



Australian T.O.S. Links

December 2011

Coordinator's comments

2011 sees the completion of my seven year term as Coordinator of the TOS in Australia. It has been a very real privilege to help build our network of servers of not just humanity but of **all** life. As I have come to know individual members and become familiar with the activities of your local groups, I have been increasingly impressed by the range of service work that you take up with dedication and enthusiasm.

While I thank you for your collective support of the international TOS projects that we have nationally agreed to support, it has been inspiring to see the energy you have invested in a great variety of individual group initiatives.

A feature of our TOS network is the fundamentally harmonious way in which members work together. We all have different strengths and interests, yet are united in our aspiration of altruistic service. My hope is that we may daily become stronger in our recognition of the Divine within ourselves and in each other.

As you may have read in *Theosophy in Australia*, the International President of the TOS, Mrs Radha Burnier, has appointed Mrs Jean Carroll as the new Coordinator from the end of the Annual General Meeting of the TOS in January, 2012. Jean is currently President of the Sunshine Coast TS Lodge as well as being active in the local work of the TOS. Jean brings personal warmth, energy and expertise to the role of the National Coordinator and I am sure that we will enjoy working with her in the coming years.

National TOS 2012 AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the National TOS will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday 24 January 2012 at St John's College, Brisbane. You will notice that the AGM has been listed in the 2012 Convention Program published in the November issue of *Theosophy in Australia*. The TOS thanks the National President of the TS, Dara Tatraj, for her thoughtfulness.

I'm looking forward to chatting with all of you who are coming to the TS Convention or the TOS AGM in Brisbane. This is always a good opportunity for sharing service ideas, strengthening our TOS network and contributing to national planning.

Focusing on selfless service to all life

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A meditation

May I prepare for the everlasting Christmas by decorating an inner Christmas tree. Around that sacred tree I lay gifts of calmness, forgiveness, nobility, service, kindness, spiritual understanding and devotion, each one wrapped in a golden covering of goodwill and bound with a silver cord of pure sincerity. Yogananda

2012: Ideas for service in our communities

When you start planning your group activities for 2012, you might be inspired by the United Nations themes for the year. 2012 has two major themes. One is the **International Year of**

Cooperatives which aims at raising public awareness about the contribution of cooperatives to poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration.

2012 is also the **International Year of Sustainable Energy for All**. This theme provides a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of increasing access to energy, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. It is a call to promote action on energy issues at the local, national, regional and international levels.

The availability of sustainable energy is an issue for all of us. In developing countries, almost one and a half billion people are still lacking access to energy, and electricity in particular, and this often has an impact on the capacity of their community to generate employment. In our own communities, most of our

energy comes from polluting energy sources.

Both these themes are related to focuses of service within the TOS. The websites for these International Years, <http://social.un.org/coopsy> ear/ and <http://sustainableenergyforall.org/about/faq>) have lots of suggestions for ways they can be celebrated in our

communities. We could have featured speakers, discussions about potential opportunities for cooperatives in our communities and forums about



Courtesy UN/Eskinder Debebe

ways of promoting sustainable energy generation. We could become involved in supporting a cooperative project, such as the village water bore project that the TOS in Kenya has initiated. You'll find more information on this project later in the newsletter.

Plan to celebrate Earth Hour 2012

Earth Hour is your opportunity to show your commitment to change as part of a global, interconnected community. The Earth Hour community already has some inspiring stories of how they are truly going Beyond the Hour with sustainable steps, big and small, towards a better planet.

Earth Hour started in 2007 as a local initiative in Sydney, to take action against climate change...and it has grown! Hundreds of millions of people in more than 5,200 cities and towns in 135 countries worldwide switched off their lights for Earth Hour 2011 alone, sending a powerful message for action on climate change. It also ushered in a new era with members going Beyond the Hour to commit to lasting action for the planet. Without a doubt, it's shown how great things can be achieved when people come together for a common cause.

Show the world you care with one simple action. Plan to join in individually, as a family or with friends on **Saturday 31 March 2012 at 8.30 pm**. You'll find more information at <http://www.earthhour.org/>

Update on one of our national projects: Literacy home-schools in Pakistan

Fareeda Amir reports that despite the unrest and violence in Karachi, the teachers at the literacy home-schools, continue their work in an exemplary way. She tells us that the TOS recently held a function to acknowledge the work their teachers are doing for the home schools despite the many hurdles they encounter (including getting shot in the leg! Thankfully the teacher involved has made a full recovery.) Each teacher was given a bonus equal to the salary for a month. A letter of appreciation from the International Secretary of the TOS was also given to each teacher. Of course the letter had a translated Urdu version attached.



The function went very well and there was much excitement amongst the teachers and children. It was supposed to be a concert, and the children of each school had prepared songs, small plays etc. The bonus and letter were a surprise!

Fareeda asks to have her deep gratitude passed on to all TS and TOS members for their donations to the four schools supported by Australia.

On your behalf, I have passed on the heartfelt appreciation and best wishes of Australian members for the continuing safety of the teachers who conduct the schools in their communities and the Pakistan TOS members who support the teachers.

International TOS news

If you'd like to find out about some of the key activities of the TOS around the world, have a look at the December issue of the **International electronic newsletter**, *in-touch.online*, in which the International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin, provides her annual report for 2011 with accompanying photographs.



You can access the newsletter via the International TOS website <http://international.theoservice.org> or contact me and I'll email it to you. The next issue of *in-touch.online* will be published in February 2012.

The December update to the International TOS website provides a wealth of new material. You'll find a new topic in the **For Members** section that provides a collection of theosophically oriented funeral and memorial services. The collection has just been started and contributions of services and readings are invited. Also in the *For Members* section, there is another fundraising idea – holding a cinema event. *The Theosophy of Service* is the **Featured Article**. It is an excerpt from a talk by Dorothy Bell for the TOS session at the International Convention of the TS in Adyar in December 2010.

Brochure documenting TS support for the United Nations

In 2010, the international TOS formed a committee to make better known the historical role of the TS/TOS in supporting the work of the UN, and to explore and promote ways that the TOS can continue to support its work. The TOS United Nations Committee is chaired by Lorraine Christensen, the Coordinator of the TOS in Canada.

The UN Committee has now published its first brochure, documenting the history of support that the TS has given to the United Nations. In Lorraine's words, the brochure describes "how the TS's history of support spans a century, going back to the early days when the TS was a leader in sowing seeds of internationalism and world brotherhood."

The United Nations, which officially came into existence on October 24, 1945, was built on universal values of peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, along with justice, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility. These reflect the fundamental principles of the Theosophical Society since its inception in 1875.

Many international presidents of the Theosophical Society, including Dr Annie Besant, George Arundale, C. Jinarajadasa and N. Sri Ram, were staunch supporters of the United Nations and its precursor, the League of Nations.

The aims of the United Nations resonate with those of the Theosophical Order of Service in its worldwide efforts to alleviate suffering and to promote peace, development and quality of life for all. TOS members and groups may continue to support the work of the

United Nations by recognising special UN days in TOS projects, presentations, articles, exhibits and debates. United Nations Day – October 24 – can be set aside and celebrated with a special programme of meditation and readings interspersed with discussion.

A copy of the brochure is enclosed with this newsletter and is also available on the Australian TOS and International TOS websites. Members of both the TS and TOS are warmly invited to print out this brochure for distribution

Update on the famine relief project in Kenya

In the August newsletter I shared information about a new emergency relief project organised by the TOS in Kenya and reported that the TOS in Australia Management Committee had decided to support this project by immediately donating A\$800 to feed a group of five families. Since then, several TOS groups and individuals have sent donations to this project.

The second distribution of food to the 55 families being helped by the TOS has recently been accomplished. Mrs Usha Shah, TOS convenor in Nairobi, Kenya, provided a report of the distribution in which she was personally involved. It is reproduced below from the International TOS website.

“The second distribution of food to our villagers in Kitui took place on October 6.

Accompanied by Paulo, our local link with the village, I set off from Nairobi at 9a.m. The journey took just under an hour as there were no traffic gridlocks on the way to Machakos where we met the pick-up carrying all 55 packages of maize flour, oil, salt and – this time – sugar.

The journey to Kitui was just as depressing as last time. It was HOT: the sun was really out to establish its supremacy! The countryside is desolate and dry, dry, dry! The grass is scarce and brown. For miles around, one sees only bare trees, bushes and parched earth. This time we saw fewer people going about in search of water, perhaps because of the fierce heat. It is a mystery how people can survive in such harsh conditions. At least those we have rallied round to assist are spared hunger for several months more....

We arrived at the venue but not before the pick-up stalled. The ladies to whom we were due to distribute the food had to push it up the hill. Hard work it was! Accompanied by cries of greetings and the singing of songs, we made it to a shady spot. We chatted a bit about the possibility of keeping cows, goats and poultry for generating income. I am a lacto-vegetarian but I do respect the lifestyle of others who may not be vegetarian. This matter was therefore discussed. I talked to the women, though, about the bore hole we have been investigating for them, so that in addition to having drinking water, they can plant high quality seeds and also fruit trees such as mango and papaya. I mentioned the fact that they would have to start a society to negotiate the purchase of a small plot of land for putting in the bore hole. The villagers were overwhelmed to learn that we wish to give them a water supply. It means that they will no longer have to wander for miles in search of it and trudge home, heavily burdened.

I then showed them how to make cow dung fuel cakes. The women were impressed! This was followed by the distribution of pencils, sharpeners, biscuits and sweets to the children who then went off happily, leaving us to carry out the very disciplined and orderly distribution of the packages. The item that was welcomed with cheers was SUGAR. I asked one lady why she was so happy about the sugar and she said with a wide grin, "Mama, sasa ta wezakunwa chai yakawaidatamutamusaaana!" ("Madam, now I will have real tea – very, very sweet!").

After the distribution, we left for Nairobi. The journey was short and traffic jam free. I managed to fit in a sauna as perspiration poured from every pore in my body. Detoxing done at no cost!

The smiling faces of our villagers, who until August were facing starvation, are a great motivation for us. So are your caring concern and interest in our reports. Blessings to all of you!"



Here we are talking to the villagers about forming a society to acquire land to put in the bore hole. The registration takes very little time and will assist the members to use the water wisely and productively. That is to say, when the land and the bore hole are in the name of a society, the whole group owns them and a committee decides how to regulate the use of the water. If they were in the name of an individual, he or she may become difficult and usurp all rights. Owning the land and bore hole collectively will give the villagers the dignity of ownership.

If you would like to help provide the planned bore hole to supply a safe source of water for the village, please send your donation to the National TOS Treasurer.

TOS contact details in 2011

Contact for donations

Ms Janice Scarabottolo
National TOS Treasurer
PO Box 7418
FISHER ACT 2611

Please send donations to the National Projects and other activities of international TOS groups to the National Treasurer. By amalgamating our donations into one or two electronic funds transfers a year to each international project, we can save several hundred dollars annually. Each individual or group donor is recognised in the email we send to the international project group confirming the funds transfer. Please

make cheques out to the *Theosophical Order of Service in Australia*.

Contact for newsletter and materials

Ms Carolyn Harrod
26 Lytham Street
INDOOROOPIILLY QLD 4068
tos.australia@gmail.com

You are invited to send news items, photographs, ideas and comments that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. I would welcome your contributions to our national newsletter.

News from our TOS groups

Sydney

Richard Larkin, President of the Sydney TOS group, reports that they have had a very good year. He writes, "Our monthly talks have been well received, with our speakers covering a range of topics, both practical and theoretical. Two of our guest speakers discussed the work of Amnesty International and the Exodus Foundation in Sydney, with others discussing the historical background of the Gnostic religions as well as some practical spirituality and even a humorous look at death (From a spiritual and palliative view)!"

I took the opportunity to remind our audiences about the good work being done by the TOS in Kenya with their famine relief project as well as the TOS run schools in Pakistan. Though times are a bit straightened, we still managed to raise funds for some worthy projects – including the TOS projects above.

I would like to thank the team at our Sydney Meeting for their enthusiasm and dedication to our common work."

Brisbane

The Brisbane TOS Group has also had a busy year, both with individual service work and group activities. This year they've tried some different fund raising ideas to enable them to make donations to several projects. They have held four sale tables at TS meetings, selling home-made jams, chutneys, oils, biscuits and savoury items, home grown produce, beautiful quilts, recycled silk gift bags, cards and boxes made of recycled materials and second-hand books and other goods. The big event for the year, however, was their Cinema Afternoon with over 70 guests, which raised significant funds for two projects.

Their donations this year went to the TOS literacy home-schools in Pakistan, a mobility aids project of the TOS in Assam and the TOS's Golden Link College in the Philippines as well as to the Hamlin Fistula Relief Project in Ethiopia.

On a local level, the group has focused on support for the homeless, through providing food parcels and handmade quilts to women's shelters and supporting a young homeless mother by providing the necessary items to start a household. This last project had such a positive impact on the young woman's self-respect and connection to the community that it literally turned her life around and she is now living in a stable situation and enjoying being a mother.

Members of the Brisbane TOS are committed to recycling, and you see them in the following photo learning how to make carry bags out of newspapers. If

you're coming to the TS Convention in Brisbane, you'll receive one of the bags to carry purchases from the bookshop.



There'll be news from other TOS groups when they send their annual reports in the New Year.

What's new on our Australian TOS web-site

Go to our national TOS website:

<http://australia.theoservice.org> for links to the 2012 International Years, Earth Hour, the new UN brochure, animal welfare action and new quotations.

Animal welfare in the news

Campaign for CCTV monitoring in slaughterhouses

Animals Australia is currently campaigning to have CCTV cameras placed in slaughterhouses to improve the monitoring of compliance with animal welfare legislation. For further information, videos and a letter to your State agency, go to their website:

http://www.animalsaustralia.org/take_action/CCTV-cameras-in-slaughterhouses

Pardon a Pig, is a campaign asking people to help begin a new tradition of kindness and goodwill to *all* beings by leaving pigs off their plate and pledging to indulge in a cruelty-free Christmas. Pigs are known to be one of the most intelligent species outside the primate family. They can learn their own name, play 'fetch' and reciprocate affection just like the family dog! Like all mothers, mother pigs form strong bonds with their babies and have even been known to 'sing' to their piglets. Like humans, pigs see in colour. Like us, they dream. And memory studies have shown that they even enjoy playing computer games! Visit:

<http://www.animalsaustralia.org/features/pardon-a-pig/>

Campaign against live animal export This joint campaign of the RSPCA and Animals Australia invites continued support. A current focus is ensuring that Asian and Middle Eastern abattoirs stun animals. Visit: <http://www.banliveexport.com/>

A thought to share

Love is a form of seeing.

Annie Besant

I wish you peace, harmony and spiritual fulfilment, and a New Year filled with happiness and wonderful experiences.

Yours in service,

Carolyn

