

Director's Word

December 2017

Dear Friends of OCMS,
Warm Advent greetings from Oxford!

I love the fact that the church calendar begins with the season of Advent. As we await a new year we are actually waiting for a new era, the fullness of the Kingdom where Jesus is Lord of everyone and everything. Until that moment, 'when the times have reached their fulfilment' (Eph 1:9), we have been given work to do. What privilege! So what news of the work of OCMS?

Our new mission statement calls us:

To advance study, education and research in God's mission and to convene practitioners, scholars and leaders in creative and prophetic dialogue.

We do this in at least four ways:

- equipping individuals, leaders, churches and institutions, prioritising those on the cutting edge of God's transforming mission
- responding to issues identified by the church with timely, strategic and rigorous research
- fostering spaces where scholarship and practice interface for mutual learning
- ensuring the fruit of scholarship is accessible to reflective mission practitioners

Let me say a bit more about the fourth area.

Not many of us believe in economic trickle-down, the idea that as money is generated by the rich it simply trickles down to the rest of the population. The same can be said of the pursuit of academic knowledge. For learning to impact society it needs to be shared in ways that people can make sense of. In mission research and scholarship, it is vital we create spaces where 'practitioners, scholars and leaders engage in creative and prophetic dialogue'.

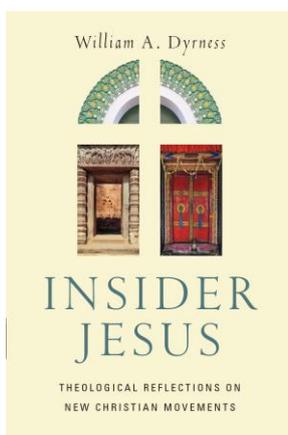
One way we create that space is through convening consultations and workshops. In July OCMS collaborated with INFEMIT to run a consultation in Ghana on 'the Refugee Crisis, a shared condition.'

(<http://infemit.org/press-release-2017-stott-bedikao-forum/>) Selected papers will be published in the April 2018 edition of our journal, Transformation. Below, you can read a report of a recent workshop with Dr Bill Dyrness exploring how we can discern the work of God in cultures and how this relates to our ministry as carriers of the gospel. We are currently working on a number of events for 2018 including consultations on Pentecostal responses to secularism in Europe and an event that will bring together theologians and advocates exploring theological resources to equip the church to deal with contexts of corruption. We are also in conversation with a number of Korean Christian leaders to consider how OCMS can support them as they seek to understand and respond to the increasingly secular context they find themselves in.

Thank you for being part of the OCMS community
and for your support in prayer and giving.

Paul Bendor-Samuel

OCMS CONSULTATION ON INSIDER JESUS



On November 16th OCMS had the privilege of hosting William A. Dyrness, Professor Emeritus of Theology and Culture, Fuller Theological Seminary, for a half-day consultation on new Christian

movements titled *Insider Jesus* echoing the title of Bill's new book published by InterVarsity Press (2016). We had about 30 participants from CMS, Interserve, Radcliffe College, RZIM-OCCA, and of course from the OCMS community.

Following a variation of the World Café format, the participants were seated around tables. The main presentation was followed by three case studies, which were discussed around tables and reported back to the larger group.

In the main presentation, Bill had three sections each trying to answer the questions:

- (a) What is God doing in the world?
- (b) What about Culture?

(c) How does religion fit into all this?

Bill argues that God is already working in all human cultures and the critical task of missions is to recognize and respond to God's work of restoring, recreating and renewing revealed both in Scripture and God's actions in culture. We are called to participate in God's new order of creation and the gospel is a window into this project which Jesus came to announce and establish. For Bill, culture is always a human project – what humans make of God's good creation. Based on Isaiah 28, Bill argues that God celebrates and takes credit for this project of human culture. Bill pointed out that while God is present in human culture, at the same time the gospel is never native in any specific context. It is always good news.



Finally, religion expresses the heart and soul of all cultures in the human attempt to reach out to God. Religion is at the heart of belonging to a community and can be evaluated in light of the gospel: the Christ-event. **Religion, including Christianity does not save, only God saves.**

GRADUATE PROFILE: Fanen Ade, Nigeria

Research topic: 'Human Agency and Capability: A bottom-up perspective from Northern Central Nigeria'

This is how Fanen describes his ministry: "I support four women/widows groups in different rural communities and churches in Nigeria. It is my strong conviction that demonstrating as much as proclaiming Christ is a good way to reveal the love and care of our Lord and Saviour. My work with these women is yielding positive results. We now have over 165 women in the groups. I have reached over 40 households with micro-credit financial support as well as stipends of cash to the poorest of the poor (sick/bedridden and disabled community members). On completion of my training with OCMS, I intend to carry on with this ministry of reaching out to these rural communities by using micro credit as an entry point to demonstrating Christ. The women and widows we work with have earned the respect, dignity, soft power and leadership in their communities by engaging in productive ventures that yield profits rather than simply waiting for handouts."



NEW STUDENT PROFILE: Samuel Amir Bazmjou, Iran



Rev Samuel Amir Bazmjou was born in Iran in a staunch Muslim Shiite family who were much respected in their neighbourhood. As a baby he nearly lost his life in a fatal car accident. When he later heard about this, it made him want to seek the God who he believes had saved him. At the age of 19 he travelled to Germany for higher education where he gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

Sensing the call to serve God full time, Amir took a radical decision and left his studies. He started by serving in a number of Iranian churches in Germany. In 2000 he travelled to England and studied theology for two years at a Bible college, when he got married. After finishing their studies, Amir and his wife served at an Iranian church in Newcastle and also the Iranian Christian Fellowship in London. The few years after that saw them serving in churches in Germany and the UK. Amir was finally ordained as a church minister in 2015.

In the past 19 years, Amir has served in various capacities. He has supervised the ministry among new believers; has led the worship teams, evangelistic campaigns; led house groups; and for many years he was involved in prison ministry. He regularly teaches and preaches on Christian satellite TV programmes, mainly with Sat7 Pars, and he also helped in the translation of a Bible commentary and writes articles for a Christian magazine.

Research topic: 'To what extent can the concepts of God in Christianity and Shiite Islam be used to evaluate democracy in Iran?'

When talking about his research at OCMS, he wrote, "I have also a passion for a deep study of God's nature, in Islam, but especially in Christianity, and the implications of divine understanding and the impact this has on the community/society."

ACADEMIC PROGRESS: QAA...

On 27 September 2017, The Quality Assurance Agency of the UK conducted their annual monitoring review of the OCMS/MU PhD Programme. In their subsequent report the reviewers noted OCMS met the QAA UK expectations as to the maintenance of the academic standards of awards, the quality of student learning opportunities, the quality of information about learning opportunities and the enhancement of student learning opportunities. We are thrilled with endorsement of the programme which is not only a vote of confidence in what we do but is also a pre-requisite in support of scholars who need to apply for full time study visas in the UK.

The development of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has become central to the development of the research programme. Online training modules were made available to the new cohort at the 2017 October Research Induction School. This allows students to access research skill training sessions and courses designed to facilitate their progress in the initial stage of their progression to the PhD. The VLE is now being developed to provide online resource for students in every stage of progression towards their research degree.

The development of research competency is being further enhanced through the application of the Research Development Plan/Planner (RDP). The RDP allows OCMS students, working with their assigned OCMS House Tutor, to identify and develop their research skills, abilities, and competences so that they not only complete sound PhD research but leave with academic skills they can use for life.

THANKS FOR READING

We hope you've enjoyed our updates. Even though we can only feature a few people and a few aspects of life at OCMS 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.

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