

Here's to the Next Five Years!

The 4th TOS International Conference was a smashing success! Every five years, members of the TOS from around the world get together to report the results of their previous Action Plans, let others know what they are doing, listen to inspiring talks and make plans for the next five years. This time the TOS Conference was held in beautiful Singapore on the coat-tails of the



Theosophical Society's World Congress (WC). We greatly enjoyed the Congress activities, which included a presentation by TOS International Secretary, Nancy Secrest, entitled *TOS: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Nancy related the beginnings of the TOS and went on to show current activities of many of our TOS countries around the world. She concluded by

saying that it is our dream to help make the TOS and organisations like it no longer necessary in our world. In Vic Hao Chin's presentation at the WC, *Our Work in the 21st Century*, Vic put forth the example of the Theosophical Order of Service as "the most important existing avenue for applied theosophy for the public."

The two days of the TOS Conference were fully packed with information, insight and inspiration. TOS President, Tim Boyd, set the tone with the opening invocation and his Inaugural Address. Tim reminded us of the various aspects of service using examples from his own life. The delegates were welcomed by our Singaporean hosts, Chong Sanne, President of the Singapore TS Lodge, and Vivekhanathan M. ('Vivek'), Director of the TOS Singapore. Vivek and TOS Singapore members worked tirelessly behind the scenes, ensuring the smooth running and success of the conference. We were off to a good start, but one thing was missing.

We had no one to handle AV during the conference! Oh my, how did that fall through the cracks? Australian TOS member



*Top, left to right: Vinitha, Uthiya, Logannathan & Vivek
Front: Tim, Shirley, Nancy*

George Wester stepped up to the task, providing flawless management of all the electronic aspects of the presentations.

The conference theme, *TOS: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, provided the backdrop for continuing events. Jean Carroll, former Director of the TOS Australia, K. Sivaprasad, National Secretary of TOS India and Ananya Sri Ram Rajan, President of TOS-USA (via video), reported on the achievement of goals set at the last TOS Conference five years ago. Educational, enlightening and entertaining presentations made by Italy, Hungary, India, the Philippines, Pakistan and Singapore gave us detailed pictures of selected projects: Italian TOS aid to Syrian refugees, Hungary's assistance to the gypsy community, medical camps and mobility aids provided by the TOS India, strides towards the empowerment of women also in India, the Golden Link College in the Philippines, Qandeel home schools and other educational efforts in Pakistan and various projects initiated by the Singaporean TOS. Their presentations touched our hearts while instilling fresh ideas for service in our own countries.



Day one was also a day of revelries. Many of the delegates wore red and white, the colours of Singapore's flag, on 9th August, to join our Singaporean hosts in celebration of their Independence Day. Televised festivities that rivalled Olympic opening ceremonies and included fireworks were enjoyed that evening in our meeting room. We also had two birthdays! Nancy Secrest, TOS International Secretary and Ricardo Basurto, TOS member from Florida in the USA, both became a year older that day.



The second day of the conference began with talks on *Service: Who, What, Why?* Isis Resende from Brazil, Renée Sell of New Zealand and Antonio Girardi from the Italian TOS inspired us with their answers to these questions as did Helmut Vandersmissen, who spoke about volunteerism and had us up on our feet, clapping hands and jumping up and down to get the energy flowing. Vic Hao Chin's major address, *Root Causes and Symptoms*, took us to the bottom of the need for service, and Carol Nicholson's presentation on instruction and inspiration through the use of webinars illustrated how a practice available to us today can help bring us to the edge of tomorrow. Armed with all these facts, examples and inspiration, the real work of developing plans for the next five years began. Seven groups from various countries and regions around the world worked to create Action Plans which were then shared with all present. Together we also discussed some international TOS issues. Consensus was reached to explore the formation of some form of international governance or advisory body and the possible involvement of the TOS with the United Nations in whatever way that may be possible to us.

Nancy's closing remarks revolved around the dual purpose of the TOS: Service and Spiritual Unfoldment. Drawing on quotes from TOS leaders, remarks from some of the speakers at the conference and her own insights, Nancy showed that the apparent contradiction of these purposes with each other was actually the inevitable flow that proceeds from self-forgetful service to humanity for, as it states in *The Voice of the Silence*, "Self-knowledge is of loving deeds the child." The conference ended on a quiet note with a TOS peace meditation that had been written by a group of members from around the world.