

Stand up for the poor

By Sarah Chan

South Africa is a country made up of many different cultural groups where people follow different beliefs and religions. During my training in South Africa, I visited a few towns and was exposed to many new situations, including people living in poverty.

The "cursed" girl

We went to one town where the poor lived in houses made out of wood, cardboard and plastic. I talked to a girl in her early 20s and asked her about her wish – what she hoped for from life. She said she once wanted to be a Mathematics teacher, but her parents died when she was only 8, and so she had to give up her dreams. After she told us this, she just stood there looking down in silence with tears in her eyes.

She also had a virus infection in her toes, but had been told by a witchdoctor that she is cursed. In fact, the infection was treatable, but she had believed what she had been told. I prayed that God would open her eyes because only through Him could she see His love and truth.

The evicted people

I went on a city tour that gave a good overview of South Africa's history and about its government. The pastor from our host church stopped us outside an empty estate and explained to us that the government evicted the poorer people that were living there because they may disgrace the country. The government promised to bring them back later, but the buildings are still empty. Across the street from the empty estate, I could see some nicely built accommodations.

The church's leaders saw the needs of the neighbours and decided to build flats and rent them out at a low rate to those who are homeless and needy. Their action challenged me further on being a real Christian in the community that I am living in!

Sarah Chan is a member of Kowloon Tong Church of The C.C. & M.A. Yan Yau Church and she was a participant of Missions Discipleship Training in South Africa in 2018.



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Board Game × Missions

Do board games and missions crossover? This creative idea came from Alpha Au who served refugees in Greece in 2016, and was inspired to create something to do just that.

Alpha started serving with OM in the Hong Kong office in 2017. Before joining OM in Hong Kong, he was a student of a UK seminary and at that time the Syrian refugee crisis was serious. In 2016, he decided to spend the summer with OM in Greece to serve the refugees.

While visiting a refugee camp, Alpha met a Kurdish family who had fled from Syria to Greece. The family, consisting of more than 20 members, was forced to leave their home because ISIS attacks came close to where they lived. Their plan was to flee to Bulgaria via Turkey.

"When they arrived in Turkey, they tried to enter Bulgaria six times, but never succeeded. At some point they were repatriated by the police. One time they were lost in the jungle and no one was around, they had to call the police for help. After going through all these risky journeys, they still could not find a place to settle. Finally they took a boat to Greece," shared Alpha.

This family's story helped Alpha understand some of the hopelessness and helplessness that refugees face. He knows that this is only one example of how millions of refugees have risked their lives and he was sad to see many families were torn apart. "I want to put what I heard about the plight of refugees in a board game. I hope, by playing this game, people can put themselves into the shoes of a refugee," explained Alpha.

The ongoing refugee crisis has forced more than 5 million Syrians to leave their homes and most of them remain displaced. Through the Borderlines Refugee Board Game, players can experience the challenges that refugees face and better understand their needs and keep them in their prayers.

Borderlines Refugee Board Game

Price: Euro 20 / USD 25 / HKD200
(Euro 17 / USD 22 / HKD170 for five sets or more)

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Borderlines - how to play



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Interacting with the community through arts

With a passion for arts since he was young, Kenneth enjoys painting, playing music and photography. He is keen to use arts to initiate conversation with people, as a way to reach out to the community.

Arts mission opens his eyes

As an artist, Kenneth never thought of how his art pieces could relate to his faith until he joined an arts mission in Turkey in 2013. During the trip, he was inspired by an artist. "He told me that arts can reach the deepest part of people's soul and by appreciating the arts, it is possible for two strangers to become friends in just five minutes. When I was in Turkey, I found out that different types of art - like painting, music, dance, drama and magic - can be creative ways to deliver Christian messages. You can arouse people's interest even though they might be reluctant to hear the Gospel," said Kenneth.

When serving with other artists during the trip, Kenneth learned to seek God's will before creating an art piece. "If I want to share my faith through my work, the idea must come from God. It's just like preparing a sermon, you have to ask God what message the audience needs," shared Kenneth.

What if Jesus were to be born in Hong Kong?

Kenneth has a strong desire to use his talents to reach out to the communities in Hong Kong. He thinks that art pieces are not only exhibits shown in galleries, they should be something that can be shared with everyone.

Every year at Christmas, the colourful decorations in shopping malls in Hong Kong seem to tell people that it is a time of shopping, feasts and parties. To Kenneth, the decorations are

a big contrast to the messy environment where Jesus was born - a dirty and dark manger. This has made him rethink the real meaning of Christmas. One day, he was walking around in Sham Shui Po, one of the poorest districts in Hong Kong and a question came to mind: What would happen if Jesus were to be born in Hong Kong? Probably Mary and Joseph would have to stay at a cheap motel with one of those "purely room renting" signs in an old building in Sham Shui Po.

With this idea in mind, he created the painting titled "The Adoration of Magi in Hong Kong". The painting depicts the scene where the shepherds and the magi visited baby Jesus. The magi, shepherds, Jesus' parents, Joseph and Mary, all looking at this little miracle of life. It is a small quiet moment, not something grand like the Christmas decorations in the mall.

"Instead of a time for holiday indulgence, I want people to think about what it was like when Jesus was born. I showed the painting around Sham Shui Po to talk to people," he said.

The painting attracted the attention of some residents in the district. Some become aware that Jesus's parents could not find a place for his birth. Many people in the district live in sub-divided flats which can only fit a bed. When a passer-by saw the "purely room renting" sign in the painting, he could understand Jesus's situation. "I can only rent a small room like Jesus. I can't afford to buy my own house," the passer-by sighed.

Kenneth loves to initiate conversations with people through his works. By showing his painting in Sham Shui Po, he could hear the voice of the poor. "I enjoy talking to people. Conversations help me know people better and I can see how God has created people who are unique," he concluded.

Serving Marginalised Women -
Companion Ministry

Have a heart of compassion for those in the dark

By **Christina** (Companion Ministry Volunteer)

After I learnt of the Companion Ministry, God stirred my heart for these marginalised women who are in bondage to sin. He encouraged me through a sermon to step out in simple faith to serve in a new and unexpected area, to do something good with a simple heart.

During a recent visitation outing, no doors were opened to us. It was a hot day, and my polo shirt was soaked from climbing up and down the stairs, knocking on doors. The Holy Spirit brought to mind that Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching, preaching and healing because he had compassion on the people who were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:35-36). It energized my steps because I was following after Jesus to seek out the lost.

When I share with my family about the Companion Ministry, they often do not see the value of it. To the eyes of the world, the ministry may not seem to be very fruitful. I was reminded again through that conversation that we are to have a heart of compassion for those languishing in the dark, lost without the Shepherd, and to go and bring Christ's light. We are to be the hands, feet, eyes, ears, and mouths of Jesus.

Sometimes we hear heart-breaking stories. There was a lady, who when we first met her, had only entered the trade a short time ago. This was the only way she could help to repay the relatives of her ex-husband for his gambling debt. She felt comforted that we did not look down on her, and for the half hour or more we spent with her and listened. She was truly happy with our visit. Though we could not help her out of her predicament, at least we could offer her comfort. Doing something good can be as simple as listening with acceptance and compassion.

For the dark corners of the world, for the soul that has never been comforted, may we respond with: "Here I am," by going, praying, and giving.



Serving Ethnic Minorities

Come closer with one more step

During one summer weekend, Pakistani ladies and children came to a church to attend their Fun Fun Fair.

These families were no strangers to the church, as their children came last academic year for tutoring lessons. At first they felt a bit uneasy because there was a big cross at the church - a Christian symbol that is not accepted by most Muslims.

For this gathering, the Pakistani ladies not only brought their kids with them, but also felt pretty comfortable dining with us. It appeared they had gotten used to the church environment.

During the Fun Fun Fair, the ladies tried to learn aromatherapy hand massages while their kids had fun twisting balloons into shapes.

Mother and daughter come closer

During the massage session, we had been encouraging a young Pakistani girl to do the massage for her mother. The mum was quite reluctant at first because in their culture, respect and esteem increase with age. Given there was a distinct distance between mother and daughter, any so called close contact, expressed in massage, was barely found in daily lives.

With gentle encouragement, the mother was willing to be served by her daughter. The daughter followed the instructor's guidance with a hope to reduce her mummy's hand muscle tension, resulting from the ever-increasing housework. The massage was a unique experience to draw the mother and daughter a bit closer together.

More trust with families

We wanted to take a group photo, which was not uncommon, when the gathering ended. The Pakistani ladies, in general, seldom took pictures with others due to their conservative culture. But this time they agreed after we shared that it was for our memories sake.

We believe that through fun times like this we can build more trust with the families, growing our relationships one step closer!

