

TMC NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER 1983 MC(P) 10/1/83

TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH 34 SERANGOON GARDEN WAY (1955)

PASTORAL EPISTLE

We had just decamped. A few days at the scenic and cool Fraser's Hill was enough to revitalise and refresh our overworked bodies. We enjoyed the Youth Retreat and we agreed that the time spent together was spiritually uplifting. How we wished we could stay longer. But Singapore beckoned us. We had to return to our work and schools.

Ah Chek our bus-driver was late. We reminded him to pick us up on time. When Stanley hired the bus, he had informed the company that we expected the bus to be punctual. Ah Chek made us wait for more than half an hour. A number of us were furious. Most of us did not seem to mind. We had each other's company. Somehow the camp drew us closer to each other and we felt that our relationship had taken on new meaning.

"We are going back to Singapore anyway. So what's the fuss if we were half an hour late," teased a lad who was obviously comfortable with rubber time.

On our way home, the bus brought us to Kay El. The petrol tank needed a drink. Our stomachs needed food. We left the town after dinner at about 8.00 at night. Ah Chek assured us that we should reach Singapore side of the causeway early next morning.

We bade farewell to the bright lights of the town centre. A group of throaty youngsters revised the new songs they learned at the retreat. Some decided to relax. Others seemed content exchanging greetings with the stars outside. Of course the moon followed us as we headed home.

Then something happened. The bus protested. It gave intermittent wounded cries. Ah Chek guided it to the edge of the highway. He stopped the bus to examine the spot which had complained noisily. It was dark outside. Once in awhile a motor vehicle would speed past our wounded bus. None stopped to offer

assistance. We had the music of a thousand insects to keep us company.

Ah Chek returned to us after he had taken a look at the troubled spot. We did not like the expression on his face. Not that he was not handsome. His face revealed something serious had happened. We had to spend the night in the bus which had broken down. When you needed them most, there was no telephone booth in sight. We could see no house either. Surrounding us were trees of different shades and sizes. Countless number of mosquitoes had a feast that night. We had to wait for the sun to rise before we could seek help to get the bus moving again.

As we tried to rest in the ill-fated bus, a number of youngsters showed signs of anxiety. They had heard tales of demon possessions and exorcism. They suspected we were attacked by the evil one. In fear, they grouped together to pray for God's protection.

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TMC IS TWENTY-SIX! PRAISE BE TO GOD!



Pastor Daniel Koh and his wife Dianna cutting the Anniversary Cake.

Very often in a church the pastor is the only one who sees to the spiritual needs of the congregation while the members of the L.C.E.C. see to the smooth running of the church. The majority of the members of the church are content to come to church every Sunday and maybe participate in some church activities once in a while.

Someone once described the church as a cart full of people representing the members with the pastor pushing the heavy cart all by himself. Sometimes the pastor is helped by some members of the L.C.E.C.. As I see it, the ideal situation would be for more members to get off the cart and join the pastor in pushing the cart forward.

Each and everyone of us has a part to play in ensuring that our church grows in quality and membership. The Bible tells us that we are all members of the Body of Christ. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians reminds us that "all of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it." (1 Cor. 12:27).

October 9, 1983 is Laity Sunday. On that day we will affirm the unique and important role of all members of the church. We will affirm that for the church to grow, we need God's guidance and the members' participation in the total ministry of the church.

I urge you as members of TMC to come forward to serve the Lord through the church as God had given each and everyone of us gifts and talents. You need not sit on the L.C.E.C. or be heads of organisations, You can serve in the various committee, be ushers, and participate actively in the ministries of the church.

Finally, the need for mutual dependence, respect and care cannot be over emphasised. 1 Cor. 12:31. Glory be to God.

Tham Yew Kee Editor

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One girl could not control her emotion. She got hysterical and cried for awhile. Those who broke into tongues did not help to calm the tense situation. It was left to the older ones among us to give words of encouragement and assurance. Ah Chek couldn't understand what was going on. Nevertheless he advised us to sleep in the bus and wait for dawn to break.

On reflection, the bus looked clean and new. We would have laughed at anyone suggesting that it would give us trouble. We were happy with the smooth journey all the way from Fraser's Hill to Kay El. None of us would have envisaged that we would be stranded in the highway.

But the bus broke down. The healthy looking bus ran into trouble. The clean bus could not move. In fact the engine was functioning well. The tank was filled up at Kay El. The brakes worked fine. Still the bus was immobilised. Ah Chek had identified the fault. One tiny ball-bearing was broken. The faulty ball-bearing had to be removed and a new one put in its place. Our lives were too precious to be exposed to silly risk. Ah Chek said we had to wait. We waited.

Now who would have imagined that a ball-bearing, so small and a seemingly insignificant part of the healthy looking bus would have caused the breakdown of an otherwise smooth journey? We don't usually think much

of small things. But the experience my wife and I went through with a group of young people three years ago changed my attitude towards lilliputians. I would never dare to underestimate the power and potency of things small, which may seemingly appear insignificant.

The Bible makes sense. "It takes only a little yeast to make the whole batch of dough rise." (Galatians 5:9.) Never belittle yourself, your talent, your contribution, your service and your importance. Your five loaves and two fish may help to feed another five thousand people. Your widow's mite may help to extend God's kingdom. Your little smile and courtesy brightens the day. Your Christian witness may lead another person to Christ.

On the other hand be careful not to kid yourself into explaining away "little lies" and "little sins". Usually little sins lead to bigger sins, and little lies lead to foul relationship with God and people. It was the little dosage of drug which made a person addicted to it. It was explaining away our absence from church services and fellowship that made us immuned to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The devil rejoices when we flirt with little sins. Small wonder!

God bless you.

With you in His Glorious Service,
Pastor Daniel Koh Kah Soon.

"TO GIVE OR NOT TO GIVE?" THAT'S NOT THE ONLY QUESTION.

Pastor Daniel K.S. Koh

SCENE ONE

You have just seen a picture of a young kid who is hardly five-year-old. Unlike those cute and chubby children whom you have often seen around you, the young kid in the picture stares at you with a pair of red-veined eyes clinging precariously onto his bony face. He is almost naked. He wears no shoe. His bloated tummy is not a sign of prosperity. It is the curse of poverty. This kid carries a dirty chipped clay bowl with a pair of hands that has more bone than flesh. The bowl is empty. The last meal he had was more than twenty-four hours ago, and that was a small portion of watery substance which your pet dog won't want to take a second look. Below the picture of this living skeleton is an emotive slogan inviting you to help fight poverty and save the starving children living in under-developed Fourth World. You are invited to pray for the children, send in a contribution or adopt a child.

What are you going to do about it?

SCENE TWO

You have always admired Christians of great faith. You marvelled at the way some Christians have to go through tough and difficult times because of their faith and belief. Lately you have heard stories of how Christians from the free world have risked their lives to smuggle Bibles into communist countries. These Christians belong to organisations pioneered in the West, and they specialise in smuggling Bibles. Often tales of bravery are head-lined in their publicity brochures and newsletters. They know how to use emotive words to tell you how evil the communist systems are, and how Christians wrapped under the oppressive curtains; be they bamboo or iron, have suffered for Christ. They give you the impression that without outside help from the so-called free world, Christians who have been tested and found faithful, cannot survive. Again you are invited to pray for them. You are hurried into parting with your money. Let your money be the missionary. Let your money do the walking.

How are you going to respond to this appeal?

SCENE THREE

You are bombarded with literature from a hundred and one organisations informing you of their evangelistic and missionary works in Singapore and far-away exotic lands. Some fantastic claims are made by these organisations. They remind you of the millions of people "who are heathens and pagans," and they tell you that they are winning these poor souls for Christ. Some of them boast of their unique methods of evangelism manufactured and packed in the West and uncritically imported here for local consumption and redistribution. You are told by each organisation that their work is worthy of your support. You are overwhelmed. Who should you support?

You want to help, but you feel helpless.

DOWN TO EARTH

Christians who have experienced the love of God, the grace of Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit are usually people with a good heart. We have experienced God's love, and we want to share His love with other people. We want to have a share in the on-going missions of the Church. We are happy to donate money to support the work of alleviating pains and suffering. We are happy to give money to support different areas of mission work.

But as we have illustrated above, it is not easy to really know which organisations we should support. There is a proliferation of para-church organisations and charitable organisations doing work that sometimes overlap, and asking the limited number of Christians for financial and prayer support. There is no doubt that many of these organisations are doing good work for God. Unfortunately because there are God-loving Christians who are cheerful and generous in their giving, we have also unscrupulous people and organisations around raising money to build their own kingdom rather than the Kingdom of God.

With God's help, we need to cultivate wise and selective giving. The next time when you are approached for financial support, ask these questions:

1. Is the organisation a locally registered and recognised body?
2. Who are the people controlling the organisation?
3. Are the accounts properly kept and audited by reputable auditing firm?
4. Who are the people sitting in the Board of Directors?
Are they people of integrity, or are they "yes" persons who receive direction from Headquarters outside Singapore?
5. Will the organisation furnish details of properly audited accounts if requested?
6. Are they divisive and arrogant in their policy and approach?
7. Are the people holding important posts in the organisation members of the same family?
8. Do they make fantastic claims which cannot be substantiated?
9. What percentage of their income is used for administrative expenses?
10. Is it an indigenous organisation?
11. Is there another organisation doing the same job more effectively?

If you are not satisfied with their answers, do not send your contribution. There are organisations around that deserve our whole-hearted support, and are prepared to give proper and responsible reports of what they are doing for the extension of God's Kingdom.

If you are in doubt, approach the pastor for advice. He will be more than happy to help.

TRAC MISSIONS TRIP TO INDONESIA 23rd to 30th JULY 1983

INTRODUCTION

Many Methodists know that Methodism in Singapore was planted as outreach from India. Not many may know, however, that the Methodist Church in Indonesia began, in turn, as an outreach from the Singapore Church. For reasons of history, the Indonesian Methodist Church is based at Medan, where it has its roots, and is strongest in this region.

Recently, these ties have been renewed through Bishop Kao's visit to North Sumatra, followed by the TRAC Pastors' retreat at Parapat. Bishop Sitorus, as head of the Gereja Methodist Indonesia (GMI), had sought assistance from the Methodist Church in Singapore and had already met Mr Loh Hoe Peng, Chairman, GC Council of Missions and Mr David Liow, Chairman, TRAC Board of Missions, in North Sumatra.

TRAC Board of Missions felt this would be a promising area for joint outreach and began planning for a Missions Trip to look into GMI programmes and to make specific recommendations to the Board, based on first-hand knowledge of these projects. Twelve members from seven TRAC churches visited North Sumatra from 23rd to 30th July for this purpose.

GMI - MEDAN

Medan is a typical, overcrowded, bustling Asian city, easily the second largest in Indonesia after

Jakarta. Here, in a large complex, GMI has its headquarters - administrative offices, the Bishop's residence and other staff quarters. In the same compound are the prestigious Sekolah Methodist, the Medan Bible School (planned to be relocated at Bandar Baru) and the University Methodist comprising four faculties - English, Agriculture, Economics and Medicine. Also in Medan, but outside this complex, is a small (100 bed) Methodist Hospital and perhaps the largest kindergarten in Indonesia with an enrolment of 1200 children. The influence of GMI on education in Sumatra is, as a result, considerable.

BANDAR BARU COMPLEX

Bandar Baru stands on the eastern edge of the central highland region, some sixty kilometres west of Medan, on the road to Berastagi. On 12 hectares of high ground overlooking the town and highway, GMI have started on their most ambitious project. Here the new seminary, an orphanage and a farm have begun to take shape. Here also, in time, a home for the elderly and a Methodist conference centre will be built. The seminary will be vital to GMI's continued growth. As an independent conference, GMI is relatively young and over the last few years, it has been experiencing a period of exponential growth of about 10% annually. This growth has to be supported by an adequate supply of trained workers, which the seminary aims to provide. The bible school in Medan trains personnel with a junior high school education, to become supply pastors. This training will continue at Bandar Baru when the seminary is completed. For the first time, however, students with a senior high school education have been enrolled this year for a higher level course at university undergraduate level. Graduates from this degree course will be ordained as full ministers. The seminary will also provide facilities for upgrading the training of supply pastors and lay-leaders through refresher and short-term courses.

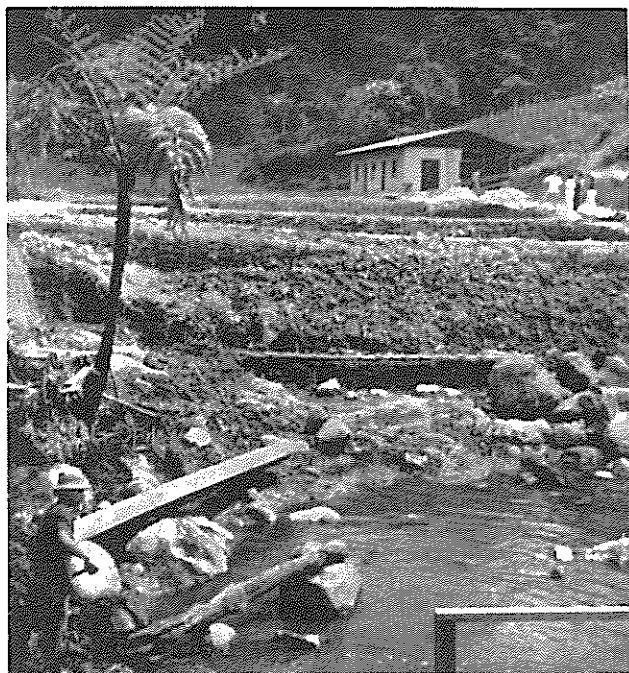
The Methodist Church in Singapore is currently extending financial support to a number of theological students at the bible school. This should be maintained and local churches could assist in supporting a larger number of students.

Faculty members for the seminary are in short supply, and perhaps our pastors, senior students at the Trinity Theological College and lay preachers could help out on term attachments. Finally, financial assistance towards the construction of the seminary, estimated at US\$148,000-, is badly needed.

Next in priority, for this complex, is the orphanage. Through this orphanage, the church will fulfill a two-fold function - social as well as spiritual. A properly staffed and well-run church orphanage will provide the environment conducive to moulding its wards into fine, serving Christians. One dormitory has been completed, with two more to come, together with staff quarters and the associated amenities. The total estimated cost is US\$50,000-.



GMI Complex in Medan. Members of TRAC Mission Team with Dr. Khor Tong Hong (Front, extreme left) as the Team Leader.



Bandar Baru Complex - Fish Pond Project.
Completed ponds are in the background.

Work on the farm, too, has begun and was in progress during our visit. On completion, there will be six fish-ponds and three areas for animal husbandry, one each for poultry, swine and goats. The intention is to make the complex self-sufficient in food. This project is costed at US\$20,000-.

The home for the elderly and the conference centre are still in the planning stage. The conference centre is estimated to cost US\$264,000- and the entire complex adds up to about US\$540,000- excluding the land which has been paid for. To place this in perspective, the total construction cost is just a little in excess of our proposed church extension cost!

KARO HIGHLANDS

Beyond the hill resort of Berastagi, and comprising the plateau at the north-western corner of North Sumatra are the Karo Highlands. Villages are strung along the two-lane metalled road winding through the highlands. The road reminds one of Fraser's Hill or the Cameron Highlands, but the vegetation is much less dense. The views are that much less hindered and often breath-taking - "mountain grandeur" is a term easily appreciated by any in this region. This is home to the Karo Bataks, one of five Batak dialect groups, the majority of whom are animists, and, until recently, occasional head-hunters! GMI has long attempted to reach out to this area along with the Lutherans and the Catholics, all with very limited success. The "break-through" came recently, when a chieftain's child was healed at the Methodist Hospital in Medan. The chief accepted Christ and the gates opened. In the Mardinding district of the highlands, thousands have been baptised during the past year.

The pressing problem is to nurture these converts into Christian maturity. Workers and meeting places are needed. Here, GMI resources are stretched thin. The team paired off to share in Sunday worship at six villages - at one, called Lua Pengulu, a newly-completed church was in use, at another, a building stood with the floor still packed-earth, and at all other villages, the services were conducted in the homes of the pastors or lay leaders. Land has been acquired and prepared in two areas, awaiting church construction, each costing US\$2,000-. Christian literature in the Batak language is another real need. The printing of bibles, hymnals and devotional guides in Medan has had to be suspended from lack of funds.

Whilst the spiritual thrust must remain the primary objective, economic assistance must follow closely. Rearing of poultry and swine is carried out on a small scale. Farming is also basic, rice being the staple crop. Maize has only been recently introduced with assistance from the church. The principal cash crop is the Buah Keruas, a nut rich in oil which is collected from the trees growing wild on the forested slopes.

GMI is actively helping out in the economic development of such areas through its agricultural extension project at Bandar Maruhur. We were not able to visit this project due to a lack of time. GMI did brief us on this scheme. The project provides agricultural expertise and practical training in cultivation and animal husbandry. "Motivators" from this centre will move out into the villages to put their training to practical use.

BOAT MINISTRY

Some six hundred kilometres south-east of the Karo Highlands lies the coast and off-shore islands of N Sumatra and Riau. Here, in the string of isolated coastal villages, many only accessible by sea, one steps into a totally different cultural and economic setting. The majority of the inhabitants are Chinese from Fukien, who migrated here from China or via Malaya, just across the Straits of Malacca. Fishing and trading are the main occupations. The older people speak Hokien, Mandarin and some Bahasa Indonesia but the young are all educated in Indonesian. This will, in time be the basis for integration of the Sumatra peoples and GMI is acutely aware of this.

The outreach programme here, comes in the shape of a converted fishing-trawler, the "Anugerah" (Grace) and the team she carries on board. This floating evangelistic post, with a medical clinic and a dental room visits the coastal villages on monthly round-trips from Tanjong Balai. The first such trip was in early July and the second, in August this year. We were able to board the "Anugerah" for a two-day sailing in between these first two regular runs. We were taken to Tanjong Leidong, the nearest of these villages, yet a good five-hour journey from the Tg Balai base. This gave our team the opportunity of meeting GMI workers in this boat ministry and also a chance of sharing Christ with the villagers during an "impromptu" service starting at 10pm, in a half-completed HKBP (Lutheran) church!



Boat Ministry - Boarding the "Anugerah" at Tanjong Balai.

Later, in Medan, we met the two doctors involved for July and August, one returning to Perth and the other, just in from Utah.

This programme is being run jointly by GMI and Rotary International. GMI is responsible for maintaining the boat, supplying the crew and staffing the evangelistic post, whilst Rotary supplies the medical personnel with all necessary government clearance. At present, the dental facilities are not being offered on a regular basis. Rotary, being a non-religious service club sends any medical Rotarian who offers to serve, the doctors having to pay their own way to and from Medan. There is no restriction placed on the doctor's religion. The ideal situation would be to staff the clinic with Methodist doctors, and we are recommending that TRAC explore this possibility with GMI.

GMI has estimated the annual recurrent cost of this project at US\$15,000-, though the actual expenditure for the first two months indicates this may be under-estimated by about 20%.

THE CHALLENGE

GMI is a rapidly-growing church. The infrastructure may be a little weak but it is present and could be built upon. The growth and consolidation of this church is deserving of support. Surely the Holy Spirit is working in the life of this church; in the planning of the varied and realistic programmes in spreading the Word and in nurturing mature Christians.

This report has attempted to present these programmes and to emphasise certain areas for immediate support in prayer, manpower and finance. It the interest of our local churches is aroused sufficiently for prayerful action to be taken, we may share in the blessings of this exciting work in Indonesia, cultivating and harvesting from the initial sowing from Singapore eight decades ago.

T H Khor
TMC Missions Committee

Last year, less than 50% of our total membership pledged to support our church. The majority of our members did not pledge. Our new church year started on August 1, 1983. About 150 members out of 440 members have sent in their pledges. We are praying that at least 60% of our total membership will pledge this year. If you have not submitted your pledge, will you do so without delay. It is a blessing and good Christian discipline to cultivate regular and systematic financial stewardship.

PULPIT CALENDAR

THEME - THE LORD'S PRAYER

SEPTEMBER

- 4 Our Father
- 11 Church Anniversary
- 18 Christian Education Sunday
- 25 Who Art In Heaven

OCTOBER

- 2 Hallowed Be Thy Name
- 9 Laity Sunday
- ~ 16 Thy Kingdom Come
- ~ 23 Thy Will Be Done On Earth
As It Is In Heaven
- 30 Give Us This Day Our
Daily Bread

NOVEMBER

- 6 Forgive Us Our Trespasses
- 13 As We Forgive Those Who
Trespass Against Us
- 20 Lead Us Not Into Temptation
- 27 Deliver Us From Evil

Once again, the year has passed so quickly that I am sure most of us feel we have not been able to do all the things we planned.

However, let us be thankful to God that He has been gracious in giving us the time and the talents to accomplish the more important plans.

At this time of our Church's 26th anniversary, we want to remember again those pioneers of our Church. If it had not been for their vision, their faith in God and their dedication, we would not have been so fortunate as to inherit a piece of valuable land and a beautiful Church. Let us follow the example set by our pioneering members so that with God's help, we may continue to grow from strength to strength and be a living witness to our community.

Daniel Gwee
LCEC Chairman

CALL TO PRAYER AND SELF-DENIAL

Elijah predicted to King Ahad that there wouldn't be any dew or rain for several years until God said the word. The Lord said to Elijah, "Go to the east and hide by the Cherith Brook at a place where it enters the Jordan River. Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to feed you." Elijah did as the Lord told him to. After a while the brook dried up, for there was no rainfall anywhere in the land.

Then the Lord said to him, "Go and live in the village of Zarepheth. There is a widow who will feed you. I have given her instruction." So he went. As he arrived at the gate of the city he saw a widow gathering sticks and he asked her for a cup of water.

As she was going to get it, he called her, "Bring me a bite of bread too." But she replied, "I swear by the Lord your God that I haven't a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jar. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and I must die of starvation."

But Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go ahead and cook that 'last meal', but bake me a little loaf of bread first, and afterwards there will be enough food for you and your son. For the Lord God says that there will always be plenty of flour and oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain, and the crops grow again!"

She did as Elijah said. She, Elijah and her son continued to eat from her supply of flour and oil as long as it was needed. For no matter how much they used, there was always plenty left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah! (1 Kings 17:1-16)

The widow made a loaf with her last bit of oil and flour for Elijah in her obedience and sacrifice to the Lord. Great is her faith too, in her belief that the Lord will bless her containers so that they will "give out" flour and oil for as long as there was drought in the land. God honoured her faith and sacrifice and supplied her with her needs.

The Lord said in Psalms 50:5, "Gather my godly ones to me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Our sacrifice in service, talent, or material is an indication of our obedience and love for our Master. Our Lord Jesus sacrificed His own life to save us from eternal damnation. We Singaporeans live in comfort, convenience and progress. It is easy to forget those around us who are less fortunate and needy. May God bless us with the love of Jesus to love and to give.

The sacrifice of foregoing a new dress, a pair of new shoes or a meal out at Svensen's or Kentucky Fried Chicken to support our projects is a very small denial on our part, when compared with the glory and honour Jesus denied Himself when He came down from heaven to suffer for our sins.

This year, our Call to Prayer and Self-Denial week is from September 19-25. Mrs. Dianna Koh will be speaking to us on the 23rd September, at 8.00 p.m. in a combined service in Paya Lebar Methodist Church. The offerings collected will go to support

- 1) Karo Batak students,
- 2) Poor and Needy in Ghana,
- 3) Sanyu Babies' Home, Uganda, and
- 4) Centre for the Disabled.

Paul told us in Ephesians 6:8, "Remember, the Lord will pay you for each good thing you do, whether you are slave or free." Our God is a rich God; we cannot outgive Him. He will even reward a cup of water you give to a stranger! "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." (Matthews 10:42).

May God richly bless you!
Patricia Chia, WSCS

Generosity is not giving me that which I need more than you do, but it is in giving me that which you need more than I do.

Kahlil Gibran



Anniversary celebration.

TWENTY-SIX. STILL GROWING.

Our church celebrated her twenty-six anniversary with a Buffet Dinner on Saturday, September 10 and the traditional Anniversary Services on Sunday, September 11, 1983.

Some 180 members and friends attended the evening fellowship dinner held at the church compound. The evening was made cool by the early morning heavy downpour which flooded part of Singapore and for a moment must have dampened the spirit of some of us praying for good weather. Our Lord was gracious. He answered our prayer.

The programme for the night was planned by a committee headed by our lay-leader Mr. Chew Chin Jin. Rev. Michael Wong, our District Superintendent brought greetings from the Trinity Annual Conference. Mrs. Violet Kwan donated the cakes. Our young people presented two song items and livened up the evening with a hilarious sketch. These young people were there before the first guest arrive; arranging chairs, carrying heavy tables and fixing the PA system. They were the last to leave as well. They had to clear the ground in preparation for the Anniversary Service the next day.

Praise be to God!



New members of the church. With you they have pledged to support the church with their gifts, presence, service and prayer.

NEW MEMBERSHIP AND BAPTISM CLASS

If you desire to be baptised and be confirmed as an active member of this church, register now for this class. Everyone who signed up is expected to be regular. The class will begin on September 18, and will conclude on December 11, 1983.

God has given us two hands - one for receiving and other for giving.

Billy Graham