

# TST BULLETIN

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## ☞ **Sunil Britto reports** ☛

### **What you say next will change your world – Marshall Rosenberg**

Over the last few months, I have been reflecting over how we relate to ourselves and others. And I realised how much of the story I live is based on my language and what I keep saying to myself. And that ranges from judgmental blaming to language that can be life giving and compassionate. All this led me to study and practice NonViolent Communication. I found in it, skills of how to relate compassionately. But it can be so hard to consciously practice this. Judging and blaming have almost become second nature to us.



Workwise, I was in Nairobi last month to tie up the necessary arrangements for the fourth Orientation Program, engage with resource persons and visit St. Joseph's Centre, the venue of the program. I was extremely pleased with how things came together largely due to the support of the leadership of East Africa District, the Karen community and the Cluster Support Team.

Then this month, Ruvan and I hit the road to visit the three newly born communities in Meghalaya, India. During our stay with them, we listened to their stories and also did some sessions on NonViolent Communication with them. The Brothers appreciated the insights and mentioned that such skills will go a long way to encourage meaningful relating when tensions or differences emerge.

### **NAIROBI ORIENTATION PROGRAM (UBUNTU)**

The TST and African PLT have decided to add *Ubuntu* in the name of the program. Ubuntu is a Nguni Bantu word meaning 'I am because we are', and it is often used in a deeper sense to mean 'the universal bond that connects all humanity'. We felt the Ubuntu spirit is at the centre of the spirituality underpinning the Orientation Program.

The preparation for the upcoming program is well underway and we hope to offer the participants a rich experience of personal growth and brotherhood.

The OP covers the essential elements of our OWITF Spirituality and Community Living through workshops and group processes, with time for personal prayer and journaling. The resource persons – a good blend of women and men – are mostly from Kenya and include Agnes Mativo, An-

drew Okeyo, Ann Itotia, Diarmuid O'Murchu, Jacinta Ondeng, Philip Pinto, Phyllis Muraya and Tony Hempenstall. The recently formed Cluster Support Team from East Africa District will present some sessions. David Gibson, Donal Kirk and I will form the OP Team.

Twenty-four Brothers from Africa, India, Oceania and Europe have signed up for the program and I look forward to welcoming each of them to Nairobi in September.

### **TST VISITS TO THE INDIAN CLUSTER**

Ruvan and I stayed with all the three new communities (at Patharlyndan, Umtyrkhang and Erpakon) in May. The communities are into the fourth month together and have worked at making their community house into a home. All three communities have prioritised spiritual and community practices that will support them to live in the spirit of OWITF. Centering prayer and Weekly check-ins were two of the common features in all the communities. On the ministry front, the mission communities are currently engaged in a Listening survey with the people of their village.

The Brothers cook all meals in turns and keep their simple houses clean and beautiful. Meals are modest and mostly 'vegetarian'. The spate of lightning in the area has resulted in fridges blowing off in both the mission communities. Electricity and mobile connectivity are intermittent. In spite of the absence of some basic amenities, we found the Brothers very cheerful and dynamic. They join the people every day for evening prayers in their homes and are present for all social events in the area. On the 5th of May, they had an Edmund Rice prayer service followed by various activities for children and youth.



Attaining fluency in the Khasi language is a challenge they have accepted. The local Khasi dialect is significantly different from the 'pure' Khasi they had learnt during the Language course. So, though the local folk comprehend when the brothers speak in 'pure' Khasi, it is a challenge for the Brothers to understand the people when they speak in the local dialect.

The highlight of the visits for me was the meeting in Umtyrkhang with the village leaders (known locally as Dorbar Shnong). The Brothers explained to the village leaders how the brothers intended to engage with the local community. The village leaders asked the brothers to clarify what a Listening survey meant and were pleased that the Brothers were looking at long term solutions to real issues the people were facing. A wonderful example of Community Engagement at work!

Our Cluster visit concluded with a three-day meeting earlier this week with the Hub community, Mayfereen Ryntathiang (Project Coordinator) and the Indian PLT.

May the Brothers through their fidelity and hardship always realise the nearness of the Spirit.

☞ **Ruvan Rebello reports** ☞

**When your life is filled with the desire to see the holiness in everyday life, something magical happens: ordinary life becomes extraordinary, and the very process of life begins to nourish your soul! - Rabbi Harold Kushner**

For the last two weeks, Sunil and I have been journeying with our brothers of the Indian Cluster. It has been an enriching experience living and sharing lives with them. In those few days, I saw that something new was already taking birth, relationships were beginning to mature, and the presence of each other was felt and understood. I felt that in sharing lives with the people of the village, the brothers had set out on a journey to explore new expression of brotherhood.

It has been 4 years since the 2014 Nairobi Chapter. When I look back, not everything has worked according to plan. What gives me energy to keep going is the hope for mutual transformation through our shared lives with our brothers in the community and with the people of God at the margins. I see it happening slowly through our brothers in their presence at the grassroots.

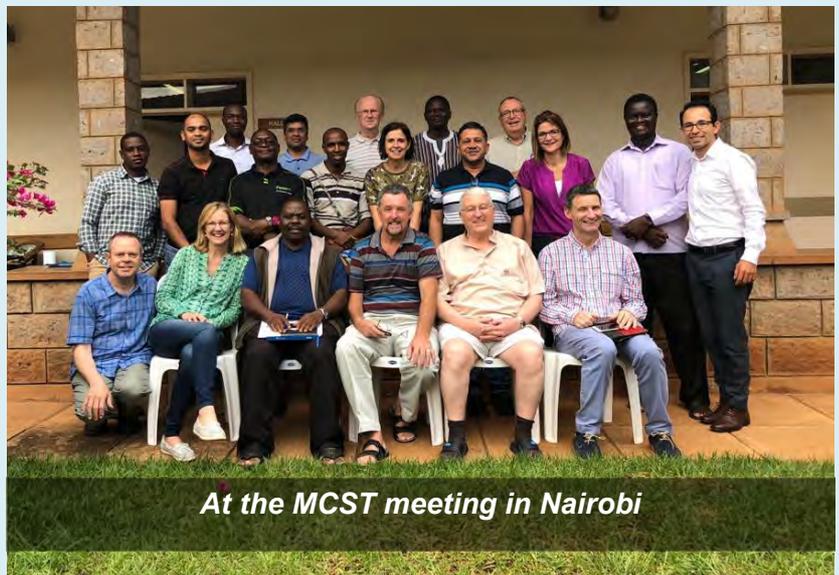
### **MCST MEETING IN NAIROBI**

I attended the 5 day (16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> April) Mission Capacity Support Team (MCST) meeting in Nairobi. Br. Edwin D'souza from Indian Cluster was my companion on the journey. Among the fifteen MCST participants there were also representatives from Edmund Rice Foundation Australia (ERFA) and Edmund Rice development (ERD). Ian and Lorna from Caplor Horizons facilitated this meeting.

The objective of the gathering was to review and identify ways to strengthen and effectively deliver the local capacity plans from each area for 2018, and to learn new skills, to deepen relationships, increase our motivation and support each other. The MCST during the last eighteen months has bonded in our common goal of making Edmund Rice Mission in Development Projects more impactful and accountable. We have become more honest about our abilities and challenges and more supportive of each other.

I'm glad that we have taken this step towards forming MCST to identify the capacity gap in our development projects across the congregation, and to respond by skilling our brothers to handle the projects more professionally. Within MCST, there are people like Fiona Dowling, Dean, Ralph, Vincent and Elser who work continually in the background doing planning and organising.

Being in Nairobi for those few days also provided me with an opportunity to connect with our brothers in East Africa at their gathering in Mary Ward Centre.



*At the MCST meeting in Nairobi*

## WAD STUDENTS' PROGRAM

This two month-long two-phase Students' Program for 2018 and 2019 is being designed at the request of the African Leadership team specifically for the student brothers, who due to their academic commitments could not participate in a full-fledged orientation program. Phase 1 of this program is scheduled from 08<sup>th</sup> August to 07<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at Bo Formation house in Sierra Leone. Francis and myself (Ruvan) from TST and Augustine Williams and Jojo Karimu from the WAD are working together as a committee to plan and organise this program for 11 brothers. Francis is visiting WAD this week in preparation for this program as well as to meet the African Province leadership team.

I am happy that this program is being run by local Brothers in partnership with TST. I see this as a positive step. It increases the capacity of Brothers at local level to organise OWITF programs. It is also good that there is a significant input from local presenters who seem keen to participate in the program.

### ✧ *Francis Hall reports* ✧

Life as a member of TST is never dull. As this bulletin happens to coincide with the start of "Ordinary Time" in the church's liturgical season (which does sound dull) I was struck by part of the quote in Ruvan's contribution to this bulletin (above): "... ordinary becomes extraordinary". This is happening in me.

My year in India was extraordinary. Not only did I have no trouble with visas but I learned so much about how I might live differently. On arrival I joined a 'community of communities' at St Edmund's Shillong in the far north east. As the months passed I began to feel at home in this "new country". Of course, I had the ongoing support of other members of TST around me which is a constant source of strength wherever I end up.

What did I learn? Social visiting and hospitality took on new dimensions for me as a central part of life. I experienced the joy of cooking and eating, with an open table always ready to welcome the guests. I learned that making connections with people makes the (Indian) world go round! Doing business and building relationships are inextricably linked. I sometimes found myself lost in this world and so often had to just let go of my way of doing things and allow other energies to take over, which they always did!

Earlier this year I was thrilled to be part of the new community openings in India and share some of the excitement and fears of our Brothers venturing to places unknown... Erpakon, Umyrkhong and Patharlyndan. I enjoyed facilitating some of the "Cluster Induction" workshops, when the members of each community and team discussed their particular roles, the importance of which we had learned from the Zambia Cluster.



*At a prayer service with the village folk*

## CLUSTER VISITS IN ZAMBIA

And then it was time to go to Zambia to join Chris Meehl and connect with the Brothers in the South Central District and the Cluster in Western Province. I said my farewells to St Edmund's and Shillong, and briefly to Brothers in Delhi, and soon found myself in Lusaka. It was great to be with Chris and later with Donal, restored to new life after his operation, courtesy of excellent medical treatment and TLC from the Brothers in Johannesburg.

Chris and I were very happy to reconnect with Alfred, Chris and Revy from the District Team and update each other on issues concerning the Zambia Cluster. All four communities had experienced a change in personnel following the departure of five younger men for studies.

We were soon in Mongu where the members of the Hub community made us welcome with a ritual of bread and wine, many good meals and the remembrance of people affected by war on Anzac Day. We stayed two days in each community and were able to sample the life and work of the Brothers.



In the town of Senanga the highlight was joining one of the long-term volunteers, Josephine, in visiting some elderly and differently abled people. The poverty was shocking but what was encouraging was to see the network of volunteers and “champions” well established with plans to create small farms to provide income for the ongoing care work.

In Luampa village the Brothers and thirty members of the “Luampa Community Farm” are highly active in developing their vegetable plots, chicken rearing and fish farming. The arrival of the “fingerlings” was eagerly anticipated.

In the royal village of Limulunga an alternative attraction to the annual Kuomboka festival was the Christian Brothers Behavioural Change Project Sports Tournament. The month-long tournament had involved several hundred young people and the mens football had reached the semi-final stage. It was very informative to stroll among the several hundred-strong crowd and chat about the event. One evangelical pastor explained that he had attended each of the “motivational talks” given to the youth and was sure that it was helping to make them more aware of how to live morally and so reduce HIV AIDS, teenage pregnancy and overdrinking, common in the area.

So much is new for the Brothers in these places, requiring skills and attitudes never before needed. I reflected on how far the Orientation, Skills Training and language programs they had all participated in, had actually prepared them for this “new country”. There is no doubt that they could not have made it so far without the shared learnings but there is much much more to learn. Many of us are not yet used to “life at the peripheries”, to use Pope Francis’ phrase.

### ☞ **Chris Meehl reports** ☞

My experiences over the past few months of being on the TST can be divided into two main areas. Firstly living with some of the other TST members and interacting in community daily. In March I was living with David and being involved with the Brothers on the Advance Skills Training Program. After David travelled to Ireland for Home Leave I was joined by Francis and later Donal. We have been living together at Keating House sharing life. As well as living together we have had regular contact with Ruwan and Sunil.

The other main experience of being on the TST recently has been the privilege of interacting with the Brothers on the Advanced Skills Training Program and being with the Brothers in the Western Cluster. Being with the brothers to listen to them share their life has been very encouraging. The Brothers in the Western Cluster formed new communities in March. Each of the four communities have worked hard to be new communities living OWITF fully. They have worked together in their communities on how they want to be with each other. Listening to them has been inspiring and life giving for me.



*At the Advanced skills Training in Limulunga*

#### **ADVANCED SKILLS TRAINING IN ZAMBIA**

The Advanced Skills Training (AST) Program in Limulunga finished on March 8<sup>th</sup>. Over the eight weeks the participants were engaged with workshops in Edmund Rice Mission, Financial Management, Advocacy, Project Cycle Management and Community Engagement. Forming an OWITF community the Brothers were involved in daily prayer, regular Check Ins, Integration Days, Group Dynamics and Spiritual Direction.

Each of the modules/workshops provided the Brothers with a variety of skills which they can further develop in their ministries either within the Zambian Cluster or in their communities in the West African District or the Latin American Region. Judging by the evaluations, the Brothers gained a lot from the Program which has prepared them well for their ministries. I share some of their reflections here:

*“I am very much prepared to engage in the ministry and I can’t wait to be in the community to practise the skills I have learnt during AST.”*

*“I am committed to broaden my understanding by putting my words, thoughts and learnings into perspective and into action as I engage in ministry.”*

*“I am also open to the new possibilities, ministries and encounters to transform my life.”*

#### **COLLABORATION WITH AFRICAN LEADERSHIP**

The TST has continued to be engaged with African Leadership. This engagement has been

in a variety of different ways:

Francis and Chris along with Hugh and John form the Working Party with Michael and Alfred and are having Skype conversations on future Programs and funding.

Chris, Donal and Francis have meetings with the South Central District Leadership Team about the Western Cluster and how best we can work together.

Ruvan and Francis are in consultation with the West African District in preparing the Student Program for August 2018 and 2019.. The West African District have formed a Committee consisting of Augustine Williams and Jojo Kari-mu.

Sunil has been in Nairobi recently developing the Orientation Program for September to December this year. He has been working closely and consulting with the brothers and the District Leadership Team in preparing the Program.

In February David and Michael Godfrey facilitated the Community Support Team planning workshop in Nairobi.



*Right relationships as brothers with each other*

### *☞ Donal Kirk reports ☞*

Experiences of vulnerability come in all shapes and sizes. Apart from the odd bout of malaria I always took my health for granted. Serious illness was meant for someone else but not for me. All that came to an end last February when I was diagnosed with a pituitary tumour which required the expertise of a brain surgeon. The man in Lusaka said he wouldn't touch it so it was off to South Africa. Very soon I was having a conversation with a brain surgeon about tumours, whether it was benign or malignant, treatment options, chemo therapy or radium therapy? an operation to remove it? There were moments when I was wondering if this was really me having this conversation or had I entered some kind of dream world? It all came down to surrendering my life into the hands of this professional who was able to put me at my ease through a combination of his genuine caring approach and his confidence in his ability to get the job done.

The operation took place on February 14<sup>th</sup> and was very successful. I came away with huge respect and admiration for the nursing staff at the hospital, for their commitment and hard work. I also had a wonderful experience of brotherhood. Mike De Klerk Clement Sindazi, Mike Burke, Steve Browne, Jerome McCarthy and Nsamu Moonga were all brothers to me as I recovered and shared community with them during my time of recuperation. Deep gratitude is the only response.

### **SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT ASSEMBLY**

The assembly took place over a period of three days during Easter Week. The theme chosen

for the occasion was: *The Two Halves of Life*. About fifty five brothers gathered from the District and Joe Mosely led us in our reflections. Brothers young and old sat down together to share their life journey. Some had many miles on the clock and had much wisdom to share while others were just starting out and were eager to hear from those who had travelled ahead. The older men were happy to see a bunch of young men following along behind with zeal and enthusiasm. We prayed, we reflected and we celebrated. It was great to see the men from the old Southern Africa District, the Old Mater Dei District and the men from the new cluster all gelling together as one.

### THE LEADERS' AND FORMATORS' PROGRAM

Among the programs we are currently putting together is the program for leaders and formators to be held in South Africa in January/February 2019. So far we have 16 applicants. We had hoped that this program would be held in Stellenbosch but due to circumstances beyond our control it has to move to another venue, which will be made known soon. We are delighted to offer this program and to work with our leaders and formators as they implement *Our Way into the Future* according to their respective roles.

#### ☞ **David Gibson reports** ☞

I am on home leave at present and have spent my time on the Camino, walking from Dublin to Santiago di Compostela in Northern Spain, a distance of 1,900 km approximately.

The journey to Santiago is a journey that is outward and inward. The outward journey involves walking on average 25km a day which is physically challenging and at times quite difficult. Such a walk, however, has offered me the opportunity to feast on a wide variety of landscapes and mingle with fellow pilgrims from all walks of life. Walking through Ireland, France and now Spain provides for a cultural feast of churches, monuments and languages. The changing landscapes in each country makes for a real appreciation of nature. What was particularly striking in France was the incredible scale of farming and the enormous effort farmers make to provide us with our daily bread!



The inward journey is a time of personal reflection and prayer, offering me the opportunity to review my life and vocation. The inward journey is both enriched and challenged by listening to the personal stories of other pilgrims and sharing with them my vocation story. Both journeys have been a real blessing and hopefully the experience of the Camino will contribute to our journeying together!

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As I walked I was very conscious of the journey Joe Mosely is making with the help of the marvellous skill of the surgeons in South Africa. I was also very mindful of the clusters of communities in Zambia and India as the Brothers seek to live a new way of being Brother.”