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SALTSHAKER

TRINITY
Methodist Church

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It's all about me – NOT!

By Rev Dianna Khoo

Many years ago, someone gave me a t-shirt with "It's all about me" printed in bold across the front. Like most people, this t-shirt is appropriate for me in many ways. From time to time, I fall into the sin of self-centredness. I like to think that it is all about me. So this t-shirt is a reminder that it is actually not all about me.

We all need these reminders because we live in a world that increasingly promotes the individual's rights or one's own self-interests over almost everything. "It's all about me" is not just printed on a t-shirt; it is imprinted on the fabric of our society.

Anyone who joins a choir soon realises that it is not "all about me." When a good choir sings in unison, you cannot pick out one voice. Each person sings his or her part and the sound produced is always greater than just one person's.

While it is true that God loves us each as individuals and knows us each so intimately as to know the number of hairs on our head, that love also calls us to look beyond our own selfish desires. Scripture reminds us again and again that is not just all about me. Unfortunately, it often takes a lot for us to realise God's call to look beyond ourselves.

Archbishop William Temple once wrote, "The church is the only organisation that exists for the benefit of its non-members." Christianity, at its best, opens our eyes to all that is around us. It shows us a world that is always in need of love and action.

A friend of mine was posted to a church in a little village in the north of England and told to close it down. This once healthy church had dwindled to about 10 people on any given Sunday. After being at that church for some time, my friend said, "It was so close to death that you could smell resurrection." So, instead of closing the church, she seized the opportunity for resurrection. This little church stopped looking inward towards its own death, and started looking outward towards a new life.

In Luke 7:11-17, Jesus interrupts a large crowd gathered for a funeral procession. The crowd has gathered in mourning. As they proceed to bury their friend and son, a resurrection moment occurs. Jesus raises the boy.

God can appear in what seems to be the unlikeliest of places and times. God is so full of surprises that we need each other to recognise these resurrection moments.

The news of Jesus' action spread throughout all Judea and the surrounding country. We also need to share our moments of resurrection, those times when God works in our lives. While we may not have witnessed bodily resurrection, we have experienced God working in our lives. We have experienced occasions when sadness turned into joy and despair into hope. Hope and new resurrection comes in many forms.

As I write, I have been in Trinity Methodist Church for about 10 months now. Already, I have witnessed many moments of resurrection, moments where there is evidence of God working in individual and corporate lives. Each week as we gather as a people of God, we need to remind ourselves that resurrection is possible. More importantly, we need

to recognise that God is amongst us and is working through us.

For me, focusing on the resurrection means that there is always opportunity for renewal and transformation in both personal and corporate life. Sometimes, when I listen to complaints about the most mundane things from worshippers and leaders, I think: "Hey, looks like it is easier to join a funeral procession in self-interest and focus on the 'its all about me', than to consider the possibilities of resurrection." My dear friends, God calls us to look beyond our individual and corporate selves. It does not always revolve around me!

I ask myself: "If Trinity Methodist Church is removed from Serangoon Gardens would anyone miss us? Or would they say 'good riddance'?" Would the neighbors think, "No more thoughtless parking on a Sunday, no more loud clanging of church bells?" Or, will people miss our presence as salt and light in the community?

In the past few years, much of our energy, time and interest have been focused on the redevelopment fund. And as responsible stewards, we will continue to do so until we raise the entire balance of our debt.

Even so, our budget, the leadership structure or even the worship services, while deserving our attention and energy, must not all be ends in themselves. None of these should be "the be all and end all" reason for the existence of the church. Our church must always also be a place where people can experience the grace and peace of God. We are a sanctuary of the Good News of Jesus Christ for the world.

For the years ahead, it is my prayer that all the people gathered as God's children here at Trinity Methodist Church will above anything else seek to honour God together. We must, in our worship services, seek to be accessible to a diverse range of people. This means we will continue to provide both contemporary and traditional music and styles. Our worship of God must be participatory in style but not casual in approach to God or one other.

We will remind ourselves, endlessly, if we must, that Jesus is at the heart of our church's life and ministry. Without Him we can do nothing. We believe that the Bible is God's written Word through which God speaks and through which we grow in our understanding and knowledge of Him.

We will constantly remember that we are not simply a group of individuals, but a genuine relational Christian community. Thus, we need one other to sustain our discipleship, and to demonstrate God's love and work to those beyond the walls of this church.

To this end, we need to sustain and in time increase our involvement in service, missions and evangelism both to our local community and to the wider world.

Let me summarise for you my vision for TMC in the following manner:

1. We connect to God through our adoration and expressions of gratitude for His faithfulness through our personal devotion, prayer, study, discipleship and in corporate worship.
2. We connect with one another in Christ-like, welcoming environments; we GROW in small groups through transformational relationships, study and prayer.
3. We connect in ministry to serve with uncommon generosity by giving of our time, spiritual gifts, and financial resources;
4. We connect with the community and the world by demonstrating the Kingdom of God and inviting others to join it.

This, of course, is not going to happen overnight. We must as a church keep our focus on these for years to come. But do remember, "It's not always about me", but it is always about our resurrected Lord!

Learning to Fast and Pray: The Tent@TMC Experience

By Cheryl Sim

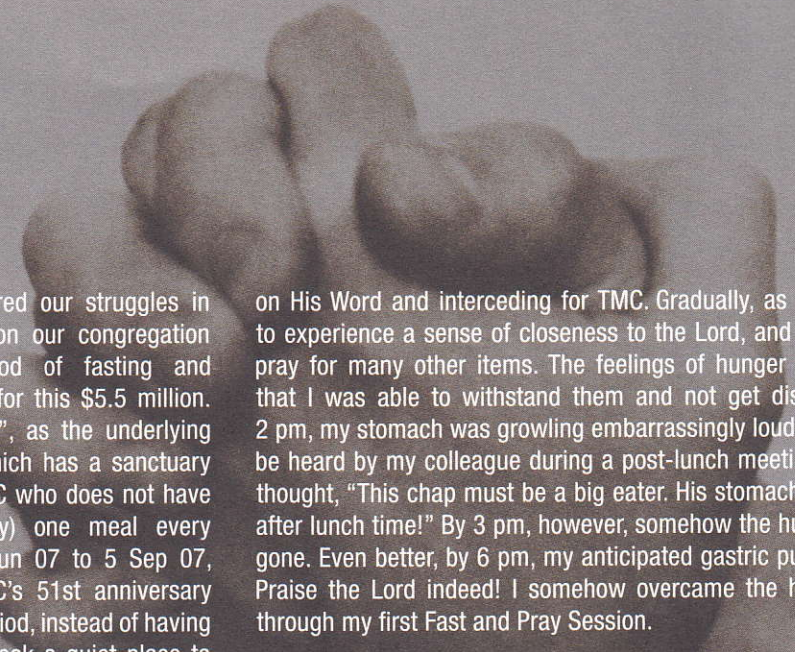
For a few months this year, many TMC members went without lunch on Wednesdays, choosing instead to spend that time in prayer. Many would also remember William Goh, who took to the pulpit week after week to encourage members to take up the Tent@TMC challenge. The Saltshaker speaks to William to find out more about his Tent@TMC experience.

Saltshaker (SS): Hi William, we hear that you were one of the members who came up with Tent@TMC idea. How did the idea come about, and what was the objective?

William (W): When TMC embarked on its redevelopment project back in 2001, the church had yet to raise any money to fund such redevelopment. Yet, in faith, the leadership decided to proceed, trusting the Lord would provide the funds in His time. The project was completed at a cost of \$12.38 million, and we returned to our new redeveloped church in end-2004. During the six-year period from 2001 to 2006, through the efforts of all at TMC, we managed to raise around \$6.4 million. There was a need to raise a further \$6 million. Some time in October 2006, a few of us got together to reflect on how to raise this \$6 million, at a time when many in our congregation were experiencing various degrees of fund-raising fatigue.

We know that we have to continue this Journey of Faith (JOF) until all funds have been raised. So how do we go about raising this \$6 million? How can each of us participate in this JOF? Is it a case of "Don't worry, just pray, and the money will come" or "We need to pay our loans next month; let's urgently think of ways to get our members to donate and further donate"? We felt it was a combination of both, but ultimately, the focus is on trusting that the Lord will provide, even as we do our part to develop ideas and platforms to facilitate fund-raising, not just from our congregation, but also from outside donors.

In June 2007, we provided a summary



update of our Redevelopment Project, and shared our struggles in raising the remaining \$5.5 million. We called on our congregation to continue this JOF, starting with a period of fasting and praying to seek the Lord's guidance and grace for this \$5.5 million. We named this Fast & Pray series "Tent@TMC", as the underlying objective was to raise funds to rebuild TMC, which has a sanctuary shaped like a tent. We called on everyone at TMC who does not have a medical condition to fast (partially or fully) one meal every Wednesday, preferably lunch, starting from 6 Jun 07 to 5 Sep 07, the latter being the Wednesday preceding TMC's 51st anniversary celebration on 9 Sep 07. Over this three-month period, instead of having lunch each Wednesday, the participants would seek a quiet place to fast and pray for our church, and the money saved, be it \$1 from a student abstaining from his/her favourite soft drink, or \$40 (about the price of the priciest buffet in town), was donated to our TMC Redevelopment Fund. The main objective of Tent@TMC was not to raise funds, as we knew that meal money saved would not amount to much. Rather, we fasted and prayed to seek the Lord's guidance and grace.

SS: On looking back, do you think that Tent@TMC was a success? Did it achieve its objective?

W: Success was not a consideration when we embarked on Tent@TMC. We knew that fasting and praying had yet to be part of the spiritual lifestyle for many in our congregation (including myself). Yet, in steadfast faith, we drew comfort that our Lord would hear and answer our earnest prayers, regardless of whether two or two hundred in our congregation fasted and prayed. Of course, we pray that as more of us participate, over time, this may become part of a spiritual lifestyle of worship and fellowship with the Lord. In the event, around 70 in our congregation submitted Tent@TMC response slips. There were more who did not submit response slips, but participated together with their respective Small Groups.

Did Tent@TMC achieve its objective? Perhaps. We will only know better over time. But I can share one tangible outcome – in the last two years, TMC raised an average of about \$70,000 per month for our Redevelopment Fund. During the four-month period from June to September 2007 when Tent@TMC was on, a total of \$446,000 was raised, which is more than 1.5 times the average amount. Why? It could be due to many factors. Let us draw our individual conclusions.

SS: What was your personal Tent@TMC experience like? Did it increase your personal faith?

W: Admittedly, I couldn't recall whether I had ever fasted prior to Tent@TMC. Typically, my breakfast consists of fruits, while I have a rather heavy lunch, partly because business lunches tend to be heavy, and partly to sustain me through the day as my dinners are usually taken late. So to skip my main meal wasn't easy at all! On my first fast on 6 Jun, I almost forgot about it altogether. So I started late, close to 1pm, already feeling very hungry. For about an hour, I found a quiet place to read His Word and prayed, using the Prayer Prompters printed in our church bulletin as a guide. The initial minutes were a struggle, alternating between distractingly tempting thoughts of good food to fill my hungry stomach, and concentrating

on His Word and interceding for TMC. Gradually, as I prayed, I began to experience a sense of closeness to the Lord, and was prompted to pray for many other items. The feelings of hunger persisted, except that I was able to withstand them and not get distracted by it. By 2 pm, my stomach was growling embarrassingly loudly, loud enough to be heard by my colleague during a post-lunch meeting. He must have thought, "This chap must be a big eater. His stomach is growling right after lunch time!" By 3 pm, however, somehow the hunger pangs were gone. Even better, by 6 pm, my anticipated gastric pulls did not occur! Praise the Lord indeed! I somehow overcame the hunger and came through my first Fast and Pray Session.

Over the next 13 weeks, there were times when business lunches seemed unavoidable, including during two business trips. However, somehow in His Plan, I managed to avoid all the lunches without the need to explain, except for sharing with a Christian colleague when I asked to be excused from several Wednesday lunch meetings. Through all this, I learned that when I set my focus and priority on the Lord, He will pave the way! Hallelujah! Along the way, I also realised the importance of reminders and encouragement for our fellow brothers and sisters. So I made it a point to send a reminder email to all Small Group Leaders, starting from the fourth Wednesday onwards. The joy and privilege of being able to send out such reminders was great! And as I searched for Bible verses to attach to the reminder emails, I received prompters from the Lord for myself as well. He is wonderful indeed!!

SS: Did you receive any feedback from those who participated in this event?

W: I did not receive much feedback, though through casual conversations with some of the leaders, I learned that they were fasting. Not all fasted at lunch. Some fasted breakfast, some fasted on a regular favourite food item, like coffee or a soft drink. I happened to chat with a sister-in-Christ who shared that during one scheduled fast session, she went out for lunch with a business associate. After ordering all the food and preparing to say grace, she was prompted that she had to fast! She struggled and then shared about the issue with her lunch partner. After much deliberation, they decided to eat the food and not waste it. I guess I would have done the same. But I was very encouraged by the fact that she struggled and prayed, before deciding to eat the food. Her sense of commitment was encouraging, especially when fasting was relatively new to her.

Tent@TMC concluded with a celebratory lunch, which was organised in conjunction with our 51st anniversary. Yet it seems that both our fund-raising efforts and our personal journeys of faith will not be coming to an end any time soon. In William's words, "How long is the journey ahead before the \$5.09 million is raised? Only He knows! But as all of us move as one united body of Christ, let us not be too focused or concerned with how long and how much. Rather, let us focus on the journey, to grow in spiritual maturity individually, and to bring as many as we can to accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour! Let us labour to fulfil His Great Commandments and His Great Commission, all for His Glory!"

SMALL GROUPS

Connecting With One Another

By Colin Yip

EXCITING TIMES!

How much do you know about small groups in TMC? There are currently 26 small groups in TMC representing more than 40% of TMC's congregation. This includes two groups from the Chinese Service. There will be another new group starting by the end of the year. Indeed, we give thanks for God's faithfulness to TMC in drawing his people together into community in small groups and we acknowledge that this can only be the work of the Holy Spirit and not our own.

By God's grace and leading, small groups are slowly but surely becoming a way of life in TMC. As our pastor Rev Dianna Khoo has reminded us on several occasions, small groups are where we can connect with one other in the body of Christ.

In September 2007, the small group leaders met together for fellowship and prayer. It was a time of encouragement and affirmation as we shared testimonies, prayed together, and observed the Holy Spirit doing His work through various individuals and groups. Indeed, God is Immanuel, He is with us.

A GLIMPSE AHEAD

2008 will be an exciting year. In line with the church's focus on outreach in the next few years, the small group ministry will be introducing two initiatives.

Firstly, we will be releasing a curriculum on hospitality where small groups can learn the practice of hospitality and have opportunities to exercise their knowledge in "on-the-ground" projects as well.

Secondly, we are organising a Small Groups Conference in July 2008 where the entire TMC community can gather to learn about the meaning of community and living together as the people of God.

We will continue to actively encourage the formation of new small groups through various platforms like DISCIPLE, Alpha and membership class. In addition, we also recognise the need



to nurture small group leadership, both in supporting existing leaders as well as equipping new leaders. There are upcoming training sessions and retreats planned for this purpose.

In the year ahead, it is our prayer that God will continue to lead the small groups in TMC by His Spirit into deeper discipleship and more effective outreach. And by His grace, we are confident He will do so!

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Is God prompting you to join a small group? Is He calling you to step forward to lead a group? Do you have a passion for small groups and would like to be actively involved in this ministry? Do contact Colin (colinyip@gmail.com, 97826446), our Small Groups Coordinator, or Ivan (ivan@tmc.org.sg, 96659847), our Lay Ministry Staff, for more information or if you are interested to get involved.

TMC's 51st Anniversary Celebrations



By Cheryl Sim

TMC turned 51 in September, and in true TMC fashion, we celebrated our birthday with fellowship, food and song. The Saltshaker reports on the sights and sounds around the church on TMC's birthday.

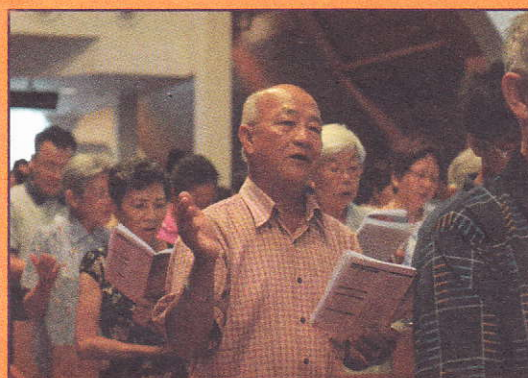
The choristers' beautiful voices welcomed worshippers to our combined service on 9 Sep 07. Members streamed into the worship hall and the sanctuary, both reminders of God's faithfulness to TMC all these years - from our premises in Serangoon Garden Way, to our holding grounds at Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' Primary School (PLMGPS), and back again to our home in Serangoon Gardens.

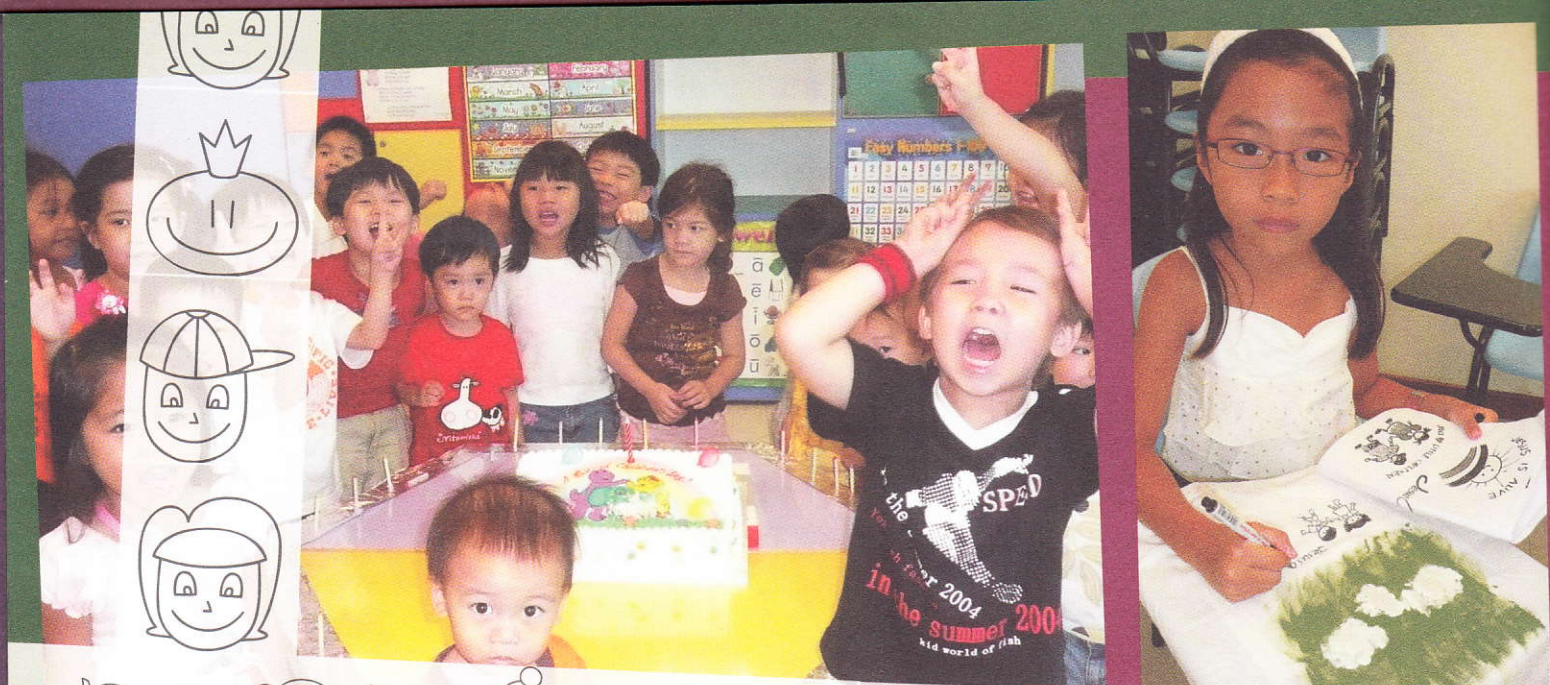
The past 51 years have seen TMC develop in so many ways, and the growth of the Chinese Ministry is just one of them. The presence of the members of our Mandarin Service at the combined service - conducted mainly in English but with Mandarin translation available throughout the service - reminded us of our ever-growing TMC family. Even our dedicated caretaker, Mr Chua, was present; prayers of blessing and thanksgiving were said for his many years of faithful service.

It was apt, then, that the message for the day was on Family. The Rev. Melvin Huang, District Superintendent (East), preached on the topic "We Are Family" from Romans 8:15-17 and 1 Peter 3:7-8. "Don't give up", Rev Huang said, "...on family, and on church, for the church is a family too." Most importantly, members were challenged to behave like God's family, and to recognise their positions as joint heirs with Christ.

As we left the sanctuary for a time of fellowship and breaking our Tent@TMC fast, one could not help but be thankful for the people we have here at TMC - the office staff, the people who coordinated the buffet lunch, and those who oversaw the smooth running of the service, amongst others.

Perhaps, the best way to encapsulate the commemoration of TMC's 51st anniversary would be through the psalmist's words, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good." (Ps 107:1) The Lord has been good to TMC, and we continue to pray and praise Him for more good years to come.





By Lee Ling Ling

Go, go, go... into the world
Go, go, go... into the world
Go, go, go... into the world
And tell that Jesus is the Best.

The Children's Ministry Missions Programme began in January 2007 and is now part of the Sunday School curriculum for primary-level children between the ages of 6 and 12.

MISSIONS SUNDAY

Under the programme, the fourth Sunday of each month is a dedicated Missions Sunday. The teachers face the challenge of coming up with ideas to make the lessons relevant and alive to the children to encourage involvement and engagement. After all, at their young age, going on a mission trip is definitely not on their or even their parents' agenda!

Typically, each lesson begins with a group lesson or presentation on a specific country. These presentations focus on the lives and cultures of the people or people groups in the country and end off with how we can pray for changed lives.

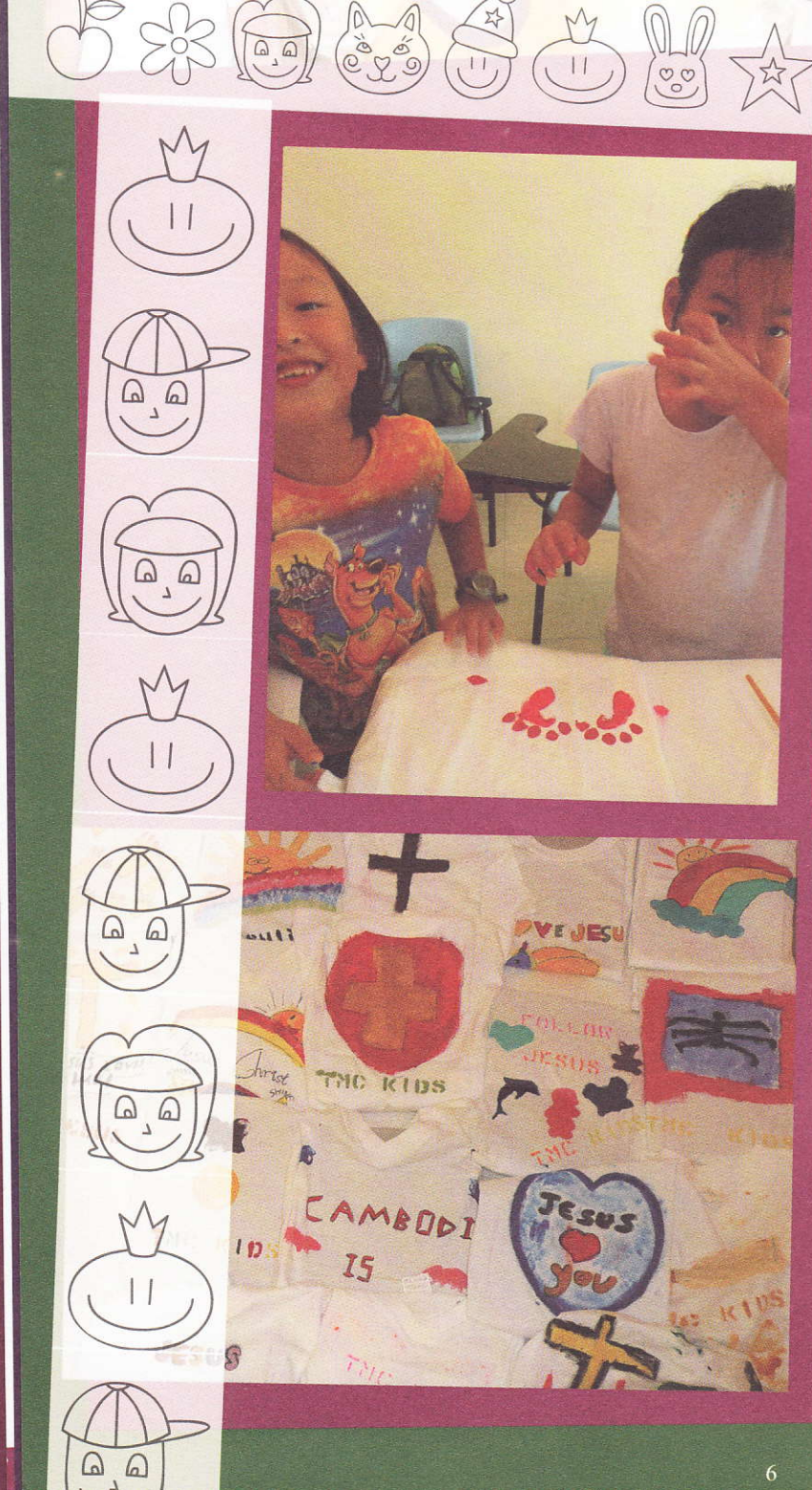
Thereafter, the children return to their classrooms for small group activities with prayer as the main activity as we felt that prayer is one of the more interactive means of engaging the children in Missions.

This year, three countries were introduced – Mexico, Uruguay and Cambodia.

"TRIP" TO MEXICO

We kick-started the programme with an introduction to Latin America via the land of Mexico!

One of our teachers, Laurel Samuel, introduced the children to Mexican culture and songs. The children received "hamburger" sweets and we told them to pray for Mexico whenever they eat sweets (if this is practised daily, imagine the number of prayers said each day!).





Children's Ministry Missions Programme

CHILDREN'S DAY OCTOBER 2007

"TRIP" TO URUGUAY

For our "trip" to Uruguay in March 2007, we had the privilege of inviting a real missionary to our Sunday school! June, the niece of Tan Ai Ling one of our teachers, shared about her life and work in Uruguay especially the impact her church, the New Wine Church, had on the people in the country. For instance, we learned about how the lives of ex-prisoners were changed.

June also gave out special Uruguayan biscuits to our children who were asked to pray for Uruguay whenever they eat biscuits!

"TRIP" TO CAMBODIA

Cambodia has a very special place in the hearts of the children as we have shared about this country many times, almost on a quarterly basis. The children pray for Cambodia whenever they eat fruits.

In February 2007, the Youth TRACKERS shared about their Mission trip to Cambodia, and in particular, their trip to the rubbish dumps where children collect garbage for a living. This had a significant impact on the children's lives.

In June 2007, Dr Ang Poh Kit, one of our teachers, also shared about the WSCS mission trip to Cambodia in 2006. Through her testimony, the children were able to see how God used her gifts as a doctor to make a difference to the lives of the Cambodians she met.

In September 2007, we screened a video produced by the Methodist Missions Society (MMS), *Amazing Grace – COSI Home*, which featured our church's very own Jerry Ong. Following that, a COSI Home Savings Drive was organised in which we challenged our children to save a portion of their allowances as a gift to the COSI Home children.

The total sum collected was \$968! It was heartwarming to learn that some of the children did extra chores around the house just to earn additional money for the COSI Home. Others saved more from their allowances by sacrificing their meals. One girl even "converted" her birthday presents into cash (by requesting for cash instead of presents from her aunts and uncles) and contributed more than \$200 to the COSI Home collection! One teacher, George Matthews, challenged his class to save more by agreeing to match \$1 for every \$0.50 collected.

Instead of the usual party and gift-receiving, this year's Children's Day saw the children involved in a "giving" mission.

For the Praise & Worship programme, we invited Jerry Ong to share his experiences from his mission trip to Cambodia, in particular, his visit to the COSI Home. It was indeed encouraging to witness the children interacting and participating with Jerry as he revisited his trip to Cambodia and shared how his life was changed.

Following the Praise & Worship session, the children returned to their classroom and painted a total of 54 t-shirts. These t-shirts were subsequently displayed at the Plaza and the congregation was encouraged to vote for their favourite t-shirt with a donation of \$10 per t-shirt to needy children in Cambodia. Praise God that support from the congregation was tremendous with a total of \$1,207 raised!

The t-shirts and offerings were presented to the Cambodian children when Chew Kim Ling, Coordinator for Children's Ministry, went to Phnom Penh in end-November 2007 with the Missions Team. The people in Cambodia were touched and appreciative of the efforts of our TMC children and congregation.

CONCLUSION

When we first started the Missions Programme, all we wanted to do was simply to share about a specific country's culture, lifestyle and to encourage our children to respond by praying for the unsaved in the country. We had little expectations of how this programme would unfold.

Unfold it did and through God's amazing grace and blessings. With God's guidance and a multitude of blessings, we were able to expand our lessons to engage and involve our children in so many ways – prayer, giving of gifts and special guests such as June and Jerry. Praise God!

We continue to pray and seek God's will for the Children's Ministry and pray for His continued guidance and provision as we plan to organise a Missions trip for older primary children to Cambodia in 2008.

May His will for Children's Ministry be done on earth. Amen!

Lee Ling Ling is responsible for curriculum planning for the primary level in the Children's Ministry and is a mother of three daughters.

Mid-Autumn Joy

By Patsy Ong

"Mid-Autumn Festival? I thought that was a Chinese festival? Does the church celebrate it too?" Such were the incredulous comments by some friends and family members when they learnt of the Mid-Autumn event held in TMC this year.

Parents of the children attending the TMC kindergarten were invited to the Mid-Autumn Festival Event at TMC on 22 Sep 07. Just before 5pm on a hot Saturday afternoon, the parents started streaming into the cool and brightly-lit kindergarten. Fifteen minutes later, work was in full swing for each child (and accompanying mummy and/or daddy) to construct a lantern using strips of board for the frame and a plastic sheet for the main body of the lantern. Glue, scissors, markers and glitter were provided in the craft-kit for each team to decorate their lantern. By 5.30pm, all the available multi-coloured kindergarten chairs and tables were occupied by parent-child-TMC befriender teams intent on drawing and sprinkling the glitter onto the lanterns.

Simultaneously, a mooncake-making demonstration was taking place in the Plaza so that parents who were not involved in the lantern-making activity could try their hand at being mooncake chefs. It was soon evident, however, that lantern-making was a task that required as many hands as possible since, one by one, the parents in the Plaza were called back to the Kindergarten by their spouses to help in their child's latest project work.

In the kindergarten, the pace of lantern-making intensified and the sounds of the glue machine attaching the electric bulb and the battery compartment to the lantern shell added to the frenzy of the last fifteen minutes before the time for submission of competition entries. At 6.15pm sharp, the lanterns were gathered on the tables and sorted swiftly into the various kindergarten levels.

While judges peered carefully and marvelled at each lantern, parents were ushered to the Plaza for a buffet spread. The children led in saying grace by singing the Grace Song. They were joined by the kindergarten teachers and some of their parents. Various TMC members present mingled with the parents and shared experiences over dinner.

The after-dinner programme was no less exciting. First up was a worship session led by the kindergarten children. To witness their joy in singing, jumping, clapping and doing actions for the songs, it was little wonder that Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me... for such is the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:16). The parents and church members stood around the group watching for the whole half hour or so, some displaying amazing arm prowess by recording the session on their digital cameras the whole time.

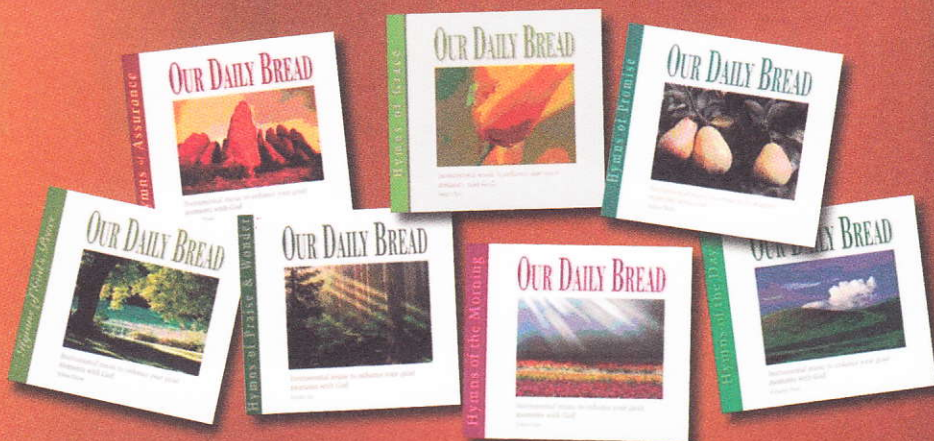
After the worship session, the results for the lantern-making competition were announced and prizes were presented. Goodie bags were also given to each child. The greatest gift that night however was surely the time shared during the lantern-making and witnessing the pure joy of children in song and dance.

The final activity for the night was a lantern walk around TMC's compound. The parents and children, excitedly touting their handmade lanterns, set off under the guidance of one of the TMC youths. The entourage trooped around the perimeter of the church lighting up the dark corners with their bright lamps bringing the words of the Psalmist to mind: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). May we all, in the TMC family, be able to share this joy and truth with many more in time to come.

OUR DAILY Bread

*Instrumental
music to
enhance your
quiet moments
with God*

The daily devotional *Our Daily Bread* (ODB) is read by millions all over the world and should be no stranger to our TMC members. The ODB team has now compiled several collections of familiar hymns to accompany your study of the Word of God. The hymns are specially selected to reflect several themes - God's grace, promises, assurance and peace, and can help to create the quiet atmosphere in the morning and through the day to set the right mood for studying the Bible. Using a variety of instruments, from piano to classical guitar, violin to pan flute, these instrumental variations of familiar hymns will create the right ambience as you dwell deeper into His Word.



These CDs are available for borrowing from TMC Resource Centre

D1043 Hymns of God's Peace

Looking for music to help you focus more on God's provision and less on the hustle and bustle of everyday life? *Hymns of God's Peace*, with 10 instrumental tracks including *Near to the Heart of God*, *I've Got Peace Like a River*, *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*, *Perfect Peace*, help create a calm atmosphere to whisk you away from the daily noise and into that quiet place of prayer and daily devotion.

D1044 Hymns of Promise

12 favorite hymns to help you focus on the promises of God. The calming instrumentals of hymns in *Hymns of Promise* like *Blessed Assurance*, *Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us* and *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*, will help remind you of 2 Corinthians 1:20: "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God".

D1045 Hymns of Assurance

Listening to *Hymns of Assurance*, you will feel a sense of peace and joy as each instrumental piece reminds you of God's pledge of eternal security. The Celtic instruments give the pieces an easy listening and contemplative air and traditional favourites like *He Leadeth Me*, *Guide Me Oh Thou Great Jehovah*, and *All the Way My Saviour Leads Me* in new arrangements will help to bless your quiet times with God.

D1039 Hymns of The Morning

If you like the instrumental versions of *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, *Great is Thy Faithfulness*, *This is My Father's World*, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, pick up *Hymns of the Morning* (11 tracks) to help you in your morning study of God's Word.

D1040 Hymns of The Day

Familiar favourites in this collection include *Be Thou My Vision*, *Amazing Love*, *To God Be the Glory* and others. *Hymns of the Day* (10 tracks) will certainly help to create the right mood throughout the day in your quest to appreciate the Bible's beauty.

D1041 Hymns of Praise & Wonder

As King Saul experienced in 1 Samuel 16:23, nothing soothes the soul more than tranquil music. *Hymns of Praise and Wonder* (10 tracks) provides peaceful devotional music for you to worship and praise our beloved creator. Tracks in this collection include *Wonderful Words of Life*, *Faith of our Fathers* and *Fairest Lord Jesus*.

D1042 Hymns of Grace

Drawing on a majestic array of beloved hymns, these 10 instrumental pieces including *Jesus Paid it All*, *Amazing Grace*, *God of Grace*, *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*, will remind and help you appreciate the love and forgiveness of our gracious Father.

TMC Resource Centre

How God Brought Me Home

By Beatrice Wong

My life before Alpha was good. I had a comfortable job with the best bosses I have ever had in all my working life. All was quiet on the home front. There was nothing to be unhappy about. What led me to attend Alpha was a debate I had with a Buddhist girlfriend about Christianity and Buddhism. So I went to the course thinking that it would be an intellectual exercise where I could get answers to the unresolved issues raised in that debate. [Alpha is a course, conducted in small groups, to address the key issues of Christianity.]

I was invited by an ex-colleague to the Alpha group at Chong Lian's home. After three lessons I wanted to quit. While some interesting questions about the faith were raised, the answers given were awfully familiar. I had grown up in Sunday school and had heard all those answers before. I confided these feelings to Chong Lian and she said, instead of taking Alpha as a cerebral exercise, "let the Holy Spirit just wash over you at each lesson." So I decided to let it be.

At the fourth lesson, Chong Lian and I had a little chat about when and why I stopped going to church. I honestly could not remember the exact moment or circumstances. Churchgoing just felt meaningless. After that chat, Chong Lian felt a great burden to pray and minister to me. One evening, she was led by the Holy Spirit to look for a CD for me. The odd thing was that she had no idea what she was looking for. She went into her favourite Christian CD shop and picked up, with some doubts, a CD titled *Father of Life*. After listening to a few tracks, she knew, for certain, that this was meant for me.

The readings spoke to me and greatly touched me. When I listened to the CD that night, the resentment, bitterness, anger and grief that

I had buried in the recesses of my memory welled up. That anger and bitterness had pushed me far from God and had reinforced my "breaking away" from Him, that is, leaving church. That night, I finally acknowledged that I had been holding on to the resentment and grief over an incident that took place six years ago. I thought I had dealt with the root cause of those emotions then, but I realised that I had never cast them aside and never surrendered them to God.

As an indication of what an angry person I was, one member of the group shared, at the end of the course, that he told his wife that there was one person at Alpha who was so angry that he physically stayed away from her because she looked like she was about to break his head off!

When I went for the first day of the Holy Spirit weekend I was pretty tired. I got home at 5 am that Saturday morning because I was out partying. (Yes, I can see the disapproving looks that you are giving me now). I was so tired that I went to the retreat without my mobile phone. I felt uneasy throughout the day. I went home that night to a family in distress. A near tragedy almost took place and I was not there for them. When I checked my mobile phone, oddly, there was no "missed call" from home. I knew then that God was taking care of them. I was meant to be at the retreat. Still, I was not entirely convinced that God was involved in all of this.

The next morning I went to the third part of the weekend with a heavy heart. I was late and the session had already started. During the time for worship, I could not sing. However, during the singing, Chong Lian started to sob. I thought to myself – why is she crying? Even as I muttered that question to myself, I knew the answer. She was crying for me. I was too spent to even cry. When I asked her about her tears, she confirmed that she was crying for

me because God knows my anguish. God is sufficient for me and He is waiting to hold me in His arms again, if I will let Him. And I did.

The same Alpha member who told his wife about an angry Beatrice told his wife that after the weekend, Beatrice was not angry anymore. When other members heard this, almost all except a few polite ones supported the observation to varying degrees. When I shared my experience at Alpha with that Buddhist girlfriend of mine, she exclaimed that my experience was "radical". Several other girlfriends have also said that they would never in their wildest dreams expect me to speak to them about how great and wonderful God is, or encourage them with His Word. Most importantly, they would never expect me to acknowledge and declare that God is real and He truly is sufficient.

Nowadays, I cannot start the day without being on my knees, worshipping and praising Him, giving Him thanks with a grateful heart, just being in His presence, committing my life into His hands, asking that He use me to do His good works. I see now that it was not by pure chance that I was invited to this Alpha course. It was not by pure chance that a series of events in my personal life ran parallel and reached a new development with each lesson. God's timing is perfect. He has weaved the events in my career, personal life and the Alpha course to form an awe-inspiring tapestry that showcases His grace, mercy and faithfulness.

Like the prodigal son who spent years lost in the wilderness, I was lost in the spiritual wilderness. I am truly blessed and glad to be saved and found by His amazing grace. Every time I look back at each step of my healing process, I am humbled and grateful that He has hunted me down, carried me all the way and brought me to my knees so that I may be restored in Him, that I may return Home to Him.

GETTING TO KNOW OUR NEW CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR



By Melissa Koh

Denisa Chin, our new church administrator joined the church office in August this year. In order to get to know her, our Saltshaker reporter meets Denisa for an informal chat.

On first impressions, Denisa strikes one as an eloquent and pleasant lady, albeit a little shy (although understandably so as she had earlier expressed reluctance about being "interviewed".) She is married to Pastor Daniel C. Tan from Wesley Methodist Church, where she continues to worship and has been very actively serving in various ministries, from being a small group zone leader to being a lay counsellor.

Administrative work is not something new to her, although full-time ministry is. When prompted to share about her decision to switch from the corporate world to full-time ministry, she replied that a lot of prayer was involved as it was a big step for her to take. She wanted to go according to God's plan for her life and prayed long and hard for an opportunity to serve in such a facility for God. When God finally opened the way, other opportunities also materialised during this time. However, she remembered her prayers to God, and hence was led to become a full-time ministry worker at TMC.



**"DAY BY DAY, ONE MUST WALK CLOSELY
WITH GOD TO KNOW WHAT TO DO."**

Saltshaker

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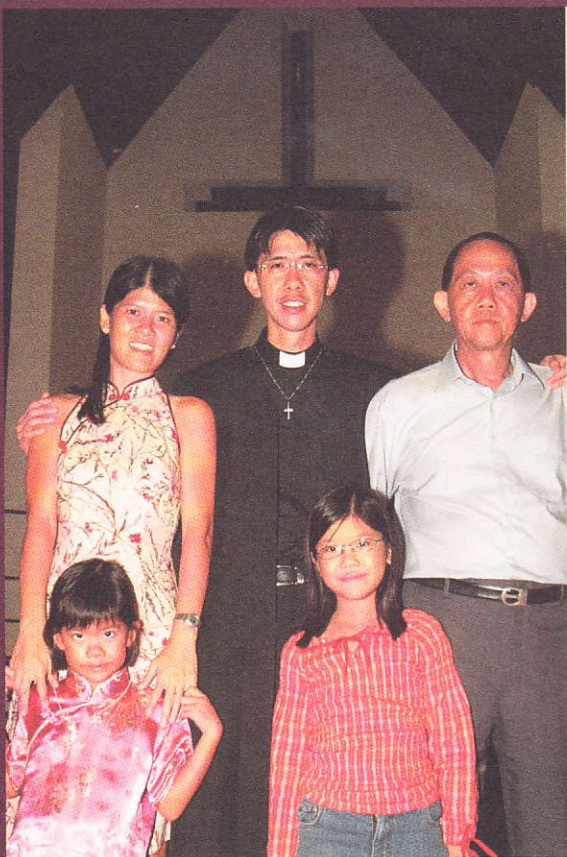
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Interview with Pastor Lai

By Eugenia Koh

Our beloved Assistant Pastor Rev Lai Kai Ming leaves us for his new appointment as Assistant Pastor of Pentecost Methodist Church with effect from 1 Jan 2008. The Saltshaker asks him to share his thoughts on his time at TMC.



WHAT ARE YOUR BEST MEMORIES AT TMC?

The best of all memories would be marrying my wife in 1993! TMC is my first church, the church where I met my wife, and the church that prepared and sponsored me for my studies at Trinity Theological College (TTC) – these are the things I will never forget.

If I could summarise, my best memories in TMC would be the countless times when I felt I was making a difference in people's lives be they children, youth, couples, or seniors. Whenever a message I spoke brought new insights, hope and transformation to others, I would be filled with gratitude and encouragement.

In particular, I remember a "best" moment when in October 2005, the TMC leadership went on a prayer walk and survey of Serangoon North as part of our leaders' retreat. It was one of the most meaningful and inspiring experiences for me. And today, we are preparing for ministry at Contact 123. Who could have expected that God would bring this about?

Being able to try new things, to explore different approaches to ministry – this I appreciated very much. I have Pastor Philip – our previous Pastor-in charge – and the leadership to thank for their support, and their willingness to take risks with me!

I'm not sure if this counts as a fond memory – I think I almost died on 27 May 06 when I was with the Boys' Brigade on St. John's

Island. I fell ill with food poisoning and suffered from a gastric attack at the same time. I vomited so much, my heart was beating so fast, and I was in so much pain that I thought I was going to heaven ahead of time. Well, I guess it was not time yet.

WHAT WILL YOU MISS MOST?

Needless to say, I will miss the people most. I really do not deserve all the kindness and love showered upon me all the time! I guess I will miss the older folks the most. Some of them are like parents and grandparents to me. In TMC, I experienced grace, and I know firsthand, "What's so amazing about grace?"!

I will miss the wonderful working relationships with the office staff. Without them, I would be quite miserable and very overwhelmed. A special mention of brother Jacob, who has been a constant inspiration to my own ministry; I will miss our impromptu meals, especially fish soup with rice.

Last but not least, I will miss the strong partnership with the lay leaders and other ministry workers. The level of trust and understanding is amazing. I enjoyed every bit of our ministry together, even when meetings sometimes ended way past midnight!

SHARE WITH US MORE ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY IN TMC – THE UPS AND DOWNS.

THE HIGH POINTS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

- The Community Engagement Programmes (CEPs) such as "Purpose Driven Life" and "What's So Amazing About Grace" when the whole church was learning and growing together. It was messy, but boy was it fun!
- The visitation teams that were formed to bring the church to the sick, needy and lonely. A special thanks to my two team leaders – Eng Hock and Dennis.

- People rising up to serve and make their lives count for Christ. This warms my heart like nothing else can.
- Leading a Disciple I class for 34 weeks on Sunday afternoons. That really took the life out of me, but it also made me stronger.
- How TMC has become more open to the reality and work of the Holy Spirit, with myself a major beneficiary of this development.

THE LOW POINTS:

- When members with young families fell sick and died leaving behind little ones and spouses. I felt so helpless and could not understand why God would allow it.
- When marriages and families broke down; when children failed to care for their aged parents
- When church people were sometimes cold towards those who were not part of their clique and social background.
- When I struggled with my own inadequacies, fears, and imperfections.

PARTING WORDS BEFORE WE MEET AGAIN!

I thank my mentor Ivan for all the years of guidance and unconditional love. Since I am now a minister, he must be Minister Mentor (MM)!

I thank brother Park Ming for making it possible for me to study in TTC in his then capacity as Scholarship Chairperson.

I thank brother Sathia, Fook Yoon, and Sin Hoon for being my "big brothers" all these years.

I thank brother Chong Hiok for his generous encouragement every time I preach.

I thank the brothers in my two Accountability Groups, and everyone in my Small Group, Village People, for being there for me, always.

I thank the many more unnamed people who have made an impact in my life – you know who you are, and I will always be grateful for you.

I thank God for calling me into TMC.