

Scarboro Missions magazine

Ninety-nine years of mission history

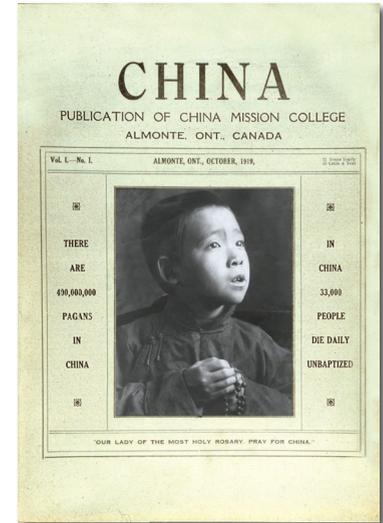
This is the final issue of *Scarboro Missions*. The magazine first appeared in October 1919 as *China*, the name used for its first 30 years.

Founder and first editor John Mary Fraser knew the power of print to reach every corner of Catholic Canada. Making good use of compelling photographs, he laid out his 16-page monthly magazine on large sheets (8.8" x 11.5") and quickly built up a roster of more than 10,000 subscribers. His buoyant confidence and dramatic flair are seen in the inaugural issue's main news story: "China Mission College Meets With Universal Approval;" and in its bold cover statement: "In China 33,000 people die daily unbaptized." On the back pages

of each issue, Fraser made a point of listing every single benefactor whether their gift was a thousand dollars or ten cents.

After four years as editor, John Mary Fraser entrusted *China* to William McGrath. A moral theologian, Fr. McGrath had joined the teaching staff of the St. Francis Xavier China Mission Seminary in 1922. This gifted man would have a marked influence on the young institute as a teacher and administrator, and as a forceful preacher and colourful journalist. Within a few months of his arrival the talented Fr. McGrath was appointed to the college's five-member board of governors.

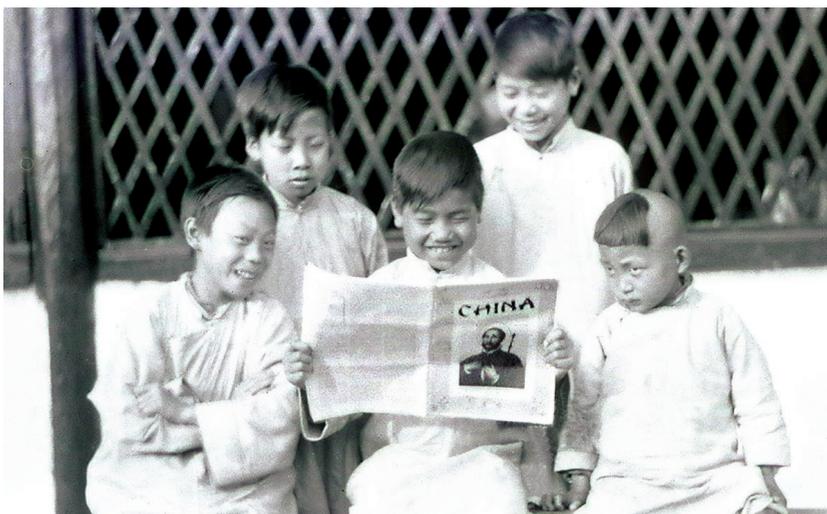
Like Msgr. Fraser and the editors that followed, Fr. McGrath knew that readers were inter-



Inaugural issue, October 1919

ested in the stories and experiences of the missionaries. He added form and feature to the magazine including a humour column called "Nonsense," and a page or two dedicated to St. Theresa of Lisieux and aimed at younger readers. "The Little Flower's Rose Garden" edited by the elusive "Fr. Jim" appeared for 40 years, making it the magazine's longest running column. Throughout that time, many youngsters tried in vain to discover Fr. Jim's identity.

When McGrath was sent to China with the 1931 band of missionaries, he left the job of producing 11 magazines a year to Fr. Alphonse Chafe. Chafe, a Newfoundlander like McGrath, would also serve eight years as editor. While McGrath and Chafe were on the job, two frequent contributors from the China mission were Frs. Hugh Sharkey and Desmond Stringer. Both became editors in their turn. In 1944 Fr. Sharkey reduced the magazine to digest size and increased the page count to 32 so that it was pos-



Boys from Lishui joyfully look through the pages of the January 1926 issue of *China*, with almost every page filled with photos of people and places where they live. They might even see a picture of themselves.



sible to have five or more extensive articles written by Scarboro priests in every edition.

The magazine has always served five key roles: sharing the story of mission, thanking benefactors, fundraising, recruiting vocations and promoting the Society. Seminarians and priests worked in the Promotions office, which handled mail, processed donations, organized speaking tours by returned missionaries and performed other duties. A major part of their work was to knock on doors across the nation to get new subscriptions to the magazine. By 1953, *China* reached 50,000 subscribers who paid \$1 annually.

Des Stringer became editor in 1954 after all foreign missionaries had been expelled from China. The content of the magazine, renamed *Scarboro Missions* with the April 1950 edition, had already shifted with optimism to the newer missions. William McGrath, now a monsignor, continued to author a column called “From the Crow’s Nest,” which promoted the message of Fatima and called on Catholics to pray for the conversion of Russia. After their harrowing years in communist China, it was no surprise that McGrath and other China hands continued to warn of the dangers of communism in the pages of the magazine.

The first editor without mission experience in China was appointed in 1961. Fr. Harold Oxley easily filled his magazines with stories written almost entirely by the more than 70 Scarboro missionaries stationed overseas in the Dominican Republic, Japan, Guyana, the Philippines, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the Bahamas. Articles about China were now found only occasionally on the “I Remember” page.

A message of liberation

Scarboro Missions was in for a different kind of transition as a result of Vatican II. Topics that had often concerned Society members were considered in a new light. In keeping with the reform era, the magazine developed a more questioning attitude. Special themes included changes in the ways of doing mission, Christian unity, religious liberty, community life, Christian witness, and dialogue with non-Christians.

Fr. Gerry Curry, who had spent 11 years in Japan, became editor in 1975. In his first editorial Fr. Curry said he would follow the approach of his predecessor Fr. John Walsh who had reported “on the lives of our men in mission, both in Canada and throughout the world...and called on many talented people to write for the magazine so that you, the reader,

Editors of *China* and *Scarboro Missions*:

John M. Fraser:	1919-1923
William McGrath:	1923-1931
Alphonse Chafe:	1931-1939
James Leonard:	1939-1940
Hugh Sharkey:	1941-1946
Francis O’Grady:	1947-1950
Jack McGoey:	1950-1953
Roland Roberts:	1953-1954
Desmond Stringer:	1954-1959
Harold Oxley:	1960-1961
John Gault:	1961-1963
Harold Oxley:	1963-1968
Donald Boyle:	1968-1972
John Walsh:	1972-1975
Gerry Curry:	1975-1979
Michael O’Kane:	1980
Michael O’Hearn:	1980-1983
Jack Lynch:	1983-1986
Joseph Young:	1986-1988
Michael Donelson:	1988-1989
Gerry Curry:	1989-2003
Kathy Gillis:	2003-2018

would be given the chance to experience many areas of mission and some of the problems facing mission today.”

Fr. Curry’s commitment to a global view is seen in the articles he commissioned for his inaugural edition. One of these, “Notes on the church in China,” was remarkable for two reasons. First of all, it was a mainly positive view of life in China, including a discussion with Chinese Christians about their growing yet limited



religious freedom. Secondly, it was an article on China written by a Presbyterian, Dr. E.H. Johnson. Another break with tradition was reflected in the issue's lead story. "Sin: Personal and Social," written by the revolutionary thinker Gregory Baum. Fr. Baum ended his reflection on sin with a stark break from the church's former understanding of mission:

"The church's saving mission then, cannot possibly be understood in terms of the salvation of souls. This would reduce the Gospel to an individualistic message. What the church has been sent to offer in Jesus Christ is deliverance from personal sin, and connected and intertwined with this, the liberation of people from the multiple structures of domination."

The liberation of people from structural oppression became a constant theme in *Scarboro Missions* as Catholics looked for leadership in understanding this emerging Gospel-inspired priority. Scarboro missionaries in Latin America and the Philippines who were immersed in these realities of struggle, provided real-life insight into topics Canadians were hearing about in secular news reports. To complement and give context to these stories, Fr. Curry added social analysis and the teachings of prominent liberation theolo-

gians like Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez. In October 1976 he devoted an entire issue to economic and social analysis of the Canadian reality, including articles on "signs of hope" and "how Christians can participate in the process of social change." Letters to the editor from this era show that for some readers the message of choosing sides in the face of social struggle was a hard pill to swallow.

Mike O'Hearn was the first lay person to hold the editor's job. He was hired in 1980, the same year Archbishop Oscar Romero was martyred in El Salvador. In an early editorial, O'Hearn said that the word "pagan," which had disappeared from the missionary lexicon, might find a new use in describing richer nations' consumption patterns. "That is because the treasures of the faith—the beatitudes, the social teachings of the church, the exemplary lives of contemporary martyrs in the third world—are having so little effect on our anti-Christian lifestyles. The high standard of living in the North, including 'our own fair Canada' is based on the continued rape of the South's resources. It is we and the global economic structures, which we support, that are in need of conversion, of radical transformation. The conversion of the pagan North by the spread of

the treasures of the faith—that is the mission task before us." Mike also published his PhD thesis in 1983 on Scarboro Missions, "The Political Transformation of a Religious Order."

Colour, currency, calendars...

Three of the biggest changes in the look of the magazine came in one fell swoop. In the September 1983 issue, new editor Fr. Jack Lynch published a magazine that had a larger page size (8" x 10"), was in full resplendent colour and was reduced from 32 to 24 pages. This format remained the standard from then on. Jack also introduced a calendar, which evolved into the November "calendar issue" and remained a popular fixture.

After a decade's hiatus, Gerry Curry returned as editor in 1989 for another 14 years of service. That year, *Scarboro Missions* became a member of the Canadian Church Press (CCP), an ecumenical association striving to maintain high standards of religious journalism. At the CCP annual awards banquet in 1989, *Scarboro Missions* won three Awards of Excellence and received three honourable mentions for its 1988 submissions. Fr. Curry congratulated outgoing editor Mike Donelson and other magazine staff for a job well done.

It is no exaggeration to say



The 2007 OLM special issue. The cover featured Sr. Susan Moran who was presented with the Order of Canada by Governor General Michaëlle Jean in Ottawa in 2006.

that Gerry loved his job. Again he brought currency and a thematic focus to the magazine. He dedicated special issues to particular missions, to laity in mission, and to the Society's close collaborators, Our Lady's Missionaries, whose first special issue was published in May 1977 during Gerry's earlier term as editor. In February 1998 he published the first of many inter-faith editions of the magazine.

Kathy Gillis assisted Fr. Curry for 15 years and at his retirement, the mantle was passed to her. As the last editor of the magazine, she has tried to emulate the work of her mentor and friend. Kathy says her 30 years of working for Scarboro Missions profoundly transformed her:

"Immersed in a community of priest and lay missionaries with firsthand accounts of walking with the marginalized and among peoples of other lands and cultures gave me a new understanding of my faith and of the world. I began to learn more about the social teachings of the Church and to hear the message of the Gospel in a new way. I am grateful to Scarboro Missions for this continued learning and for inviting me to participate in the building of the Reign of God. It was a pleasure and an honour for me to serve the work of mission through the magazine."[∞]



St. Francis Xavier Women's Auxiliary founded in 1940 to help support the work of mission. Many of its members were mothers and sisters of the priests and seminarians. Its first president was Mrs. A. Hymus (front left), mother of Fr. Robert Hymus.

Mission education in Canada

"As missionaries...we have the responsibility to share our overseas experience with all its implications with the Canadian Church that sends us."

Dir. 173, Scarboro Missions Constitutions

Scarboro's mission education efforts in Canada were the main responsibility of the Mission Information Department, which encompassed the Mission Centre, publication of the magazine, communications, posters and audiovisual productions, the Promotions Department, fundraising, and outreach to parishes and schools.

In 1971, a mission education team of Frs. Jack Lynch, Mike Traher, and Gus Roberts was formed. They produced multi-media presentations for schools and parishes to help in the work of conveying the meaning and scope of mission around the world. In addition to producing audiovisual programs and films on Scarboro's work and on new understandings of mission, the Society also distributed (and advertised through the magazine) social justice productions by well-known filmmakers Kevin Moynihan, Patrick Hughes and others.

Books by Scarboro missionaries were also promoted. The most prolific writers were Frs. Jack McGoey, William McGrath, Jack McIver, Hugh Sharkey and Harvey Steele. There were also books written by others about the Society, including *Assignment in Chekiang* (inset) by Grant Maxwell; and biographies such as *Agent for Change: The Story of Pablo Steele* (Harvey Steele) by Gary MacEoin.[∞]



Bishop George Marskell (right) on the parish boat with videographer and photographer Hans Eijssenck who was on assignment to the Brazil mission. Itacoatiara, 1990. Hans had worked on several projects with Scarboro missionary Fr. John Walsh at Development and Peace and was hired by Scarboro in 1989, with Susan Watson, to do video programs on the Society and its overseas missions. They also produced "Restless Mission Flame," a documentary on the life of Msgr. John Mary Fraser, founder of Scarboro Missions.

