



Issue 1 - November 2008

Dear fellow members of the TS and TOS around the world,

Welcome to the first issue of the on-line newsletter of the international TOS which will be sent regularly. As its name implies, it is designed to be read on-line so that you can access the links to extra information on the internet.

Through this newsletter, you will have the opportunity to keep in touch with what is happening in the TOS internationally – getting to know TOS members outside your own country, sharing in celebrations, being inspired by stories of service around the globe, exchanging ideas about ways of putting Theosophy into action and keeping up to date with organisational developments.

We welcome your contributions to this newsletter, either through your National TOS Director/ President/ Coordinator/Correspondent or directly to the editors at: carolyn.tosinternational@gmail.com

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International TOS Plan of Action 2008-2013

A Plan of Action has been developed through extensive international consultation with members to guide the work of the International TOS during the next five years. It proposes action in eight main areas.

To read a summary of this [Plan of Action click here](#).

A full copy of the International TOS Plan of Action is available by contacting the International Secretary at: tosinternational@wanadoo.fr

Meet one of our newest Correspondents

We welcome one of our newest Correspondents for the TOS, Breda Zagar, the Correspondent for Slovenia. Breda is enjoying the opportunity of collaborating with her husband Dusan, the Organising Secretary of the TS, in developing the work of the TOS and the TS in an integrated and harmonious way.

[Read on to learn more](#)

Centennial celebrations

This year the TOS celebrated the centenary of its founding in February 1908 with events around the theosophical world and all kinds of commemorative publications: bulletins, bookmarks, cards, pens, etc.

A centenary logo was produced by the TOS in Brazil and widely used on letterheads, posters, newsletters and on the T-shirts produced by the TOS in Chennai.

A special edition of *The Service Link* of 90 pages was brought out. The TOS in the Philippines prepared a centennial banner and shipped a copy gratis to groups overseas, along with a large colour poster about the TOS's founder, Dr Annie Besant, and another one on its current operations. At the international TOS's

request, it also produced in DVD form an outstanding illustrated lecture given by Vicente Hao Chin Jnr entitled 'On root causes and symptoms'.

For a photo-collage of some of the celebratory events [around the world click here](#).

TOS news from around the world

In this issue of the e-newsletter:

- Lorraine Christensen, National Director of the TOS in Canada, writes about two highlights of the year;
- Danny Giron, the TOS Coordinator for Singapore, tells us about the service activities that this new TOS group is energetically implementing;
- we have photographs of a TOS wedding in Chennai; and
- Renée Sell, National Coordinator of the TOS in New Zealand, shares the highlights of a busy year.

[To read the stories, click here](#).

World Congress 2010



The dates of the next World Congress of the Theosophical Society have recently been announced. The Congress will be held in Rome from 10 to 15 July 2010 at the Summit Hotel and Convention Centre (address: via della Stazione Aurelia 99).

The Congress will provide TOS members with a wonderful opportunity for sharing ideas, networking and exploring ways of applying theosophical principles to issues of contemporary concern.

For further information see [Latest News](#) on our International website at <http://international.theoservice.org/>

UN International Days

The United Nations was built on spiritual principles and universal values such as peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, justice, respect, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility. TOS groups will therefore find that many UN designated International Days provide opportunities for promoting the theosophical principles underpinning TOS work as well as networking with similar community groups in supporting relevant UN activities.

For information on [UN International Days from December 2008 to March 2009 click here](#).

In the news – His Holiness The Dalai Lama speaks out about bull-fighting

His Holiness The Dalai Lama has written in support of a French association's 2008 campaign to prevent bull-fighting.

[To read his open letter click here](#).

Invitation from the USA TOS website

The TOS-USA website (<http://usa.theoservice.org>) has been re-cast as a dynamic, user-built community website. Site members can easily comment on any article and even post their own article, or email their contribution to the webmaster. The interactive features of the website allow it to serve as an effective networking and communication tool for TOS members and friends.

What's new on the International TOS website?

When you visit our International TOS website you will find information about a new [Featured Project](#) – the SEE Project initiated by the TOS in the Chennai Region, as well as a new [Featured Article](#) by Jim Ball, a member of the TS in America. Jim challenges us to examine our lifestyles and suggests that frugality is needed to re-establish an ecological balance. In late December, the [Featured Article](#) will change to one by our International TOS President, Radha Burnier, entitled *Compassion: The Basis for Peace and*

Understanding.

You will also find details about the World Congress as well as additions to the TOS picture gallery, reports and the Inspiration section. Go to <http://international.theoservice.org>

An inspiring message

'We are only limited by our attitude to what appear to be limitations.' This is the message of the motivational speaker on this YouTube video, made more powerful by the fact that the speaker is limbless. Watch the seven-minute video on: <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=3O6OluBxGtM>

Lastly (please don't miss this)...

- a) Do you know any fellow members of the TOS and TS you think might like to see this newsletter? If so, please forward it to them. If you received this newsletter forwarded from someone else, you will need to subscribe in order to continue to receive it. To sign up, you have only to send a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Subscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.
- b) If you do not want to receive future newsletters you can easily unsubscribe. All that is needed is a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'UNSUBSCRIBE TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.

With best wishes,
Carolyn and Diana

*Diana Dunningham Chapotin is the International Secretary of the TOS and
Carolyn Harrod is the National Coordinator of the TOS in Australia.*

'Pain and suffering may often seem to be calling us to jump in and fix things, but perhaps they are asking us first to be still enough to hear what can really help, what can truly get to the cause of this suffering, what will not only eliminate it now but prevent it from returning. So, before we act, we need to listen. When we do become quiet enough... the way opens, and we see the possibilities for action'.

-- Mirabai Bush, *Compassion in Action: Setting out on the Path of Service* (Ram Dass and Mirabai Bush, NY Bell Tower, 1992).

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Centennial celebrations

A photo-gallery of celebrations around the world



Mrs Radha Burnier, International President of the TOS, addressed the international gathering that took place at Adyar in early January to celebrate the centenary of the TOS which was founded in February 1908 by Dr Annie Besant. A very full programme of activities on and off the campus was organised by Mr C.V.K. & Dr Sunita Maithreya and the TOS International Secretary.

Chief Electoral Officer of Tamil Nadu State, Mr Naresh Gupta, lights a lamp at the concluding session of the Adyar Centenary gathering, organised by the TOS, Chennai Region. Looking on are Mrs Radha Burnier, Mr C.V.K. Maithreya and Mrs Radha Muthaia.



Under the enthusiastic leadership of Regina Celi Medina (left), the TOS in Brazil celebrate the centenary with a cake decorated with the beautiful logo its members designed for international use.

The Brazilian members make music to celebrate the centenary!



In early March, the TOS and TS in New Zealand collaborated in a weekend programme celebrating the TOS centenary under the title *Joy & the Spiritual Life*. Overseas guests included the Hon. Sec. and Treasurer of the TOS in Pakistan, Fareeda and Aman Amir, Australian TOS member, Dorothy Bell, the National President of the TOS in France, Michel Chapotin and the TOS International Secretary. Time was taken on the second day to celebrate the centenary of a sister organisation called the Round Table, a ceremonial movement for children designed to inculcate spiritual values.



Kenya marked the centenary of the TOS with a stamp. The TOS Centennial special postage stamp was officially launched by the Minister for Gender and Children's Affairs, Hon. Esther Murugi, M.P. on Monday, 17th November 2008. Among other invited guests who attended this function was the Postmaster General, Mr Fred Odhiambo. Here, children from the Don Bosco School perform a dance of welcome to the official party.



Blavatsky Hall in Nairobi was packed with members and guests. Master of Ceremonies for the launching of the stamp was Mr Narendra Shah.

The Centennial stamp is unveiled.



The Postmaster General and the Minister planting the TOS Centennial Tree.

After an afternoon of celebratory activities in April, members the TOS in France enjoy refreshments. US\$600 was collected for the education of Tibetan monks in Dharamsala.



The TOS in Chennai Region had T-shirts made with the centenary logo. They were modelled by four participants at the centenary celebrations in Auckland, New Zealand.

On a crisp sunny May afternoon, TS and TOS members in Canberra, Australia celebrated the centenary of the TOS with a workshop on meditation, led by teacher, Birthe Ross. The entry fee and generous contributions by participants were donated to the TOS literacy home-schools project in Pakistan.

TS member, Birthe Ross, the meditation teacher, is in the centre with Tony Fearnside to the right and Karyn Fearnside and Peter Fokker, President of Canberra TS, to the left.



In February 2008, TOS and TS members in Brisbane, Australia celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the TOS with an afternoon tea. Long term TOS members were honoured and the TOS President, Lynette Muller, spoke about Annie Besant, the formation of the TOS and its work today.

Members and friends of the TOS Brisbane, Australia participated in a craft workshop to support a Centennial project. This was an opportunity to have fun, meet old and new friends, learn about the work of the TOS and contribute to funding a literacy home-school in Pakistan.



The TOS Group on the Sunshine Coast, Australia, celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the TOS with a day of sharing approaches to meditation from various religious traditions including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sufism and Christianity.

A TOS variety night in September marked the Centennial in Perth, Australia. Members and friends came dressed as their favourite character. The entertainment included a play, dances and songs and the night finished with supper and dancing.





In the news – His Holiness The Dalai Lama speaks out about bull-fighting

To Whom it May Concern

Today, together with a growing appreciation of the importance of human rights there is a greater awareness worldwide of the need for the protection not only of the environment, but also of animals and their rights. Unfortunately, there continue to be those who feel it is not only acceptable, but also a pleasure, to hunt or fight with animals, resulting in the painful deaths of those animals. This seems to contradict the general spirit of egalitarianism growing in most societies today.

I deeply believe that human beings are basically gentle by nature and I feel that we should not only maintain gentle and peaceful relations with our fellow human beings but that it is also very important to extend the same kind of attitude towards the environment and the animals who naturally live in harmony with it. As a boy studying Buddhism in Tibet, I was taught the importance of a caring attitude towards others. Such a practice of non-violence applies to all sentient beings – any living thing that has a mind. Where there is a mind, there are feelings such as pain, pleasure and joy. No sentient beings want pain, instead all want happiness. Since we all share these feelings at some basic level, we as rational human beings have an obligation to contribute in whatever way we can to the happiness of other species and try our best to relieve their fears and sufferings.

Therefore, I am happy to support the Comité Radicalement Anti-Corrida (CRAC) which is campaigning to prevent bullfighting.



Meet one of our newest correspondents

Mrs Breda Zagar, Correspondent for the TOS in Slovenia

As the new Correspondent of the TOS, Breda Zagar is enjoying the opportunity of collaborating with her husband Dusan, the Organising Secretary of the TS, in developing the work of the TOS and the TS in an integrated and harmonious way.

Bringing to the role her communication skills as a Slovene language teacher, Breda coordinates the work of the four TOS groups in Slovenia, providing support for such activities as the collection of materials for a shelter for injured wild animals, a daily meditation for peace, the donation of food to a soup kitchen, educational sponsorships for needy children and the channelling of donations to the Social Welfare Centre and the HPB Hostel at Adyar.



What Breda likes about the TOS work is the genuinely friendly cooperation amongst the TOS representatives of the TS branches. Working with them is a real joy. When there is unity, there is nothing that can't be tackled, Breda feels! Important features of the work for her are this brotherly cooperation and a spontaneous sense of duty to help others whenever it is within one's power to assist – without a self-conscious sense of being a 'helper'. When one is really open, really eager to help, then the work itself will appear. There is no need to search for it, Breda believes.



In this photo, we see Breda (centre) surrounded by the TOS representatives in the four TS branches of Slovenia.

From left to right: Mrs. Cvetka Maher of Surya-Svit Lodge in Maribor, Mrs. Vojka Hocevar of Lodge Surya in the city of Koper, Breda Zagar, (TOS Correspondent), Mrs. Blanka Blaj Borstnar of Lodge Understanding, Celje, and Mrs Irena Zalar of Adyar Lodge, Ljubljana.



TOS news from around the world

TOS in Canada

Lorraine Christensen, National Director of the TOS in Canada, writes about two highlights of the year.

As a special Centennial Project, the TOS in Canada raised a significant sum to go towards the Kern Foundation's matching grant to assist the Golden Link School in the Philippines.

At the annual convention of the Canadian Theosophical Association held in August 2008, a special TOS display table was put out with photos, posters and free literature. The TOS was well represented at the convention with a total of 14 attending, 13 of whom are pictured below:



TOS Delegates Canadian Theosophical Convention

Back Row: Donald Johnston, Jean-Guy Fournier, Ernest Fechner, Fiona Odgren, Ken Madden, Donna Erickson, Frank Schornagel, and Henning Christensen.

Front Row Seated: Jutta Mildner, Terezinha Franca Kind (TOS guest from Brazil), Charles Sequeira, Lorraine Christensen (TOS Director in Canada), and Rita Sequeira.

TOS in Singapore

Danny Giron, the TOS Coordinator for Singapore, writes about the service activities that this new TOS group is energetically implementing:

The group's first long term project involves regular visits to the Bright Hill Evergreen Home for elderly people. About eight to ten TOS members regularly meet at the Home on Wednesday evenings after work. Through the unfailing devotion of sister Nancy, they provide muffins, cookies and other snacks for the residents. Those residents who are able to go to the recreation room in a wheelchair or with assisted walking are entertained with songs by popular Chinese entertainers on DVD.

Another activity to benefit the elderly was made possible by the generosity of TOS member, brother Kay Keng Chuan, who donated time and money to provide a sumptuous Chinese vegetarian lunch for the 183 residents of Tai Pei Old People's Home. They were joined by TOS and other TS members for the occasion.



*Singapore TOS members and residents of
Bright Hill Evergreen Home*



A fourth collection of new and used books was sent to the Golden Link School in the Philippines by brother Vivek.

To keep conversations buzzing around stimulating topics, the Singapore TOS members have established an e-group.

In addition to their TOS group activities, some members have been involved in personal service projects. While these projects are not officially TOS activities, they are done in the spirit of philanthropy. Brother Choong Chi Pin has been giving free tai chi lessons for several years. Others have been volunteers in various community service programs and Danny is planning to start an environmental awareness program with nature walks and group assistance with environmental clean-up activities.

A wedding in Chennai

We wish great happiness to a long-time and faithful team member of the TOS in Chennai, physiotherapist Dr P. Nagaraj, who married N. Subalakshmi in October 2008. In the photo, we see Nagaraj and Subalakshmi surrounded by their 'TOS family'.



Left to Right:

Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, V. Gopalan, S.K. Srinivasan, Dr R.Revathy, Subalakshmi Nagaraj, P. Nagaraj, Chaganti V.K. Maithreya, Dr. Sunita Maithreya and Dr Geetha Jaikumar.

and from the New Zealand TOS...

Renee Sell, National Coordinator of the TOS in New Zealand, shares the highlights of a busy year.

One of the special fundraising projects for the 2008 Centenary was the creation of the Geoffrey Hodson Trust Fund which now has two parts to it:

- a Scholarship Fund for the Golden Link School in the Philippines to create an ongoing scholarship for one child at the school; and
- a fund to help keep in print the inspiring books that Geoffrey Hodson wrote.

Another special project was to secure five more child sponsorships in India from New Zealand.

The TOS has continued its work in the area of education in Pakistan where the TOS sponsors a literacy home-school and the National Council of the TS also sponsors a school. The individual child sponsorships from New Zealand continue and are coordinated by Vicki Jerome.

The TOS in New Zealand maintains strong links with



Wearing the TOS Centennial T-shirts

Left to Right:

the Golden Link School and this year a container full of over 11,000 books, some computers and many more wonderful educational items was sent to them. Maureen Paterson from Orewa was the tireless coordinator who made this project successful.

Renée Sell, (National Coordinator of the TOS in New Zealand), Richard Sell, Diana Dunningham Chapotin (TOS International Secretary) and Michel Chapotin (National President of the TOS in France).



Summary of the International TOS Plan of Action: 2008-2013

This plan of action has been developed through extensive international consultation with members to guide the work of the International TOS during the next five years. It will periodically be reviewed and amended during its lifespan. The work will be carried out by international teams of volunteers.

In summary, the plan proposes action in eight main areas:

1. Development of International TOS constitutional guidelines

These guidelines will outline the TOS's foundations, purpose, structure, membership and relationship to the Theosophical Society. They are expected to be available in 2009, after consultation with and approval by the International President.

2. Staffing International Secretariat

It is felt that a team is needed at international level to support the management of the TOS and the expansion of its work. Volunteers will be sought for particular roles such as assistant secretary, assistant editor of publications and translation coordinator.

3. Increasing awareness of the TOS's existence

The TOS is currently present in only half the countries where the TS is active. Much needs to be done to make Theosophists aware of the opportunity to participate in the TOS's work and to start groups. As a first step, it is proposed to produce an introductory pamphlet '*What is the TOS?*' and update the start-up kit for new TOS groups.

4. Development of international TOS publications

In addition to the international magazine, *The Service Link*, several other communication strategies will be put in place: an international website, an international e-newsletter and a team of volunteer translators, particularly for languages within India.

5. Increasing awareness of the nature of the TOS's work

The main purpose of the TOS is to encourage members to take up the path of service to humanity and the planet. Its mission is to offer:

- a framework in which individuals may work in self-selected lines of service for the relief of suffering and the uplifting of society;
- a framework in which the practical application of theosophical principles to issues of contemporary concern may be explored;
- a framework in which social action as spiritual practice is honoured, supported and nurtured.

A group of volunteers will explore strategies and draft useful material to improve understanding about the nature and function of the TOS.

6. Development of support materials for different lines of service

Volunteers will be invited to develop programmes and resource materials on which local and national TOS leaders can draw in their work of facilitating service within the TOS, within the TS and by individual Theosophists.

7. Skills development programmes

Again, volunteers will be invited to develop 'how-to' materials and workshop plans in two areas: to enhance the operation of their group and to support the inner transformational process involved in theosophical service.

8. Development of financial management policy and procedures

Some of the areas proposed for attention are:

- accountability processes about how funds donated from other countries are used and reported on;
- clear procedures for the channelling of funds for emergency relief;
- ways of transmitting money internationally (such as PayPal).



UN International Days from December 2008 to March 2009

December 1: U.N. World AIDS Day (Media Resources). The World AIDS Campaign has announced the theme of 'Leadership' under the banner of "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise."

December 2: International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

December 3: International Day of Disabled Persons 2008 Theme: 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Dignity and justice for all of us'. Around 10 per cent of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with a disability. They are the world's largest minority. The World Bank estimates that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability, and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged.

December 5: International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development

December 9: International Anti-Corruption Day

December 10: Human Rights Day Theme for 2008, 'Dignity and justice for all of us'.

December 18: International Migrants Day

December 20: International Human Solidarity Day

January 27: International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of Holocaust

February 21: International Mother Language Day

Close to half of the 6,000 languages spoken in the world are doomed or likely to disappear in the foreseeable future.

March 6: International Women's Day

March 20: World Water Day

March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

March 24: World TB Day

World Tuberculosis Day is designed to build public awareness about the disease. It commemorates the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the cause of tuberculosis (TB). His discovery opened the way toward diagnosing and curing tuberculosis. Tuberculosis kills about two million people each year, making it one of the world's leading infectious causes of death among young people and adults. One-third of the world's population is infected with TB.