

Saltshaker

Trinity Methodist Church • December 2003

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Trinity's 47 Years
Discipleship & Nurture
Christmas Greetings
Colour My World
We Fasted and Cried Out to God
The Laity Demystified
Diary of a Retreat
Nails on Cement

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Transitions – Meeting Challenges

The world is changing and we have to keep up with the changes lest we are left behind. Yes, we want to be productive in what we do, we want to be professional in our ministry, we want to be efficient and effective in the ways we go about our tasks, and we want to strive for excellence in every project and event. But, we must not forget our basics. And our basics is that we are called to be in the world and yet not of the world (John 15:19). We are called to be holy (set apart), to be different and to make a difference with our lives.

It is not always easy to make a difference with our lives when the world is beckoning us to conform to its values, to enjoy lives and to be a part of it. The world hates us when we do not belong to it! It is so easy to just go with the world and let the world into the church, to do as the world does. But Jesus calls us to obey Him and not the world.

As we struggle with our transitions and meet challenges, let us bear in mind that we are called to be God's family at Trinity. God has put us together to care for one another. But that is not all! He also wants us to be His light and salt to touch the world.

The year 2003 has been a watershed year for us. We have moved out of our familiar surroundings at Serangoon Garden Way to worship at Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School Primary Hall. It has been a year away from our own premises. We had our fair share of difficulties and adjustments, sometimes having to put aside our own preferences to do what is good for the Church. We have our disagreements, yet we are able to see that there is unity in diversity. Our aim is to work together to build the Church. It has been a good year for us as we can see the hands of God at work in our midst. The relocation has been smooth and settling into worshipping together in borrowed premises has been without major hitches. We thank God for that.

In the year, 2004, we will see ourselves gearing up for our move back to Serangoon Garden Way. Homecoming is what we are looking forward to towards the end of the year. 2004 will be another year of transitions for us. Therefore we have chosen the

theme, "Transitions – Meeting Challenges" to remind us that there will be changes ahead of us. To help us face the challenges to come, we are calling all members and worshippers to avail themselves to opportunities for

warmer fellowship to be experienced. Get to know one another. Combined Worship Services are good opportunities for us to get to know people we do not normally meet because of the different worship services we attend. Open ourselves to each other so that we can carry one another's burden. Join a Small Group.

As we develop warmer fellowship in the Church, we also want to grow in **deeper discipleship**. We urge you to return to the WORD and PRAYER. Let the Word of God inspire us to do more for Him and let prayer open our hearts to know God's will for us at Trinity.

Warmer fellowship and deeper discipleship will produce a **stronger leadership** that will be in touch with the whole congregation and one that is able to march to the heartbeat of God.

Let us march into 2004 with the knowledge that God who has begun His good works in us will be the ONE who will lead and guide us. Let us build Trinity to God's glory. Have a Joy-filled Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

Rev Philip Lim

Trinity's 47 Years

by Eugenia Koh

This year, TMC celebrated its 47th Anniversary.

Mr P. Sathiasingam, one of the pioneer members of the church, gives us a glimpse of what transpired in those early years and how God has worked in, and through, TMC.



What was TMC like in the early years?

I would equate TMC in the early years to a Small Group of these days but without any Church affiliation or supervision.

The group was made up mostly of young married couples of Wesley Homemakers Group and members of other Methodist Churches who took up residence in the newly completed Serangoon Garden Estate in late 1956.

The late Reverend Christopher Smith, writing in the Silver Jubilee Souvenir of TMC, described it thus:

"My first memories are from 1955 - an open-air witness, surrounded by builders' rubble, somewhere near where the 'Chomp-Chomp' now stands (if it still does!). The late Andrew Lee, then a fairly recent new resident in Cowdray Avenue and for so long the founder-spirit of the venture; Jimmy Martin, a British businessman later to resign and become a Methodist minister; and the lovely voice of Leila Havelock rising above the noise of the traffic".

Cowdray Avenue consisted of sitting on the chairs and floor sometimes into the kitchen for lack of space. Then the welcome generous offer came from St. Peter's Church for the use of their sanctuary for our services.



The Sunday Schools were all functioning out of homes in Huddington and Cowdray Avenues and with regular but small Parish meetings offering prayers of thanksgiving and seeking God's guidance for the future directions.

It was then considered a 'Family Church' and it still is today although we have grown in numbers.

How is TMC different now from its early years?

I don't think there is much difference in the 'Spirituality' and in the Vision and Mission of the Church to win souls for Christ. We could be perceived as impersonal but that again depends on what an individual is looking for from the Church. We have grown in numbers and interaction among the members and congregation could be lacking - something people tend to compare

between then and now because some of us have been here from Day One.

TMC's ministries have grown as evidenced from the Local Conference reports. The work of Social Concerns (the late Mr Francis Lee) and Missions

(the late Mr Andrew Lee to the Sengois and Woodbridge Services) were seeds sown in the early days of TMC. Church planting and Missions Outreach to the unreached people in Cambodia and sending students on study scholarships to Trinity Theological College are a fulfillment of God's calling to Trinity.

God has not changed - but the expectations and lifestyles of people have changed and therefore the changes that have come about with advancement in science and technology, sometimes obscure God's love and compassion for us.

The present Redevelopment Project is not a big issue but it has turned out to be. We were no different from those days when we were scouting around for a place of worship and finally bought the present land for \$58,000 (a 999 year leasehold) in 1958. It was a difficult decision to make but God helped us to make that decision and we obeyed it. Consider the value of the land in terms of today's price in the open market. These are business issues but can we say that God has short-changed us?

How have you seen God work in TMC?

God has been faithful and has kept His promise to all those in TMC who believed in Him. It is obvious that He has blessed everyone who has been faithful to His call. The fact that people have come back to worship Him through TMC is a testimony that God is at work in TMC.

I have heard many appreciate the counseling and care of the Pastors, Prayer sessions, Small Groups and committed lay people for their love and compassion. People are willing to come forward to give testimonies of what God has done in their life, through TMC.



The people were of one mind and that was to establish a Methodist presence in Serangoon Gardens. As a very small group, they were warm and friendly, and would be missed if they did not turn up for meetings or fellowships. The first Services that were held in a home at

DISCIPLESHIP & NURTURE COMMITTEE IN TMC

by Ellen Seah

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

- 2 Timothy 3:16, 17...

As the guiding verse for the TMC Discipleship & Nurture Committee, this verse on its own speaks a lot for the purpose of this committee.

The primary aim of the Discipleship & Nurture Committee ('D&N') is to build up the congregation through the teaching of the Word. Typically, you will notice that other ministries in TMC usually target a particular group of the congregation, such as children, youth and music. D&N is unique in that it targets the congregation as a whole.

Indeed, learning the Word of God is one of the most fundamental and important things a Christian should do. From basic knowledge about our God to understanding profound expositions of the Word, this learning journey is an important and never-ending one. The D&N Committee plays a significant role in looking into the various avenues that support the church in building up the biblical knowledge of the church members.

At present, activities organised by D&N broadly covers 4 areas: DISCIPLE courses, Bible talks & workshops, Resource Centre and the Discipleship Roadmap.

Disciple Course

Being firmly established in TMC now, the DISCIPLE course effectively helps members build up their foundation in the understanding of the Word. To date, 117 church members have completed DISCIPLE I and about 30 have completed DISCIPLE II... and the numbers are still growing. A number of the graduates are now confidently assuming the facilitator roles in the on-going sessions and many others are now serving in various ministries after being convicted by the Holy Spirit through God's Word.

Bible Talks & Workshops

For Bible talks & workshops, there was the talk on the Book of Acts by speaker, Mr Kua Wee Seng in February this year and a workshop on Learning How to Study the Bible by Mrs Tan Kiem Kiok. Such talks and workshops are generally well-received. Members who have benefited from attending such events can expect more in the year to come.

Resource Centre

The temporary move to Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' Primary School has inevitably disrupted the previous weekly operation



The D&N Committee: (from Left) Alex Tan, Goh Ken-Yi, Andy Seah, Ellen Seah (not in picture: Fang Yea Yee)

of Resource Centre. However, after 4 months of absence, we see again the now-smaller-but-equally-helpful Resource Centre serving church members on every 2nd and 4th week of each month. The faithful Resource Centre members painstakingly worked out the new operational difficulties and are now able to resume operations with makeshift shelves and loyal resource centre users, the children especially!

Discipleship Roadmap

While the DISCIPLE course is the talk of the town in TMC at present, the Discipleship Roadmap is probably still an 'alien' tool to some church members. This roadmap will be introduced to TMC this coming January and will serve as a guide for church members in assessing and improving their spiritual growth. It charts a systematic path for people to take in terms of Christian growth from the time of their conversion until they assume the mantle of leadership in TMC. The committee will be promoting the use of this roadmap by our members at the January 2004 Fellowship Lunch (after Combined Service). Look out for it!

Besides the 4 broad areas, other ad-hoc projects undertaken by D&N include the planning of the recent Combined Service Fellowship Lunches. Another project that D&N is involved in is the Crossover Fellowship targeting the young adults who have just left Youth Ministry. D&N's involvement is mainly to provide guidance, teaching in Bible Studies and mentorship for the young adults.

In the coming year, D&N hopes to achieve more in the area of providing support and assistance to the other ministries such as organising Prayer Workshops with the Prayer & Intercession Ministry, so as to equip our people with more proficient skills and knowledge that enable them to serve even better.

Another immediate task for D&N is to encourage more members to take up the DISCIPLE course. One useful feature of the DISCIPLE course is that members learn to identify and recognize their spiritual gifts. Hence D&N will set out to get more graduates to put this knowledge into practical use by serving in the various ministries.

So if you are curious to find out more about your spiritual gifts and have the desire to serve the church in a ministry, joining the DISCIPLE course will be a good start!

Discovering DISCIPLE

Revolutionizing. Transformational. Solid. Moulding.

These were some words used by graduates to describe the DISCIPLE 1 programme. Saltshaker caught up with some of the graduates to get them to reflect on their experiences. May they inspire you to take up the DISCIPLE 1 challenge too!

by Alex Tan

Q: What is the level of commitment required to attend the DISCIPLE course?

Tricia Tong: Faithfulness and a desire to know what the whole of God's Word says, and not just parts of it.

Sherry Koh: High level – at least 90 percent if not 100 percent.

Richard Seng: A very serious and deep one. 40 weeks will come and go but it is not something to be taken lightly.

Lynn Cham: Moderate... just additional time during daily Quiet Time and 2.5hrs each week.

Davina Lai: High.

A commitment that one should persevere with (i.e. juggle my time to do the daily work) since the covenant has been made.

Q: What adjustment did you make to achieve the level of commitment required?

Tricia Tong: Going to work earlier every day in order to spend time in quiet reading His word.

Sherry Koh: Re-scheduling of daily routine, setting aside at least 30mins if not 1hr of personal time for reading, research, and meditation.

Richard Seng: I bluntly questioned myself how much I believed in the course for the good that it gives, if I do believe it, and want the benefits, I would make the time for it, somehow. It gets worked into my daily schedule.

Lynn Cham: My Sunday afternoon was taken... that meant leisure time sacrificed.

Davina Lai: Lifestyle changes – spending more time alone reading.

Koh Eu Beng: Quite a bit, especially around the work travel bit. Also, the daily assignments meant adjusting my schedule to fit in the 'extra' piece of work.

Q: What particular problem or difficulty did you face while attending the course?

Tricia Tong: Tendency to speed-read the familiar texts instead of reading meditatively.

Sherry Koh: Minding the kids – felt a little bad about leaving the kids and not minding them when I should be.

Richard Seng: Time – the resource that seems to flow non-stop but yet at the same time takes many things away from us if we are not careful with it.

Lynn Cham: Inability to articulate my thoughts.

Davina Lai: Transportation.

Koh Eu Beng: Keeping up to the assignment at times was difficult, especially when it required reading many chapters of a book (eg OT studies)

Q: Was there a time when you wanted to give up, and what did this moment coincide with?

Tricia Tong: Yes. When doing the New Testament, I felt that more time had to be spent with the familiar text so that one didn't take it for granted. The corollary was that I sometimes got impatient with it.

Sherry Koh: No.

Richard Seng: Once I was sure that the programme was something I believed in, this was not an option.

Lynn Cham: No, not at all.

Davina Lai: When heavy classes coincided with high demands from work.

Koh Eu Beng: Fortunately, no, this wasn't on my mind (giving up)

Q: What lessons have you learnt? What particular lesson that is more relevant than others? Has it been easy/difficult to apply lessons learnt?

Tricia Tong: God chooses the weak to do his work, and the most unexpected and unlikely scenarios in which to work. He desires us to worship and obey Him no matter what the circumstances, as worship is better than sacrifice. The ease of application of these lessons sometimes depends on one's current state of mind, maturity and emotional being. Continued and diligent application requires a growing faith.

Sherry Koh: The power of the Holy Spirit – the importance of being a good disciple "to serve and not to be served"; this has been my key lesson learnt.

Richard Seng: To know God the Creator is lovely, to have Him love me is priceless, to have him die for my sins, my life must speak for Him. The waywardness of Man has not changed since Adam, so hasn't the Love of the Creator. His power to kill/let live and my goodness. His Love that lifts ANY soul.

It has never been, nor it shall ever be, easy to stick to Him at a level that will make one feel good enough – there will always be a segment of my wretched life that needs fresh surrender to Him.

Davina Lai: The programme dealt in depth with what being a disciple entails. I personally felt that the lesson on "The cost of discipleship" was particularly relevant. To apply all 37 characteristics of a disciple is an on-going journey but it is encouraging to know that people in the bible have done it before and you are not alone in this journey.

Koh Eu Beng: The lessons on God's plans and the experiences of Israel are particularly new to me. Most of the lessons had 'soul-searching' questions, which then brought a new perspective of my personal spiritual life.

Q: What changes have you undergone since attending the DISCIPLE course?

Tricia Tong: A deeper awareness of the application of the Old Testament and, therefore the entire Word of God, to present-day life.

Sherry Koh: More prayerful within the family, especially instilling to our children the need for prayer.

Davina Lai: I experienced a renewed passion for my ministry. All of us in the ministry have taken DISCIPLE and we are implementing parts of it in the curriculum; with the same biblical grounding, it is a better foundation for executing lessons, and integrating the principles taught through the class. Also, I have developed a strong desire to edify other brothers and sisters-in-Christ.

Koh Eu Beng: Growing as a Christian, understanding the 'bigger picture' in my Bible Studies, and overall, keeping in mind – the Discipleship that we all have to be.

Q: Who is this course suitable for?

Tricia Tong: Anyone desiring to know what it takes to be a disciple of God, anyone serious in being a disciple, serious in wanting to know God's word for what it is in its entirety.

Sherry Koh: New believers/young Christians.

Richard Seng: Anyone who wants to kick himself/herself out of the comfy and hazy: Christian walk, where Spirit and Daily Life are divorced half the time.

Lynn Cham: I would not recommend it for new believers as it may be too much for them. But if they are earnest, nobody can stop them.

Davina Lai: Christians who have been with TMC for a year at least.

Koh Eu Beng: All persons, regardless of age, educational level, and work experience. Especially for those we think they know (enough) of the Bible, they should attend; and those who especially struggle to find time with God – this is a good, disciplined way to get into spending time daily with God.

Interested to take up the DISCIPLE 1 challenge? Fill up the enclosed response slip and return it to the Church Office. Be prepared...your Christian walk will never be the same again!

Yes! I want to take up the DISCIPLE 1 Challenge. Please get in touch with me!

Name: _____

Contact number: _____

Email: _____

(Pls return this to the Church Office, or the info-counter after church services.)

To the Watchmen,
May the richness of
God's blessings fill you
this Christmas season & the
wisdom that comes from the
Word of God light your path
always. ♥ NINISTON

May God's Blessings touch
you this Christmas!
With Love from
David, Dawn, Daniel &
Dominic Gwee

Wishing everyone a
God-blessed Christmas
Keng Teck, Fong Chun &
Family

GIVE THANKS TO OUR
GOD FOR HIS GIFT,
JESUS CHRIST

FR: NGUK FUI, Irene, David
Jit & Debbie.

dear precious
Your love is strong & your
touch is everlasting.
Thank you for being who you
are in my life.

ever yours,
abcin

Dear rock,

You are beautiful!
ALWAYS....
Have a blessed

Christmas

CIN

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

to: Worship team & all TMC
Serangoon members
north S.G. & friends,
+ P.A. team + Saltshaker
HAVE A BLESSED TEAM
CHRISTMAS AND A GREAT
YEAR AHEAD! + GOD BLESS
♥ ZACH + PATSY

Wishing Members
+ friends
a Blessed God
Bless
Christmas + New Year
Paklin

A GOD BLESSED
CHRISTMAS

MR & MRS TAY Soon Hock

亲爱的
谢谢你这十年来给予我的
♥
MAY YOUR CHRISTMAS BE
FILLED WITH JESUS!
耶稣♥你, 我也♥你!
abcin

Wishing one and all
a Joyous Christmas
and a Happy New Year
SATHAS.

Merry Christmas to
all @ TMC

Chin Hyuk Fui,
Irene & David

A Blessed Christmas
&
A Happy New Year!

From: Mr & Mrs
Lee Eng Kian

Dear All
in Christ

Dec 03

Our thanks to God for
allowing us to grow
spiritually with you in TMC.
Have a Blessed Christmas!
Diana, Chee, Simon & Shong

Wishing All A
BLESSED CHRISTMAS

from
Mr and Mrs Lee
Cheong Seng & family

Wishing all TMC members
Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year!
Maw Maw Tekh Chui Pong
& family

To: Pastors & all members
of TMC,

A very blessed X'mas
&

A joyous New Year

from: Judy & ENG HOCK

Wish to
our pastors
& all our TMC
friends a
Blessed &
joyous Christmas '03
-CHERKHEE MAELY & CHERYL

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO...
DEN COMMITTEE & all
Resource Centre helpers
THANK U FOR YOUR HARD WORK
this year !! may the LORD
BLESS U & KEEP U !!

ANDY
ELLON

CHRISTMAS
GREETINGS

CHRISTMAS
GREETINGS

CHRISTMAS
GREETINGS

A Blessed +
Joyful Christmas
to all
Phyllis Ong



May Love, Joy and
Peace be with all at
TMC and a Happy and
joyous Christmas
to all.
Mr + Mrs Jey Kam Chong
+ family



Wishing all of you
A joyfilled Christmas
and a hope laden
New Year
Pastor Philip + family

To Pastors + Families
and all TMC Members
Merry Christmas + A
Happy New Year
2004



Suzie Gann

2003
3



2003
3

Dear Serangans North SG!
Merry Christmas and Best
wishes for the New Year!
God Bless, Ken, Viv & Ethan.

Wishing all TMC Members
a happy, blessed and
merry X'mas. May God
bless you all.
Helena
Family



Wishing all our friends
a Merry & Blessed Christmas

from: Emily, William,
Marek & Andrew
(WILFREDS)



To: Pastors, Members &
Friends at TMC
May God's rich blessings
be with you at this
Yuletide season.
Love Stephen, Jessie, Romona &
Celia

Pastors... TMC Staff... Friends
Joy Peace Love



BLESSED X'MAS
to ONE and ALL
PAUL NG
MAUREN
NANCY NG

May You Experience
God's Love, Joy,
Peace & Truth

this Christmas &
throughout 2004!

Sin Hoon,
Eunice, Sam & Dan



To All TMC Members & friends,
scattered & gathered, every
rich for the Joy & love of
Christ this Christmas and
the light through the Yuletide
come.



Khor
family

Dear Brothers & sisters in
Christ.

Merry X'mas + Happy New
Year.

from Sally & Nancy



CHRISTMAS
GREETINGS

AYAYE I LOVE YOU
MERRY CHRIST
MASOC
Deborah Wong



Wishing everyone
at Trinity a very
Joyous & Blessed
Christmas.



Mr & Mrs PANG KIA SENG

To Family Aspiration members,
In season, out of season,
In our work, in play,
Our blessed Lord be with you all
In this festive cheers,
may you all continue to come
together to share, to love, to pray
& to give.
Thank you for the joy, laughter
& love of this group. Andrew Low



With Love to
Lesley, Lois
& Yasha.

Thank you for being here for me!!



CHRISTMAS
GREETINGS

Wishing all
Brothers-and-sisters-in-Christ
a very Blessed Christmas and a
Happy New Year!

Jit Siew,
Merintha &
family



Wishing all member
& friends a
Blessed Christmas.

Sally Tam + Jey



CHRISTMAS
GREETINGS



by Eugenia Koh

COLOUR MY WORLD

Colour My World - TMC's first creative evangelistic outreach to the upper primary girls at Paya Lebar Methodist Girls Primary School (PLMGPS), was jointly organized by the Witness and Evangelism Committee (W&E) and the Children's Ministry (CM) on 6 December. In total, 27 girls from PLMGPS joined 30 children from our CM for a one-day vacation art camp based on the art of French impressionistic painter, Vincent van Gogh. The one-day vacation camp incorporated many interesting activities, to allow the organisers to share the gospel in a creative way.



The day started with worship and icebreakers led by our Youth Ministry. Indeed, what better way to start a camp on Art than by praising the one who has created unparalleled works of art - our God! The icebreakers helped create a friendlier and more relaxed environment, as our helpers mingled with the girls.

The various activities saw an outpouring of creativity, beginning with the girls engaging in "Creating Colours" using the colour wheel and "ladder" of colour intensity to give a better understanding of colours and the concepts of primary and secondary colours.



Incorporated into "Creating Colours" was the story of God's creation.

For the rest of the day, they imitated Van Gogh's two famous paintings - "Sunflowers" and "Starry, Starry Night", painting on pots and in groups on large art canvases respectively.

Through the second activity of painting sunflowers on pots, the girls were also told about the life of Vincent van Gogh and taught how to paint using techniques he used. The story of van Gogh, titled "The man, the myth and the

legend" captivated the girls, as they heard of the many hardships and sufferings he went through. Interwoven within the story was the hope that God provides for each of us, that even though we may, at times, feel as hopeless as van Gogh felt, (van Gogh underwent severe depression and eventually committed suicide), we need not end up like him as there is a God who is there to carry us through.

Finally, the finale of the day! Working in groups, the girls were given the opportunity to paint on large art canvases. Their painted canvases of "Starry, Starry Night" provided the backdrop for the story of Abraham, and of God's promise to Abraham that his descendents would be as plentiful as the stars in the sky. Once again, the story spoke of God's love for the girls, that there is a God of promise out there for them, one who hears their cries and fulfils His promises.



Indeed, what a beautiful time it was for all present, as we reflected on the beauty of our God, not only in His creation but also the beauty of his promises and the hope we can hold fast to. At the end of the day, the children of the CM also invited their new friends back to TMC on Saturday 20 December to join in their annual Christmas Party fun. We pray that these new friendships made between TMC and PLMGPS will be the seeds that will allow God's purposes to work in the lives of the children.



The paintings are available for auction on New Year's Day.

The Day We Fasted and Cried Out to God

"Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God, cry out to God" Joel 1:14



Trinity Methodist Church (TMC) followed the example of the New Testament church in Antioch (Acts 13) by praying and fasting together. After the combined service on 5 October 2003, a group of about sixty church members gathered to fast and pray.

A week earlier, a brief exposition on fasting was placed as an insert in the order of service to explain to the congregation the significance of prayer and fasting. The purpose of fasting, as espoused by Reformer John Calvin was for 'prayer and meditation; overcoming human sinful nature; repentance and confessions of sins'. Biblical greats, such as Moses and Paul, had also found it necessary to pray and fast.

Fasting is a prelude to prayer and an indication of the solid practical grounds upon which the resolve to submit to God in prayer is based. However, it is not a convention, much less a Christian injunction - it is a blessing.

Not everyone in TMC fasted on Sunday, 5 October, and some of us are still unsure of why we should fast. Although it was only a fraction of the congregation that stayed on to fast and pray, the insights gained were meaningful. Two members of the congregation shared their experiences with Saltshaker.

In the case of Ms Amy Cheong, her fast began from 10 a.m. and ended at 6 p.m. Praying and fasting is not something

*Fasting is:
when we deny
ourselves and see
how much we
rely on God for
strength*

new to her since she had been keeping faith by doing so every season of Lent. To her, fasting is: 'When we deny ourselves and see how much we rely on God for strength. It is an act of humility for the naturally proud not to rely upon their own strength'.

Consequently, it is easier to skip a meal for fasting than for dietary purposes because she knows that God will take of her whenever she fasts and not deny her any spiritual and physical benefits. It is a faithful reminder of how much God is in control. What flowed naturally was the courage to look for a new job and to commit her job search efforts to God in prayer. Amy commented that not everyone has the mental or spiritual discipline to do so. In the past, she had encountered mental blocks; they could be trying as a test of faith and self-denial. Gradually she realized that she could go through normal life and activities during a fast, though she could get a bit tired physically.

As for Mr Sim Cher Khee, he preferred to fast between 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. He first fasted during Good Friday and the Sunday on 5 October was his second. It became his resolution to adopt it as a practice and he drew inspiration for that from Ezra 8:21-23. And, if he had cause to find it difficult to do so initially - as a creature of habit who needs to eat - he certainly took it all in his stride eventually. Praying and fasting, as an organized event, has helped him enormously as he was prompted to get over his initial difficulties. He found it

meaningful to fast because he could be 'closer to God, rely upon Him and hear Him more clearly'. In addition, he looks upon such activities as opportunities with the rest of TMC or fellow Christians to fast and pray. He desired to 'experience this new adventure with God' and, also, for everyone including himself, to 'see fasting and praying as a lifestyle, and means to know God more and allow Him to direct us.'

Reverend Philip Lim chose to skip breakfast and lunch and ended the fast with a normal dinner. The means for fasting was varied but the ends remained the same.

On 5 October 2003, TMC prayed. The members were as musical instruments: harmonised, attuned to God and in symphony. Where two or three were gathered in God's name, He was there in their midst to give expression to His mind, purpose and will. That was evident in the midst of the praying and fasting members of His body. There was agreement and the conforming to God's will. In fasting, the church members presented themselves before God as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable. As one, the church prayed for the Prayer Ministry, Small Groups, Discipleship and Nurture activities, Chinese Fellowship, Redevelopment project, evangelistic efforts in Cambodia, social concerns and Boys Brigade. The church also prayed for personal revival. The session was a glowing testimony that God can make a prayer warrior out of every church member yet.

by Chan Chong Wei

The Laity Demystified by Amanda Yong

Question: Who are the Laity?

- a) All Christians
- b) Pastors
- c) Church leaders
- d) Church members

Answer:
None of the Above

In the Christian context, the simple answer would be (a) minus (b). The laity are ordinary Christians, like most of us, who are neither trained nor ordained to serve as pastors, but are nevertheless also called to serve the Lord in ministry by giving of our talents and time.

Laity Sunday is observed every year to recognise and celebrate the importance of the role of the lay people to the life and the ministries of the church. This year's Laity Sunday, on 12 October, saw the installation of the Local Church Executive Committee (LCEC), which comprises chairpersons of the various committees, coordinators of the various ministries, stewards, delegates to the Trinity Annual Conference (TRAC), treasurers, secretaries, heads of the various organisations like the GB, and so on. Dr Wu Dar Ching, Vice President of TRAC, and himself a member of the laity, was invited to give the sermon, "Seeking the Presence of God through Prayer", this year's theme which was set by TRAC, and taken from 2 Chronicles 7:14-15.

Saltshaker sought the views of our Pastor-in-charge, Reverend Philip Lim, and our lay leader, Mr P. Sathiasingam on the role and importance of laity in our church. Their replies are published below:

Dear Amanda,

The laity is an important part of the Methodist Church. Many of the ministries are successful because of the faithful involvement of the lay people of the church. As a pastor, I appreciate very much our lay people for their love, commitment and participation in the life and ministries of the church and their partnership with the pastors in many areas of ministries.

Regards, Philip.



Dear Amanda,

In the early history of all Methodist Churches, even before the Pastors were posted to the charge, the responsibility of keeping the vision and mission of the Church, fell on the shoulders of committed Lay members and a Lay Leader from amongst them.

Trinity Methodist Church is no different. I recall the names of 'Uncle Lam' (Mr Lam Yet Seng) and 'Uncle Andrew' (Mr Andrew Lee), our first Lay Leaders who ensured that every detail necessary for Worship and Christian fellowship was taken care of - inviting Pastors to preach and serve Holy Communion, visiting members both at homes and in hospital, and sharing the Gospel when no Pastor was available. They personified exemplary Christian service and leadership. They were my mentors.

According to the Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church, the Lay Leader functions as the primary lay representative of the laity in a local church, with several responsibilities. However, we have come a long way from the days of our beginning and we have now to share the responsibilities with Associate Lay Leaders appointed to assist the Lay Leader.

Not everything in the Local Church is plain sailing. Sometimes, the Lay Leader has to act as a middleman in clarifying decisions or issues taken.

I have much to thank God for calling me, even me, to serve Him.

Sathia

Diary of a Retreat by Patsy Ong

Thursday

17

Oct 2003



Rev Peter Poon was fantastic!



The DISC personality test
Wow! Everyone so busy...

Dear Diary,

Today, I had an interesting day at the LCEC retreat. Reverend Peter Poon led us in a series of Team Building Activities. And no, there were none of the usual dreaded obstacle/confidence courses or group puzzles. It was all very civilized and insightful. We did a personality test DISC which helped us discover our unique personality profiles and how they affected the way we interacted with other church members. Reverend Peter Poon also highlighted how we could maximize our effectiveness in our various capacities.

After dinner, Pastor Philip and Dr. Hum talked about the roles of LCEC members. I particularly liked it because we were reminded of the practicalities of being LCEC members, i.e. Hold a personal spiritual walk with Jesus; Hold the vision of TMC ever before us; Hold on to the Father's business and; Hold each other accountable. All very useful reminders, except that, at that point, I was quite at a loss as to what was the vision of TMC.

Dr. Hum soon enlightened me when he shared TMC's vision (and it's not the one about the \$12 mil dollar ship which is 'vision' as in God sending us 'dreams and visions'):

"TMC's vision is to become a Healthy Balanced Church that spurs our people on to Win the Lost, to be Built up in the Faith, to be Equipped for the Work of Ministry, and to Raise Leaders to bring TMC forward."

(** must try and remember that Dr Hum used a very helpful acronym WILBER)

Because the vision is a long-term one, there is also the more immediate 'focus' that stemmed from the vision. The focus for the coming year was 'Transitions: Meeting Challenges' - the challenges referred to both the spiritual and physical challenges we would face as we prepare for our Return next year to Serangoon Garden Way.

Dr. Hum also shared about the 3 objectives while preparing for our return: Deeper Discipleship, Warmer Relationships and Stronger Leadership. Also the 3 primary areas of work: Prayer Ministry, Small Group Ministry and Leadership Growth and Development.

Oh dear.... How can I remember all these? Chew on it in my dreams.... ZZzzzzz.....

Dear Diary,

It was nice chatting with new people over breakfast and lunch. Uncle Yip was telling us about the breakfast fellowship at his place. Prayer and Food - great combination!

After worship, we got down to serious planning. The various ministries and committees split into 3 main groups (Evangelising, Establishing and Equipping) led by the 3 associate lay leaders, Ms Violet Khor, Mr Lee Park Ming and Uncle Yip. Uncle Sathia was on hand to provide consultancy!

As each ministry and committee made plans for their activities and programmes, they also considered consciously how they could support the three focus areas of work - prayer, small groups and leadership. There were plenty of innovative and exciting ideas (and a few wacky ones too!).

The whole segment was concluded by the presentations where everyone heard all the plans and programmes for the coming year. It's nice to know that all the different groups of people are working towards a common goal in their own unique ways. We spent the last part of the programme-planning session taking the decision on whether or not to continue with the regular combined communion service. It was not an easy decision and I suspect most people changed their minds through the course of the discussion, especially when reminded of the original motivation for it. But we felt peace at the end that the right decision had been made - and it was a decision not driven by logistical demands, or individual preferences; instead, while we had the luxury of space in PLMGPS, we wanted to enjoy and build fellowship, like in the NT church where 'they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' (Acts 2:42).

We ended the retreat by serving communion to one another. As we drove out into the falling night, I thought it had been a most fruitful retreat.



Our discussion was most fruitful

Friday

18

Oct



Caught in action "yummy"

Nails on Cement

It was a cold and wet Saturday afternoon on 20 September 2003. The thought of climbing down 3 flights of rickety stairs didn't strike me as I went for the 'Foundations on Cement' session at the original Trinity Methodist Church along Serangoon Gardens Way. Members of the congregation had been invited to inscribe a verse from the Bible onto slabs of wet cement at the very foundation of the church, a symbolic way of representing that God's Word is the foundation of the church.

Upon arrival, the people were ushered to the old Media Resource Library, which has been converted to an office, to collect their safety helmets. Reaching the edge where the ground level opened to the deep gap where the basements would be, I wondered whether there was another way down, like using a crane. The stairs to the lowest basement were wet with the rain and narrow, so the workers made us walk down in single file. Not more than four were allowed to walk down the stairs to ensure that there would not be a domino effect should somebody slip and fall. Praise God that nobody did.

Reaching the bottom, Reverend Philip, Pastor Kai Ming and members of the LCEC were busy instructing those who were already there on what to write. There was a pre-prepared list of Bible verses people could choose from. After selecting the verses they would write, everyone took a nail and left to choose a space to write on within the 6 slabs of wet cement provided.

Writing on cement is no easy task because one has to avoid getting cement on the hands and yet write legibly. Once everybody had written on the cement, the photographers on site took several group shots and everybody went up to the office where Pastor Philip closed the whole event with a prayer. One of the senior member of our congregation commented, when I interviewed her, that she was very thankful that God has given her a chance to write on the foundations of the newly built church and that it was something she would not forget so easily. A youth had a brilliant idea and said that he would keep the nail, auction it off some time later and contribute the proceeds to the Church Redevelopment fund.

by Lai Wei Cheng

