending and supporting churches of our missionaries regularly. This is part of our membercare initiative to ensure ongoing communication and relationship building with church leaders. Through this platform, various issues facing missionaries are discussed so that both OMF and the church can work together to find optimal ways to best support our missionaries.

At this year's D&D, the discussion topic was on financial provision for missionaries' retirement, also touching on housing and medical insurance when they return from the field to retire in Singapore.

The dinner get-together and discussion was attended by 42 pastors and church leaders from 23 churches.



The D&D allowed time for catching up and Q&A



OMF Singapore's Home Council Member and Treasurer Dr Luke Tan, presenting on current finance practices for missionaries' retirement

## OMF Building Project Thanksgiving & Dedication Service

After one and a half years, renovations for the OMF Building were completed. Improved features include a thematic dining hall and guest rooms, as well as a reception area with a comprehensive display of OMF's history and interactive media on missions.

To give thanks for God's provision, a thanksgiving and dedication service for the building project was held on 16 July 2010. OMF partners, vendors, staff and all who have contributed to the project in one way or another, were invited to the service. OMF



OMF General Director Dr Patrick Fung presented appreciation gifts to contributors of the building project



The OMF office is open Monday – Friday, from 9.00am – 5.30pm and the public is welcome to come with missions enquiries or to purchase books and resources on missions.



# go Asia

A missions newsletter by OMF Singapore

Mobilising Singapore for the Urgent Evangelisation of East Asia's Millions

## The Pearls of Wanhua

by Teo Sin Ee

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. (John 15:1)

What does a woman do if her husband passes away, leaving her with huge debts and two young children? Or if she needs to earn NT\$5000 (S\$200) a day to pay off loansharks? How about when she urgently needs a large sum of money for a critically ill parent?

Faced with such trying circumstances, some Taiwanese women end up in the tea shops\* of Wanhua. As you walk through the streets, Wanhua seems like a typical working-class neighbourhood in Taipei. But venture deeper into the alleys, you will see the tea shops with women sitting outside, waiting for customers. The spiritual darkness is palpable. Longshan Temple, one of the oldest and most active temples in Taiwan, dominates the scene.

Last year, after completing Taiwanese language study, I felt God's leading to work with people on the margins of society — those who are rarely seen, heard, reached or accepted by the local church. So I joined OMF missionary Tera van Twillert's ministry to the women who work in tea shops or who solicit customers on the streets.



Outside a tea shop in Wanhua (faces in this photo are blurred to protect the identities of the women)

Through God's gracious provision, the Pearl Family Garden women's centre was set up 2 years ago in the heart of Wanhua. It is a warm, cosy environment that the women can call "home" and a safe place where they can come for Bible study, English class, craft, lunch fellowship and prayer.

Sowing "The harvest doesn't come overnight but God never forgets where the seed has been planted."

(Henry Breidenthal)

With my co-workers Tera and Huang Jie leading the way, I walked hesitantly down a flight of stairs to the dimly lit basement. We found Lily's room, which was only slightly bigger than a cubicle. I

tried to ignore the musty smell and poor ventilation. We opened the door and found Lily sleeping. She woke up as we entered. Her tired face bore the effects of a recent stroke.

Lily used to sit outside tea shops, waiting for customers before bringing them back to this room. She cannot work after the stroke but she still lives in Wanhua, sharing this tiny room with her 30 year-old son. We visit Lily each week, encouraging her with songs, Bible stories and prayer.

#### Pruning

*"... every branch that does bears fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."*  
(John 15:2)

For 3 years, **Fiona** has faithfully met up with Tera and Huang Jie to read the Bible. She feels convicted by the Holy Spirit to stop working in the tea shop. A year ago, she even applied for social assistance and found a job as a care giver. But she had to quit due to some health issues. Worried that she will not be able to find a suitable job, Fiona has held back from making a new start outside of Wanhua. In the meantime, we keep praying for Fiona and encouraging her to trust God.

#### Bearing fruit

*"You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you."*

(John 15:3)

**A-qiu** used to work in Wanhua to support her drug habit. Now, she makes gospel beads (an evangelism tool) for a living. By the grace of God, A-qiu was baptised just before Easter this year and she boldly testified that God has delivered her from drugs and given her a new life in Christ.



Staff and Volunteers of Pearl Family Garden:  
from the left - Sin Ee (1st), Tera (4th & standing) and Huang Jie (6th)

Praise the Lord!

Unlike A-qiu, many women have been trapped in the tea shops of Wanhua for so long, they have given up hope of any change for the better. Satan has deceived them into thinking that there is no way out. Pray that they and more will come to know our Lord Jesus and put their hope in Him.

#### Remaining in the Vine

*"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."*

(John 15:4)

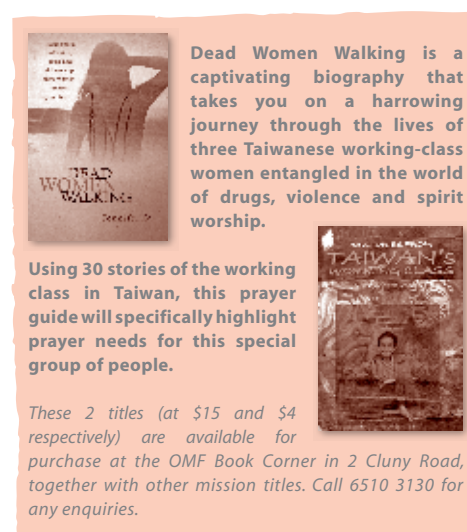
Through my ministry at the Pearl Family Garden, God has challenged me to confront my fears, prejudices and what it means to love and accept someone.

Once, when I was giving out Christian magazines on the street, a lady on the street offered me a piece of fish from her lunch. It was obviously the best part of her lunch but all I could think of was, "Will I catch a disease?" On the surface, it seemed like a valid health concern. But as I probed deeper, I realised that it was because I saw her with the eyes of a Pharisee—"unclean", "sinner", "prostitute".

Pray that I will learn to see the women of Wanhua, not with the eyes of the world, but with God's eyes of love and compassion. These women are just like other women in our communities – mothers who worry about their children, wives who struggle to please their husbands, and daughters who look after ailing parents. They are precious "pearls" in the eyes of our Father.

*\*tea shops are places where men can drink tea or alcohol in the company of women.*  
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\*\*All names have been changed.



Dead Women Walking is a captivating biography that takes you on a harrowing journey through the lives of three Taiwanese working-class women entangled in the world of drugs, violence and spirit worship.

Using 30 stories of the working class in Taiwan, this prayer guide will specifically highlight prayer needs for this special group of people.

These 2 titles (at \$15 and \$4 respectively) are available for purchase at the OMF Book Corner in 2 Cluny Road, together with other mission titles. Call 6510 3130 for any enquiries.

## Can Dry Bones Live Again?

by Yeo Hwee Joo

*At Sayama Psychological Institute, patients between 20s and 50s who have withdrawn from society in various degrees come for counseling. Some have confined themselves to their own rooms whilst others go about their daily routine of work and school but struggle with a fear of people. They all seem to come from good families, have good academic backgrounds but just cannot build intimate relationships. Those who are single find marriage impossible and those who have children struggle with loving them.*

When we ask them to draw a picture of their mothers, the sketches are often expressionless or angry. One actually is a picture of a woman's head, as seen from behind. Fathers are often absent, leaving the care of children entirely to mothers.



Hwee Joo (in the middle) with Mr and Mrs Hattori

Hikikomori (social withdrawal syndrome) is peculiar to Japan where millions of young adults seem to have wiped out their own existence by disappearing from society. Mr. Yuichi Hattori, a psychologist who started his own practice Sayama Psychological Institute since 1993 at his own house at Sayama city, observed that, "children of traditional middle and upper middle class families, whose parents are civil servants, teachers, farmers, corporate executives and business owners, are highly likely to develop hikikomori." ('Social Withdrawal in Japanese Youth: A Case Study of 35 Hikikomori Clients' published in 'Trauma and Dissociation in a Cross-cultural Perspective: Not just a North American phenomenon'.)

Yuichi Hattori's assessment of hikikomori brings light to a baffling social problem plaguing especially young Japanese men. He says, "Hikikomori is a cultural bound syndrome." Japanese culture values group conformity over individual freedom and approves of a dual system of 'tatemae' (outward self) and 'honne' (inner self).

Yuichi found out that patients at Sayama suffered a loss of secure parent-child attachment with histories of emotional

neglect and abuse. In adapting to emotionally dysfunctional families, they seem to have repressed their original identities and feelings hiding behind a false front to please and conform to parents' and societal expectations. So inevitably most of the patients developed a dual personality system of an outer and inner self. When their outer selves can no longer function properly they tend to withdraw from people.

Can these dry bones live again? This question in chapter 37 of the book of Ezekiel is such an apt description of the situation of hikikomori.



The water baptism of one of the two patients mentioned in the article, conducted by a missionary

In 'Trauma and Recovery' by Judith Herman, she wrote that "in situations of terror, people cry for their mothers or for God. When this cry is not answered, the sense of basic trust is shattered. When trust is lost, they feel they belong more to the dead than the living."

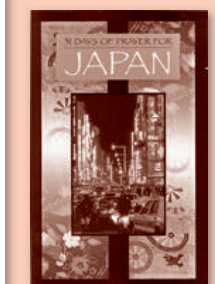
Through our counseling we help hikikomori learn to build trust relationships all over again not only with people but with God also.

Can these dry bones live again? Yes because, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says, "O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.'" Ezekiel 37:12

On 20 June 2010 (Father's Day), we had the joy of witnessing 2 of our patients go through water baptism at the clinic upon their request. Both of them have come to the clinic some 7 years ago and actually live in the same neighborhood, Sayama, where the clinic is. When they no longer need to come for counseling, we rejoice that we can continue to enjoy their fellowship in God's community.

For hikikomori to recover, they obviously need both a relationship with their Creator God as well as a loving community. We covet your prayers for God's love to be poured out through us as we respond to the cries for help beneath the valley of dry bones.

*Hwee Joo is a missionary to Japan since 1990, presently counseling hikikomori at Sayama Psychological Institute and reaching out to disadvantaged and isolated young people in Japan.*  
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31 Days of Prayer for Japan (at \$4) is available for purchase at the OMF Book Corner.

The 31 Days of Prayer for Japan explores an array of issues confronting Japan, such as the high suicide rate, the pursuit of wealth and success, and the challenges of the Japanese church. Using this guide, readers gain insight into how to pray for the Japanese people.

Mongolia is one of the highest countries in the world with Ulaanbaatar at 1350 m above sea level. Known as the Land of the Blue Sky, Mongolia enjoys around 250 sunny days a year with clear cloudless skies. However, winds in the Gobi and steppe areas often develop into devastating dust storms, reaching a velocity of 15-25 metres per seconds.

Moh Leng and I arrived after one such dust storm leaving an atmosphere that was dusty, dry, brown and cold. There was hardly any vegetation to be seen. Quite a shock coming from green and clean Singapore! As we drove to the guest home, Jimmy explained that winter was just over and spring was on its way hence the land was still bare. Another reason for the barren land was the stripping of whatever vegetation there was to feed the Mongolian cashmere goat. Mongolian cashmere is among the softest and best, and most sought after wool in the world. The high altitude and dryness of the atmosphere did cause us to tire easily and my nose bled on quite a number of occasions.

In Mongolia, the cost of living is high and the poor live in gers pitched wherever there is vacant land. These gers are often ill protected against the extreme weather changes, as well as petty theft and break-ins. Alcoholism is prevalent and people on the streets sometimes get accosted. It is also not uncommon to see the intoxicated slumped by the street or staggering along. Pickpockets are also highly skillful hence one has to be wary, especially in crowded places. Amidst these conditions, I was touched by the compassion of Joseph and Janice, the Khoos' children, in giving their food to a very young child and her brother begging on the roadside.

The Khoos are now learning Mongolian in their language school. Mongolian is not an easy language to grasp, requiring much discipline and perseverance. They often practise it while interacting with the shopkeeper, the taxi driver, and the

## Keeping Khoo in Mongolia

by Lindis Szto

*In early May 2010, Lindis Szto and Tan Moh Leng visited the Khoo family in Mongolia, as part of a longer membercare trip to find out how our new missionaries are doing. Jimmy and Jennifer, with their children Joseph and Janice, have been in Mongolia since August 2009. They are spending their first 2 years learning the Mongolian language before going into ministry. Lindis gives us a glimpse into Mongolia and the Khoos' life there.*



Lindis & Moh Leng visiting a ger

Mongolian church they attend. Jimmy and Jennifer each have a Mongolian language helper they meet to practise their Mongolian language. In addition, the Khoos are also home schooling their children.

In terms of ministry, OMF is one of the 15 Christian organisations under the umbrella of the Joint Christian Services (JCS) in Mongolia. The Khoos' language learning is arranged through JCS and their placement in subsequent ministries will be decided after discussions between JCS, OMF and themselves. As such, new missionaries like the Khoos are encouraged to attach themselves to various ministries available in the provinces during their summer breaks. They will then work with an established team, practise their language and discern where God is leading them.



Joseph & Janice are settling down & "hanging out" well in Mongolia

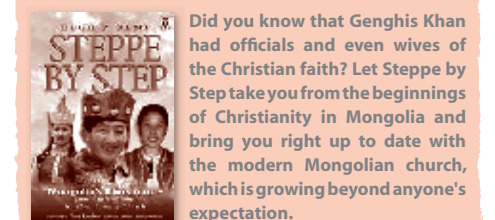
Although we were with the Khoos for just 3 days, it was quite a tense experience for me due to the climate and culture change. How much more stressful it must be for the Khoos as they make the long-term transition from Singapore to Mongolia! Yet, they are keeping cool and grounded in a harsh environment. What lies behind the Khoos' decision to leave the comforts and security of Singapore? I believe 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 is the underlying factor. "For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again."

#### A note from the Khoos:

*"We were very much encouraged by Lindis and Moh Leng's visit albeit short. Coming over to visit us certainly helps them to understand our situation better and to be able to pray more specifically."*

*The most helpful thing was when they went with us to the Mongolia OMF TCK (Third Culture Kid) Coordinator, Emma Thompson, to especially discuss about Joseph's next educational step (what kind of curriculum and material to use). It was during that discussion, that we kind of saw the light on how to move forward from there.*

*We actually wish they can stay a day longer so that we can show them around more places."*  
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Steppe by Step (at \$20) is available for purchase at the OMF Book Corner.

Did you know that Genghis Khan had officials and even wives of the Christian faith? Let Steppe by Step take you from the beginnings of Christianity in Mongolia and bring you right up to date with the modern Mongolian church, which is growing beyond anyone's expectation.