

prayer alert

PASTORING AND PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO YOUTH

AUTUMN 2021



YOUTH AND
SOCIAL MEDIA
KENYA

WALK THE TALK
MYANMAR

THE ASIAN
MILLENNIAL
INDIA

STAYING RELEVANT
INDONESIA



OVERSEAS COUNCIL AUSTRALIA



STOP PRESS. WHAT WILL OCA BE UP TO IN 2021?

A glance back at 2020

As you will read on page 5 we had a strong year for donations at around \$1.9 mil. You may recall from our dinners and Christmas appeal letter that we focussed on many new projects to help our partner colleges shift to online education. It was a major new experience for most of them to begin online classes.

How did the colleges go?

All the colleges had major disruptions to their teaching programs in 2020. Most of the mid-sized or larger colleges shifted to online education. After months of 'clunky zoom' they are moving towards more adequate ways to provide online education. Most will operate both methods from now on. They will offer on-campus and online education.

2021 presents a once-in-a-generation moment

The last time something this big happened was when the Soviet Union fell and millions of new people came to faith in Christ. Alongside this, many new theological colleges and training programs opened up in dozens of countries.

This year presents the opportunity for hundreds of colleges to double, triple or quadruple the number of students they train!

OCA is building on our contribution last year and working with our partners to understand what the needs are to help this forward momentum grow. We'll be rolling out a range of new projects which we hope will vastly increase the capacity of our partner Bible colleges as they improve online education options.

PLEASE PRAY

Thank you Heavenly Father that our partner colleges have the opportunity to dramatically increase their enrolments through online learning. Please give the college leaders wisdom as they develop relevant, high quality online programs that will impact their context. We ask that you would bless their initiatives so that many more leaders can be trained to competently serve the church around the world. Amen..

"2021 is a once in a generation time for training leaders. What would have taken 15 to 20 years to transition to online education has in fact taken only 15 to 20 weeks because of the lockdowns."

REV. DR. STUART BROOKING

WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS & COMMENTS!

E office@overseascouncil.com.au

P (02) 9635 4409

Mail to PO Box 437, Parramatta NSW 2124

W www.overseascouncil.com.au

Executive Director Rev Dr Stuart Brooking

Editor Lisa Ferguson

Design Rosie Wheeler, Cocoon Creative

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COVER: An ABTS student teaches young people outside Beirut.

LEFT: Faculty Members at Lake Malawi Anglican University attend training for online learning.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION TO BECOME A MEMBER OF OVERSEAS COUNCIL AUSTRALIA, THE COMPANY.

Every few years we like to let our supporters know a bit about our company structure and invite interested friends to join as members of the company. OCA is a company limited by guarantee and reporting to the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission and the ATO.

We have about 85 members in Overseas Council Australia. Their duties are slight but perform an important part of our governance structure. Members receive our annual reports and attend our Annual General Meeting which alternates each year between Sydney and Melbourne. We hope to introduce a zoom connection option as well to help more people attend. At the AGM I give an 'insiders' update' on some aspect of the work, answer any questions about our operations and our future, and we elect our Board members.

The Board oversees both Overseas Council Australia and our ancillary fund, Overseas Council Fund. We're also working to set up a new tax-deductible fund, the Overseas Council Australia Building Fund, which the whole Board or a Committee will oversee.

This year our AGM will be held in Sydney (and hopefully via zoom) on Thursday 6th May at 1pm. (In the past it has been in November, but we have just changed our reporting year to end in December.)

If you have an interest to become a member, please contact me and I'll let you know more details.

E: office@overseascouncil.com.au

P: (02) 9635 4409



ALISON COOKE FINISHING UP, SYDNEY DIRECTOR APPOINTMENT PENDING

At the time of writing, we were in the process of interviewing candidates to take up this role.

Over the past 18 months, **Alison Cooke** has been transitioning out of the role as Sydney Director, as she focuses on leading her own marketing and media company. Ali will keep connected with OCA in various roles, not least because we've contracted her company to provide people for our communications activity. Ali has made a great contribution to the work of OCA over more than a decade and has helped us shape our messaging as well as building many great relationships amongst our donors.

Rev Dr Stuart Brooking, Executive Director



ABOVE: Alison Cooke.

LEFT: OCA members at the 2020 AGM.

PLEASE PRAY

Lord, we thank you for OCA's members and their willingness to serve and support the organisation. We pray that all those who are interested will take up the invitation to become members. We are also grateful for Alison Cooke and her dedicated service to OCA over more than a decade. Please bless her as she transitions out of this role and into a new season. We ask that the new Sydney Director would be a great blessing to OCA and that you prepare them for this dynamic role. Amen

WE GIVE THANKS

*“God is renowned in Judah; in Israel his name is great.
...You are radiant with light, more majestic than mountains
rich with game.”*

PSALM 76: 1 & 4



GOD'S RADIANCE OUTSHINES EVERYTHING

Asaph, the writer of Psalm 76 gives us this intriguing comparison – God's splendour surpasses mountains rich with game. Wealth looks different in different times. Apparently, the ancient Israelite couldn't help but be thrilled at the idea of mountains covered in wild animals. They represented incredible wealth for the taking. The correspondence of the value of the herds and the splendour that would accrue to the one who could exploit them is clear. And yet there is a more radiant one. Even today the Glorious One relegates our stockpiles of property, shares, and even cryptocurrency to a dim lower place. I love it that our donors know this reality and invest in the work of training leaders in the developing world because God's radiance outshines everything else.

Rev Dr Stuart Brooking, Executive Director



05 Students at Lanka Bible College & Seminary in Sri Lanka participating in live broadcast classes using equipment provided by OCA and reSource Leadership International.

PLEASE PRAY

Our radiant God, draw us to yourself. Fill our hearts with your glory so we may live and work and give from that place of joy. We thank you for your faithful servants who have given this past year to OCA and many other ministries. Praise your glorious name. Amen.

Full Year Results

We recently transitioned to make the Calendar Year our reporting year so from now on will focus on Calendar Year results.

Our overall income continued well throughout CY 2020 and we had a total income of \$1.9mil.

Faculty Study Grants – we raised over \$260,000 towards faculty members upgrading their degrees in Asia and Africa. Most of these were doing doctoral studies.

Other funds were raised (and recorded in our Projects and Programs section below) for the Masters programs we support in PNG, Pakistan and Egypt. Many of these graduates are faculty members as well. In total 35 students were involved in these programs in 2020.

We also supported a group of 5 faculty at Hanoi Bible College who are all doing a modular Doctor of Ministry program in Thailand. This group was jointly funded by our friends, OC Canada and ScholarLeaders, a US based ministry.

Sponsorships – we raised \$420,000 in 2020 to directly assist 240 students amongst 21 of our partner Bible colleges.

Projects and Programs – We raised \$970,000 in 2020 towards a range of projects in our focus areas of the Pacific, Asia, Middle East and Africa.

In 2020 several projects and programs were put on hold by our partner Bible colleges due to restrictions imposed in their countries. Our Shoulder to Shoulder Strategy was a major development which allowed us to support the immediate new needs of IT for online learning, and in a few places to assist with emergency relief packages for the nearby communities.





IS THE WESTERN VIEW OF YOUTH

Rev Dr Stuart Brooking, Executive Director of Overseas Council Australia

We tend to think about culture as static. As soon as I say that it's obvious that no culture is static. In our own culture the ephemeral matters such as fashion indicate change. More deeply we see the mindset of people in different generations as they relate to things such as social mores, finances and technology.

Yet, we still tend to think of culture as static. This is particularly true of Australians. When we encounter other cultures through travel, we tend to make sense of them by observing the slice of history as it is when we are there. Curiously, this can even be while we observe the various historical epochs of the place we are visiting!

Our Prayer Alert is focussing on youth. It is easy to assume that word has a similar meaning around the world - after all, we hear about the statistics of youth

I remember being struck by a number of things in my early visits to India. One was the way that the young students (in their twenties) spoke with endearment about their professors. No Australian youth that I knew could use the honouring language they did. I also remember hearing about the revolution that was created by the IT boom in cities like Bengaluru (Bangalore). Because of education some young people could get jobs in call centres and computer firms. Their pay levels meant they could own a motor bike, when their parents could only afford a push bike. They could mix with members of the opposite sex in the work context and sometimes afterwards. No village youth could imagine such a thing. Those working in cities could connect with a slice of the international scene on a daily basis when their peers could not think beyond the radius of their family,

RELEVANT OVERSEAS?

caste and town.

It is tempting when we see the adoption of technology and shifts in lifestyle and hear talk of 'global youth culture' to think that there is a drift to a single 'youth culture'. As you read this edition's articles, you'll get a sense of much more nuance than those familiar ideas suggest.

While it is possible to count how many people there are between 15 and 30, it is a very different thing to ask what the lived reality is for those people. Their cultures are in flux, the influences are multiple. The western view of 'youth' is just one of those influences, and sometimes only a very minor one.

I expect you'll again get a vision for why OCA keeps helping leaders to be trained in each context.

PLEASE PRAY

God most high, please empower all of OCA's partner colleges to work strategically and effectively with young people in their context. Please help your servants to understand the needs of youth in their nations and to reach out with your love and grace. Lord, encourage all of us to have a heart to mentor the next generation, to love them and point them towards our saviour, Jesus. Amen.

NEW VIDEO RESOURCE

Mission in the 21st Century

[Is there a better way?]

Reflections from Bishop Stephen Hale, OCA Victoria Director, Australia

In what seems like another lifetime, back in February 2020 I had the privilege of participating in the filming of the 'Is There a Better Way' video series. We had been in Cairo for a meeting of the OCA facilitated Africa Mile Deep Network and hopped across to Beirut for the filming. Meeting at the very impressive Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS), Stuart Brooking had assembled three thought leaders in mission:

- Nancy Njagi, who is on staff with OCA and based in Nairobi, Kenya.
- Elie Haddad, Principal of ABTS in Beirut, Lebanon.
- Varughese John, from South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) in Bangalore, India.

We proceeded to film three sessions which became the basis for OCA's 3 part video series - 'Mission in the 21st Century: Is there a better way?'

As an observer I had four distinct impressions.

1. These leaders from what we sometimes call 'the developing world' have very developed frameworks for doing theological education. In fact, what I heard and saw impressed upon me that they have much to teach us in the so called 'West'. They are actively grappling with contextualisation and seeking to teach and train in a more fully integrated way.

2. While they don't necessarily have the same level of resource (e.g. books, especially in their own language) they are very innovative in embracing the digital world to overcome these obstacles.
3. I came to realise the value of partnerships that OCA can enable and facilitate. Our partnership with these leaders, and the colleges they represent, means that we can assist where it is most needed without in any way seeking to dominate or control. In this way we bless them and they, in turn, bless us.
4. Finally, we tend to think the COVID-19 crisis has been overwhelming (and it has been), but competent leaders like our panelists can teach us much about perseverance. They minister and do great work in contexts where they have lived through many crises and yet have remained faithful and effective. For example, in Lebanon there was a financial and constitutional crisis raging while we were in the country. Not long after our visit, they were also impacted by the huge explosion in Beirut that wreaked havoc. Additionally, they are dealing with the incredible influx of Syrian refugees into a tiny country. Despite all this the work went on. Their ministry continued. Would we endure under the same pressure? For me, that was a very

PLEASE PRAY

Gracious God, thank you for OCA's Bible college partners around the world and that they are so effective in their contexts. We are grateful for competent leaders who persevere in your good work despite societal crises. Please empower them with your strength and wisdom to continue to overcome challenges. Thank you for the opportunity to think differently about mission in the 21st Century. We pray that this resource would be a great encouragement to OCA's supporters. Amen.

timely insight! St Paul, in 2 Corinthians 11:16-33 has an amazing list of disasters and dangers that he had encountered. What a great challenge for us today in our context.

Gather your Bible study or small group

and be inspired to think differently about mission in the 21st Century.

Watch the 3 videos over 3 weeks and delve into these topics:

- Is there a better way to do mission?
- Is there a better way to train leaders?
- Is there a better way to partner financially?

OCA will provide you with a facilitators' pack including discussion notes and questions to prompt deep reflection from your group.

For more information, see the flyer accompanying this prayer alert or get in contact with us.

CALL: (02) 9635 4409

EMAIL: lisa@overseascouncil.com.au



SOCIAL MEDIA AND GLOBAL YOUTH CULTURE

Captian Frank Kariuki, Youth Pastor at St. Paul's Church Mukuyuini, Kenya

Frank Kariuki is a commissioned Church Army Officer and has a deep conviction to preach the word of God among young people. As a young minister engaged in dynamic ministry for the Lord, he is currently undergoing mentorship from the Centre for Urban Mission (CUM) in Nairobi. Frank is a youth pastor at St. Paul's Church Mukuyuini, which is situated within the Nairobi metropolitan area. The church operates within a place called Ruiru, which is to the North East of Nairobi, an area that is highly urbanised. His ministry reaches out to about 200 young people, most of them teenagers.

Global youth culture is largely catalysed by social media networks. Youth are perceived as the part of society that is most likely to engage in the process of cultural borrowing. This sometimes disrupts and informs the local practices, perceptions and understanding of the gospel among young people. The effects range from modes of dressing, aesthetics and ideologies, through to language and music (the use of gospel hip-hop is an avenue for evangelising the youth). As a result, there are ways in which the youth culture becomes global. Like many other organisations and institutions, our church has been hit by the wave of globalisation. In particular, social media has opened up our church to other churches online, enabling the ministry team to improve the worship and harness the power of online evangelism.

Challenges we face

In this information era a lot of knowledge is relayed via social media. Some of it is verifiable while other bits of information are not. Unfortunately, this has given rise to false reports and misleading philosophies. We call it fake news. If this is placed in the context

of the gospel then dire hazards are detected within the youth ministry. The rise of fake news has brought about misinformation and misinterpretation of the gospel among young people. This is the crisis of the digital age!

Another challenge we face is organising youth meeting times around the tight teaching schedules of local schools. This means students often do not have time to come to gatherings and finding a shared time to meet is very difficult except on Sundays. To that effect, our youth group simply cannot find a reasonable meeting time when everybody is free. No matter what time we set, someone will be left out.

Of course, the ideal picture would be to have fellowship on Sunday; however, as our little group belongs to a larger local church congregation, we are required to join in for the entirety of the worship service. Although this brings its own benefits, not being able to take time during the service to minister directly to the youth brings its own challenges. For instance, the sermons from the pulpit are geared toward an older audience and the youth can struggle

to relate. Furthermore, we have noticed that some church leaders continually experience language barriers when interacting with young people - not based on ethnic differences but due to the age gap. The language of the old is not the language of the young!

A lack of necessary specialised training in youth ministry is one of the hurdles we face. The church itself is adequately equipped to provide theological training and discipleship for teenagers. Many workshops are organised at the Diocesan level but, unfortunately, not much change is experienced in youth ministry. Maybe more appropriate training is required to equip leaders who work with young people?

Despite the challenges above, we still have success stories to share. We have managed to engage in both community outreach and in-house ministry by providing teenagers with opportunities to gather and have fun. We offer a range of activities; from running outdoor games, board game groups, trivia competitions and video game contests to cycling, school ministry and cooking lessons. All of these outreach and mentoring opportunities have been effective and fruitful.

PLEASE PRAY

Lord we thank you for how technology has opened up the world for young people in Kenya. We pray for continued wisdom for Frank and his team on how to utilise the power of social media positively for their youth ministry. May they engage the younger generation and equip them with your truth. We ask you, Father, for your grace and favour on the team as they share the gospel with the youth of Ruiru. Please open hearts to your saving power. Amen.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

Young people playing board games during mentorship; Frank taking youth for a cycling session; Frank with youth after a Christmas play.

HELPING YOUTH DEFEND THEIR FAITH

(First published in Student Union Magazine)

Niki Hodson, Director of Children's Ministry Studies & Lecturer at George Whitefield College, South Africa

In a pluralistic world of religious tolerance that often challenges Christians, it can be difficult for young people to know how to respond when their faith is questioned. How can we encourage and support our youth to respond well when this happens?

First, we need to encourage them to look at Scripture, which provides instruction on what to do when challenged about their faith. 1 Peter 3:15 tells Christians to always be ready for when someone asks about *"the hope that you have"*. Luke 12:12 instructs that Christians should not worry in times of being challenged, because the Spirit will *"teach you what to say"*. And Colossians 4:5-6 exhorts Christians to be sure to *"make the most of every opportunity"* and to be ready to give the *"right response"* at any time.

Collectively, these verses tell us to:

- Expect challenges to our faith and don't shy away from them.
- Be prepared for challenges to our faith.
- Trust for the Spirit's help when faced with challenges to our faith.

Once young people have grasped these truths and are able to trust in God's help, there is a practical method that we recommend they follow involving four steps:

1. Consider the motive of the challenger.

A bully saying nasty things about one's beliefs is likely motivated by dislike or emotional turmoil. The response here should be more about treating one's enemy compassionately with patience, or removing

oneself from the situation rather than engaging in a theological conversation. But, if the challenge appears to be genuine, then they can move onto the next step in the process.

2. Listen to and understand the other person's viewpoint first.

One does not need to respond immediately. In most cases, the challenge is coming from someone who is seen on a regular basis, and there will be opportunities to respond in the future. This step is important because, when we listen to someone without judgement, they will begin to trust us. Additionally, when a response is given, the other person will be more willing to listen.

3. Research points raised by the challenger.

If the challenger believes in reincarnation; annihilation; a rewards-based idea of heaven or any other religious or atheistic ideology, we encourage the young person to look up what this means or discuss the concept with Christian family members. Alternatively, we are happy to do this research with them. This will help them understand the main differences that Christianity offers to the challenger's world view, and will help them identify points of commonality or contrast with which to continue the discussion.

4. Give the gospel.

This is the final step because the ultimate goal of responding to a challenge is NOT actually to defend the faith but rather to share the story of Jesus. By being a good listener in step two, one will hopefully have won

a hearing with the challenger. Then, based on the research of step three, a gospel opportunity can take place by using the points of commonality or contrast as an avenue to introduce Jesus. It is, after all, the gospel story that has the power to save: *"For we are not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation, for everyone who believes"* - Romans 1:16.

Students on campus at George Whitefield College.



PLEASE PRAY

Lord God, our Saviour, we thank you for the love you have for the youth of all nations. We pray that as they read and study your gospel they can face challenges to their faith confidently and graciously. May your Spirit go before each young person who receives Niki's teaching, softening the hearts of those around them to receive your word. Amen.



WALK THE TALK

Dr Mark Naw Yaw Yet, Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Myanmar

When Myanmar opened its doors to the world in the 1990s, suddenly the nation was under the influence of global cultures, particularly other Asian countries. Now we hear western pop songs in every corner of the country and we can order western food such as pizza, hamburgers, KFC and doughnuts at the click of our fingers. Young people are attracted to western brands such as Nike and Guess, which they can easily purchase, even in small villages. At the same time, same sex attraction has become popular among young people here.

In the past, church leaders would preach the same old message again and again, using content inherited from western missionary teachers. Believers were satisfied with these antiquated sermons. But today, people can listen to popular preachers online, thus creating a sense of dissatisfaction with their own pastor's teaching. Consequently, new churches have emerged and older generations feel that Satan is leading young people away from the church. In reality, their preaching does not meet the needs of young people today.

Therefore, when we train this young generation for the church we need to work harder and wiser. This means that we ought to know the heartfelt needs of our young people. Teachers need to prepare well to instruct and train young people effectively. The time has come to differentiate between cheap education and quality education. Since MEGST trains our students with quality (and therefore costly) education, we have many challenges. MEGST needs to maintain a higher standard, and this means paying a higher price in this challenging age.

Our integrity and character become the core of our teaching. Mere intellectual exercise does not work in Myanmar. We need to walk the talk. Our curriculum must reflect this dynamic and needs to be updated to help people experience the power of God in the midst of challenges. At the same time, we need to stand for justice in our society. This means that we must integrate our teaching and life. Training young people in Myanmar should not be seen as a purely religious activity, but it must be for the transformation of the nation; for building the nation.

Myanmar was an isolated country for more than 70 years and its education was purely spoon-fed instruction. Students were not allowed to ask questions in the class, or even outside the class! Critical thinking was not encouraged. Consequently, training young people for a better future with quality education is critically important today.

Our country is no longer isolated from the world and young people today receive a far better education than previous generations. To provide for this shift, MEGST has a desire to train leaders who are attuned to the needs of our people. It is crucial for us to be united in this vision and, academically, to regularly revise our curriculum to meet the needs of the local church.

Taking all this into account, our teachers and professors need to be trained well and receive suitable financial support. In the past, Bible school teachers were not paid properly, and thus not regarded as valuable. Now we are aiming higher. We are passionate about working hard to provide high quality, relevant Christian education so that our nation will be transformed.

PLEASE PRAY

Everlasting God, thank you for the young people of Myanmar - for their inquisitive hearts and minds. We ask, Holy Spirit, that you would continue to work in the nation, bringing many more people into relationship with Jesus. Please help MEGST to continually develop quality education that will raise up effective Christian leaders in Myanmar. Give them guidance to adapt and refresh their curriculum to stay relevant and glorify your name. Amen.

BELOW FROM TOP

A MEGST Graduate leads an outing for Tedim Church Youth; The MEGST football team with Principal, Dr CK Hrang Tiam



THE ASIAN MILLENNIAL

Joshua George, Trainee in the Department of Pastoral Theology and Counselling at South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, India

Of the 2 billion millennials in the world today Asia is home to around 60% of them. These are 24 – 39 year olds who fit right into what psychologists term the 'young adult' category in their psycho-social development. The resemblance to their western counterparts, however, varies across different countries within the continent and depends on the unique sociological, political, technological and economic changes that have taken place in these countries since the latter half of the previous century.

In China they are known as the post-80's generation, the first of the one-child policy adopted by the nation in 1980. In India, however, they have accepted the western category of millennials or Gen Y. This was evident in 2019 when the finance minister of India partially blamed the economic slowdown of the automobile industry on the "mindset of the millennials", who prefer not to commit to owning cars and opt instead for Ubers. The millennials responded collectively in the way they know best – on social media and using cheeky hashtags! Today, there are 400 million millennials in India alone, but studies show that millennial identity is primarily an urban phenomenon.

The Asian millennials, unlike their western counterparts, have come from an economically poor past. Through recent economic setbacks in the western world, they have primarily seen growth.

This has made them more optimistic about the state of their economy and caused them to seek the traditional vertical success markers of personal stature and wealth accumulation. Like their western cousins, Asian millennials also engage in social issues, but only if it includes some personal benefit.

They are digital natives and don't consider the virtual world as separate from the real. They live a parallel existence. Much like their western counterparts, they are also increasingly disassociating themselves from traditional religion. But rather than rejecting it, Asian millennials are seeking newer paths to spirituality that are more practical and inclusive. In an honour/shame culture that strongly values community consensus, Asian millennials constantly find themselves navigating the tension of appreciating and challenging their social and religious values and traditions.

The engagement with traditional forms of religion and the global, innovative, ever-curious and socio-technologically parallel mindset of the Asian millennial is a complex one and seriously worth researching. In my doctoral research, I hope to explore the attitude of the urban Indian millennial towards the traditional church practice of preaching. I believe this is a small start towards understanding and serving both millennials and other generations in the Asian context.



PLEASE PRAY

Gracious God, we give thanks to you for the spiritual hunger and inquisitiveness of millennials in Asia. We pray that the church in the region will be empowered to engage with millennials and share the gospel in innovative ways. We pray for Joshua, that you would bless his studies at SAIACS and give him insight into reaching out to this generation. Amen.



ABOVE FROM TOP

Joshua George (right) preaching in the SAIACS chapel; Indian Millennials are digital natives.

Joshua George is a faculty member at SAIACS, India. He has been supported through his masters degree by OCA and now his PhD focussing on preaching in the Indian context.

17 Josh will be our international speaker in March/April 2022.

REACHING YOUTH IN PAKISTAN

Rev. Shahbaz Boota, Principal of Zarephath Bible Seminary, Pakistan

Did you know that by age Pakistan is considered to be one of the youngest countries in the world? With approximately 64% of the population aged between 15 and 33, our youth demographic is impossible to ignore. When we talk about the church in Pakistan we must consider that over 50% of attendees are youth. Clearly, it is critically necessary and also exciting for us to identify the best ways to pastor and preach the gospel.

I have seen a great hunger and thirst in the youth of Pakistan for serving the Lord. We have over 65 students in our different programs who are under the age of 40 with a great burden to share the gospel. After training at Zarephath Bible Seminary (ZBS), some students plan to follow their strong calling to serve in the villages and slums where there are no pastors, or where pastors are reluctant to go.

Some of the significant steps we have taken for training young pastors:

1. Every year we run a Youth Conference to bless and equip our young people. We have used this opportunity to survey the youth to understand what kind of pastors they want to see in their churches. The results have helped us to bring significant change to our curriculum and improve our training for new pastors and evangelists.
2. By the grace of God, we have trained our faculty to address the needs of young people in Pakistan. With 8 of our faculty members under the age of 40, they are effective mentors and teachers for the next generation. Our young faculty has a special connection to youth, not only with our own students, but with young people from across the church of Pakistan.

3. We have trained over 1,500 young people at our youth conferences. Coming from schools, colleges and universities, we equip them to become witnesses for Christ in their own institutions. They are empowered to engage with their Muslim fellows with an ability to answer questions that commonly arise.
4. Our young students at ZBS are wonderful examples for the youth in the wider body of Christ. We regularly send our students to churches to speak and encourage young people to consider ministry training.

The main challenge we notice in churches is that some existing pastors are not trained sufficiently in ministering to the needs of youth. Consequently, young people can feel that the church has nothing to offer them. So, we have taken the following actions to improve the situation long-term:

1. We have started a special youth ministry course where future pastors learn about the specific needs and challenges of reaching youth.
2. ZBS has engaged help from a para-church ministry which is renowned for their training in youth ministry leadership. We invite them to help our faculty from time to time.
3. By incorporating more practical training opportunities through the use of games and activities, we teach our students how they can make links with young people from the sports ground to the church.
4. We are continually praying for and working towards updating our seminary by revising our curriculum and listening to what the young people

like. For instance, we are keen to get new musical instruments and learn how to use more media in ministry.

5. For the last five years, we have run special career counselling sessions for our young pastors. These courses cover skills in management and writing; computer and IT; as well as English and Urdu courses to assist them in connecting effectively with youth.

While it is true that young people in Pakistan have adopted many trends which are not always in accordance with a biblical point of view, we have found that the vast majority of youth coming to Christ are helpful for the church overall. I have enjoyed seeing that they have extensive knowledge about setting up and using social media. Many young congregants have helped their pastors and church leaders set up Facebook pages and various media channels. They have also been able to help the church to organise online prayer meetings and services.

PLEASE PRAY

Loving Father, we offer thanks and praise for the strong hunger of the students at ZBS to serve you and your church. Lord we pray for their ongoing effectiveness in ministry, particularly those who are planning to serve in remote villages and slums. We ask that you enable the staff and faculty at ZBS to remain relevant and engaging as they train the next generation of Christian leaders for Pakistan. Amen.



IMAGE Women studying at ZBS.

RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP IS KEY - AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

Canon Craig Robert, CEO of Youthworks, Australia

How do we reach the next generation with the great news of the gospel and orient them for life in Christ?

From the slums of Africa and the subcontinent to the urban jungles of western and Asian cities, youth are continuing to grasp for their place in the world – as are our churches. In the West, churches are on the wane while in Africa they are overflowing. Across the world there are big churches and small churches; churches blessed with infrastructure and churches that meet under a tree; churches that are in COVID-19 lock down and churches that are free to gather in person.

What I am seeing from my vantage point as a long-term supporter of OCA, CEO of Youthworks and Chair of the GAFCON Youth & Children's Ministry Network, is that both Scripture and history attest to the most effective way to raise up the next generation of mature, life-long, disciple-making followers of Jesus.

It's a commitment to relational discipleship. Just like the adults of Israel were commanded to "tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD" (Ps 78:4, also Deut 6:7), Jesus reached out to children (Mark 10:13-14) and Paul invested in Timothy (2 Tim 1:13, 2:2). Where older and more mature believers

invest in those coming behind them, we see churches grow. We should therefore not be surprised that the truths of Scripture transcend time, culture and place.

This means we are not constrained by resources, infrastructure, or even a global pandemic in effectively preaching the gospel to youth. It can start in any church with just one believer who is confident in the Scriptures and power of the gospel to transform lives.

As Christians, we want our youth to not just be citizens of the world but citizens of the kingdom of heaven. We want our churches to be strong, flourishing communities of Christ-honouring faith and Jesus-focussed mission.

That is why OCA's work in resourcing theological colleges across the emerging world is so critical. In those places where theological colleges train their students in the scriptures, they grow in both their knowledge and love of God. This forms future church leaders for ministries shaped around relational discipleship – and that is key to reaching the young people of our world with the great news of the gospel and orienting them for life in Christ.

Youthworks' commitment to Bible-based theological education that drives effective youth and children's ministries led them to partner with OCA to produce the world's first Mongolian commentary on Revelation that was launched in November 2020.

PLEASE PRAY

God Almighty, thank you for mature believers who have a heart to partner with youth, to share the Gospel and mentor them so they may also know its transformative power. We pray for the continuation of the resourcing of theological colleges across the globe so that future church leaders can grow in their understanding of relational discipleship, with the hope of reaching youth in every context. Amen.

STAYING RELEVANT TO REACH YOUNG PEOPLE IN INDONESIA

Rev. Dr. Petrus Setiadarma, Tyrannus Bible Seminary Alumni and Senior Pastor in Semarang, Indonesia.

I serve in a Pentecostal church named Gereja Isa Almasih (Church of Jesus Christ) in Semarang, Indonesia. The church is based on a strong evangelical theological understanding.

We have a youth ministry that serves 300 teenagers aged 14-18, and around 150 young people aged 19-30. During this pandemic period they have worshipped together online via live streaming every Saturday at 7:15 WIB for 45 minutes.

Our church also runs a small group program that enables our young people to be encouraged in their faith by gathering together. We call these Care Groups (CGs). Our CG leaders are trained to deepen their theological understanding through Bible study. Our aim is to equip and help them so that they are ready to answer questions raised by their group members. Each CG leader runs their own small group and encourages discussion using material based on Saturday's church sermon. The sermon material is arranged with a balance between strong faith, a healthy body and mature character.

One of the challenges we face is to retain the loyalty of the younger generation, particularly to participate in our local online church services. These days they have access to many options for worship services and Bible teaching online. The problem is that not all the teaching presented online is in accordance with what the Bible instructs nor based on the principles of evangelical belief. This is why our Care Groups are so

important for discipleship. Many matters of faith and issues of life can be discussed in a caring environment.

However, we are also grateful for some of these virtual resources because at least they provide spiritual food for our young people to find.

Our ministry aims to provide biblical motivation for our young people to remain diligent and disciplined in their studies or work, as well as in entrepreneurial activities and business. Speakers are balanced between internal and external presenters according to their respective competences.

Finally, our church has small groups and churches that meet in 22 locations, including urban and village sites. A crucial challenge in the villages, especially for women, is how to maintain faith amid the temptation to switch belief systems in order to have a family. The main challenges for young people in the city are issues of materialism, hedonism, promiscuity, and the influence of social media, with concerns these issues will plunge them into unholy living.

I always encourage the youth ministry team to listen carefully, to learn and understand the unique needs and struggles of our youth. We emphasise prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ, asking the Holy Spirit to empower our leaders and congregations.

PLEASE PRAY

Lord, we pray for the fruitful ministry of the Care Groups in Semarang. Thank you that a large number of young people are regularly meeting to have deep discussions around your word and how to apply it in their life. We ask you, Holy Spirit, to continue to empower the youth ministry team to understand and meet the needs of the young people they are serving. Help your children to stay strong in their faith and not sway to temptation. Amen.



STUDENT STORY

DANIELA VALLEJO TORO

STUDYING AT FUNDACIÓN UNIVERSITARIA SEMINARIO BÍBLICO DE COLOMBIA IN MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA

Daniela is studying a BTh at Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia in Medellín, Colombia. She feels called to train in theology so she can serve the church, and the community in general, in counselling for mental health, abuse and family breakdown. Daniela has been studying online since COVID-19 lockdowns came into effect.

Daniela writes, *“Every subject I have been studying has profoundly impacted my spiritual progress, as each subject allows me to know the character of God, His purposes with my life and all of humanity.”*

As well as studying, Daniela is serving at the Ciudad Refugio Foundation where she helps women who are seeking to be restored from their addictions and to have a life in the Lord which is pleasing to Him and good for themselves and their family. Daniela says that God has enabled her to use the practical teachings from FUSBC with these women.

Daniela is currently working on her final degree project. She writes, *“That makes me quite excited. I am anxious to be able to do a research work that contributes to the church and Colombia as a society, although for this moment the exact topic has not yet been defined. My focus on any chosen topic will be to show how theology contributes to the construction of peace in Colombia and provides a fundamental base for reconciliation in the midst of our nation. All of the above is thanks to God's mercy accompanying me.”*

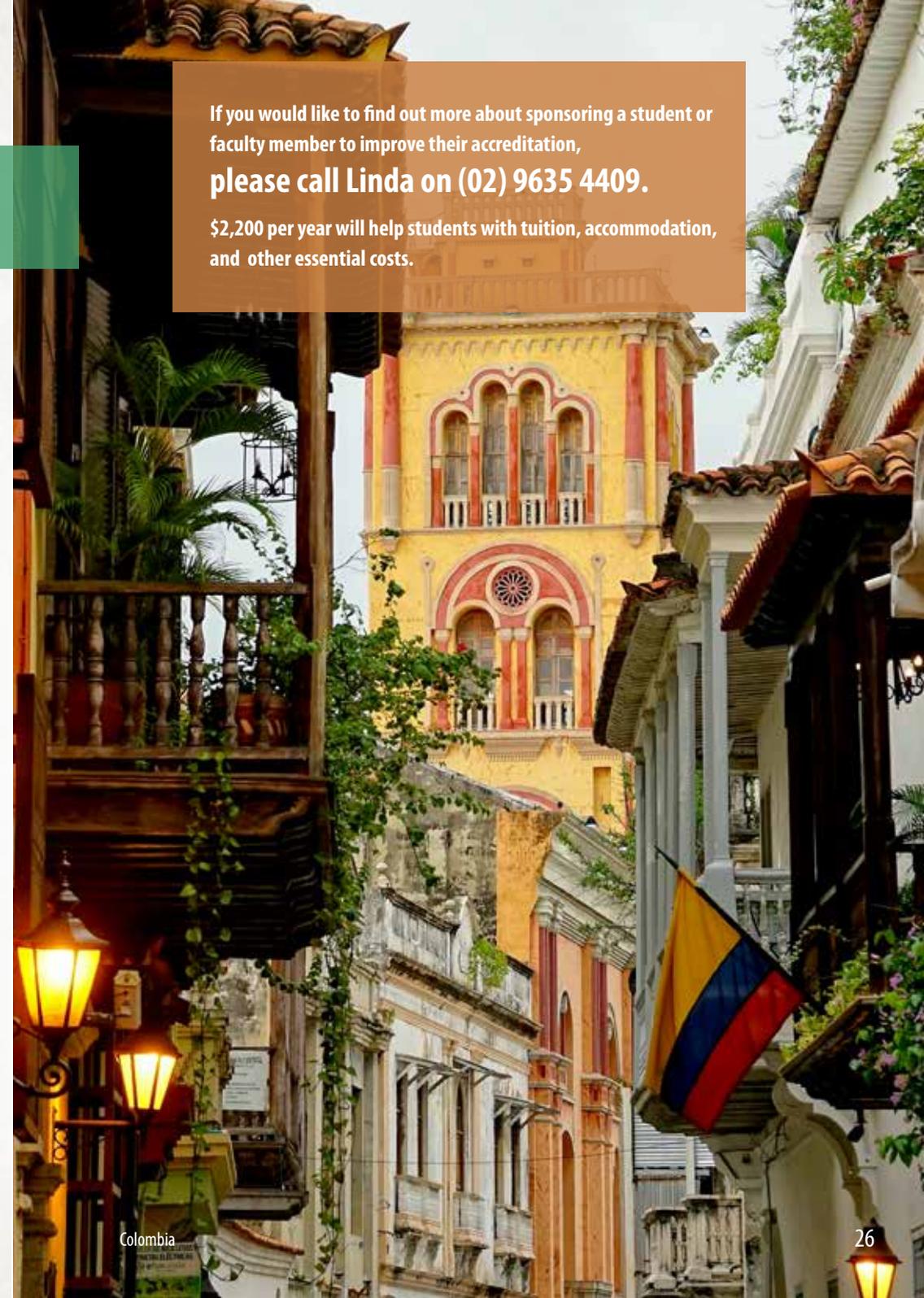


PLEASE PRAY

Thank you God that Daniela is studying at FUSBC and that you are preparing her to minister to her community. Please bless her work at the Ciudad Refugio Foundation and help her to share your saving power and love with the women she meets in the program. Lord, help Daniela to complete her final degree project and let her research be significant in assisting her community and the wider church in Colombia. Amen.

If you would like to find out more about sponsoring a student or faculty member to improve their accreditation, please call Linda on (02) 9635 4409.

\$2,200 per year will help students with tuition, accommodation, and other essential costs.





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P (02) 9635 4409

E office@overseascouncil.com.au

A PO Box 437, Parramatta, NSW, 2124

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