

## Long-awaited news

By Gladys (Companion Ministry Outreach Worker)

Many people's livings have been affected by COVID-19, including women working in brothels. But with increased uncertainty has also come more opportunities for Jesus to work in people's lives.

Recently, we contacted Wen-wen\*, a brothel worker, who we've known for about five years. Through the Companion Ministry, which cares for women in brothels, carrying true light to these women who live in darkness, we brought Wen-wen some masks, as a result of the pandemic. The first time we met Wen-wen, she was alone in the brothel, watching pornographic films. She told us that she could not find any other job that could provide her with such good salary and opportunities to have sex with men.

Throughout our relationship with Wen-wen, we chatted with her about anything and have maintained good relations. She said she got along with people in mahjong houses and seemed to have no friends elsewhere. She also told us that she could not communicate with her own children. After meeting her for some time, we found that she was addicted to love and sex relationships, as well as gambling. We prayed and shared hymns with her and also accompanied her when she suffered from the sudden passing of her mother.

However, she would become hesitant every time we asked her to consider leaving the sex industry and finding another job. She would say, "I know I should do that," but would never take further action.

Last year, during our visit, she told us at the very moment of opening the door, "I have just renewed the rental contract for the brothel for another year." Every time since then, we would urge her not to renew the contract again.

Because of the Hong Kong protests and COVID-19, Wen-wen's income has dropped significantly. During our most recent visit, she told us that she would leave the brothel when the contract ends. However, due to COVID-19, many employees' retraining courses suitable for her were suspended. She could only find some part-time work to make a living. The economic slowdown makes it more challenging for Wen-wen to find a stable job.



### Prayer:

- Pray that God gives Wen-wen a determined mind to leave the sex industry, renders her a way out during COVID-19 and provides what she needs.
- Pray that our workers can continue to care for Wen-wen's physical, psychological and spiritual needs, and walk with her to experience God's forgiveness and healing. May God transform her life.

## Sharing what we have during this pandemic

As COVID-19 spread around the world, people were advised to stay home and keep social distance, which can make connecting with other people more difficult. Carmen, an OM in Hong Kong worker who serves ethnic minorities, had to suspend activities for the ministry. But she's found new ways to serve the Pakistanis in Hong Kong.

When the outbreak became severe, most stores were sold out of masks due to high demand. While Hong Kong people were trying every way to get some masks, Carmen wanted to see if the Pakistani families she worked with needed any help.

Carmen was able to get in touch with a Pakistani girl called Sadia\*. Sadia told her that she needed some masks, and fortunately, Carmen got some from local churches. She asked Sadia to meet her to give her the masks.

### A simple act of giving

Sadia, a Muslim, came to the office with her college friend who is a Pakistani Christian. When Carmen gave out the masks, Sadia's Christian friend asked, "How did you get the masks?"



Carmen told the girls about the church's donation and that the church had wanted "to share God's love with people who can't get any masks to protect themselves."

Carmen went on to ask the girl how she felt about being a Christian in her culture. This led to a conversation about their church lives. Carmen also asked the Christian girl how she got along with Muslims.

As they talked, Sadia looked interested. She asked Carmen, "You are a Chinese. Why do you go to church?" Carmen then shared how she came to faith and how Jesus has changed her life.

"Let's hang out later on. Maybe we can visit your church," Sadia replied.

Carmen didn't expect that a simple act of giving would create the chance to share her faith with Sadia. Though there are restrictions during this pandemic, God has opened doors for Carmen and other workers like her to share what the hope and security they have in Jesus and talk to people who have not heard about God.

\*Name changed



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## 1st Biannual Report 2020



Being present with the needy



### OUR PURPOSE

We want to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached.

### How to support us?

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Natural and manmade disasters happen everywhere. In a world full of suffering, how can missions meet the real needs of people?

Jesus incarnates Himself in man, enters into a world of suffering and lives with us. When we feel sad, hopeless and distressed, He is the Emmanuel to comfort us. God's mission is a mission to be present with the needy. How can we, living as Jesus' disciples, follow His footprints to serve our neighbours in different parts of the world?

## Serving the needy after the disaster

In 2011, when the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, Frances Ku, an OM in Hong Kong worker serving in Japan, and her husband Takahiro Ami were residing at Sendai. At that time, Frances was expecting her first baby. The earthquake had seriously devastated Sendai, and her son was born three days after the disaster. She was really struggling when her sending church in Hong Kong asked her to come back home. In the end, Frances decided to stay in Sendai.

"I didn't want to leave in this difficult time," said Frances. "I wanted to serve the Japanese who were in deep sorrows."

Six months after the disaster, Frances and her husband started to visit the temporary housing area where the victims lived. Most residents there were reluctant to receive any visitors, as they wanted to maintain their dignity. However, Frances's newborn Renma provided a turning point.

Frances recalled, "I brought Renma with me. When the residents realised that the little boy was born in Sendai after the earthquake, they welcomed us immediately. God opened the doors of their houses...as well as their hearts. At that time, we didn't know what to do, but we found that just a hug was enough to comfort their hearts and show our care."

The couple has served in the temporary housing area for seven years. They become friends with the residents and study the Bible together. Some residents also decided to follow Jesus. One of these residents was an auntie, exhausted from taking care of her bedridden mother. Frances tried to stay in touch with the woman and kept praying for her. The auntie's mother

passed away, and the funeral was held in Buddhist rites. At the graveyard, Frances comforted the auntie and prayed for her.

Frances added, "After the funeral, the auntie asked us to remove the idols at her home and decided to go to church. Gospel proclamation is necessary, but we also spent more time to be present with her, to understand her needs and to share her grievance as well as burden."

By sharing her experiences in serving the disaster-stricken area, Frances acknowledged, "We need love and patience to be present with those in need. We also pray for trust in God because we are not serving by ourselves, but by God Himself."



## Tough times bring people together

Since last year, reading the news about the protests in Hong Kong had struck the hearts of Manna and Kinya, who are serving in Sendai, Japan. The couple felt worried and heartbroken as the conflicts in their hometown became increasingly intense.

Not physically in Hong Kong, the couple had no idea of what they could do. Their friends in Japan also heard about the conflicts in Hong Kong and initiated some conversations on this. Seeing that many Japanese had the heart to understand Hong Kong's situation, the couple thought they could make use of this opportunity to share more with their neighbours. They set up a booth near the train station, hoping to tell people about the circumstances leading to the conflicts in Hong Kong.

A passerby approached Manna and Kinya's booth and proposed an idea: "I can ask my friend to organise a gathering to talk about the situation in Hong Kong. May I invite you to share with us?" Though this came a bit unexpectedly, Manna was happy to accept the invitation.

It was a Japanese lady who offered to organise the gathering, and she invited some neighbours in her community to join. To help participants get a whole picture of Hong Kong, she made a detailed presentation introducing Hong Kong's history, political system and economy.

Manna shared his thoughts about the conflicts in Hong Kong. After, Manna and Kinya were able to share their feelings and exchange views with the Japanese.

Manna and Kinya were happy to meet a few Japanese who care about Hong Kong's future. Though the couple moved to Japan to serve the local people there, they've found that the Japanese can also serve them. Manna and Kinya were brought together with new friends by something they are concerned about. Mission journeys can be more interactive when both believers and non-believers walk alongside each other.



## Playing a unique role

Matt and Mandy, OM workers serving at Kanazawa, Japan, could not help being anxious when the conflicts in Hong Kong started last year. Except praying for Hong Kong, they had no idea how to support their hometown. However, as two of the few Hongkongers in Kanazawa, the couple's friends there were happy to listen to how they felt about the political and social situations.

"At first, we thought we couldn't do anything because we were away from Hong Kong," said Matt. "However, our identity is unique. Not only we are one of the few couples from Hong Kong there, but we are also one of the few Christians too. We can explain to the Japanese about the situation in Hong Kong in more detail."

## You can offer love and relief to those affected by COVID-19

OM has teams in over 110 countries sharing God's love to those who need it most. During this global pandemic, OM teams want to continue serving those who are lost and afraid.

This coronavirus has taken thousands of lives and impacted every country in the world. People who have not yet experienced the hope and promise of the gospel are isolated in their homes, without community or care, and often without income. Refugees and the income insecure are more alone than ever as camps and shelters fight to stay open amidst dwindling resources and panic over communal living.

As God's workers, we are committed to honouring the precautions and mandates delivered by prevailing government and healthcare officials during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we also know we have an opportunity and responsibility to deliver peace amidst the chaos.

Do you want to support our workers in this unsettling time? If so, please consider donating to OM's COVID-19 Relief Fund.

