

Saltshaker

A Trinity Methodist Church Publication



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Smaller and Smaller



Rev Sng Chong Hui

This is taken from Rev Sng's blog post of 6 Nov 17.

To follow his blog, visit <https://goldenapplesilversetting.wordpress.com/>

My wife and I were watching the Korean game show, "I Can See Your Voice."

The show host commented that you could easily tell which era the singer belonged to by the heart gesture he made during his performance.

In the early days, the heart gesture was depicted by the bending of both arms over the head to form the heart shape. That large heart symbol belongs to the older generation.

Subsequently over time, the heart gesture was articulated using both hands cupped to form the heart shape. This heart gesture became trendy among many performing artistes.

But today, the heart gesture, which is very popular among Korean celebrities, is created by crossing the thumb and index finger.

It appears to me that the heart gesture is becoming smaller and smaller.

And I wonder if the heart gesture of evangelism in Christendom has also become smaller and smaller.

Evangelism was a big thing in the early church. The early believers spoke boldly about Jesus even under the threat of persecution.

I remember in the 70s, the churches in Singapore organised big evangelistic rallies and crusades in the national stadium, national theatre and conference hall. The gesture of evangelism was big.

But over time, the scale of evangelism became smaller. In fact the big rallies and crusades have vanished. Evangelism has shifted to small groups, interest groups and friendship contacts through sporting activities.

Today, in our post-modern and post-truth world, I wonder if the Christian church has become somewhat post-evangelistic where the heart of tolerance and inclusiveness (not that these are wrong) is preferred over the heart for evangelism.

In the name of progressiveness, have we become a people who just want to live like Jesus without talking about Jesus? Have we become so afraid of offending people with the Gospel?

Has the heart of evangelism become smaller? Or worse, has evangelism become a “dirty” word?

The heart of the Church since its inception is evangelism. Without evangelism, the Church loses her purpose for existence.

One theologian puts it: "Compared with evangelism, everything else happening in the Church is like re-arranging the furniture when the house is on fire!"

The heart of evangelism is obedience to the last instruction of our risen Lord to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15).

The heart of evangelism is a readiness to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15).

The heart of evangelism is an obligation that says, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16)

The heart of evangelism is a love for the lost who “will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

And that heart is surely the heart of our Lord who cries out: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34)

Don’t let the heart gesture of evangelism become **smaller and smaller**.



Credit: Pexels

Touch of God



Karin Low

I joined the Trinity Methodist Church (TMC) WSCS missions team on a five-day trip to Cambodia last December.

I fell in love with the Khmer people. I witnessed their hardship and sufferings. The people in Cambodia face poverty, hunger and injustice. Yet through it all, they have learnt to be content.

Many “houses” in the slum villages have been built by the residents’ own hands. They are neither stable nor secure. The land can be confiscated by the government without warning or negotiation. The children do not know how to protect themselves. They eat all kinds of “food”, and drink untreated water. They do not practise basic hygiene and some fall seriously ill. Many who have been struck by cancer cannot afford to get medical treatment. Even for those who do receive treatment, the quality of the treatment is poor.



Village children some of whom attend GTMC

One Cambodian lady I met, Nary, had been diagnosed with intestinal obstruction after having had several operations. Her stomach had been cut open seven times in less than four years, and her ovaries, colon and intestines had been operated on separately in those four short years. There were two occasions when she almost died and the doctors were unable to help her.

On the seventh occasion, she was in such extreme pain that she was willing to return to God. As she lay on the hospital bed, she looked at her sister who was carrying Nary’s second son, a two-year-old. Nary was too weak to reach her hand out to her son. She cried and surrendered herself to God saying: “If it really is Your will, then take me. But I really want to look after my sons and I can’t leave them yet. But if You really have to take me, then take me.”



Nary and her sons

Weeks later, when she was about to drink her medicine, she prayed and begged God to give her full recovery. With great faith, she drank and by the amazing grace of God, she recovered.

Nary was severely underweight then but after three months, she became strong and of a healthy weight again.

It has been almost a decade since Nary underwent her last operation, but she is still on an intravenous drip twice a week. Unfortunately, her body occasionally gets attacked by bacteria and she falls ill and grows weak again. Yet she has great faith that God is Jehovah Jireh and Jehovah Rapha, and she recovers from her illnesses each time.

Another Cambodian I met was a man who was diagnosed with leukaemia, triggered by his failing kidneys. In recent months, Paou's lungs were found to have water in them and his health deteriorated further. He goes for dialysis twice a week to keep his body functioning. Each dialysis session costs US\$50. Furthermore, changing a piece of required medical equipment costs US\$70. In half a month, his medical fees can cost up to US\$300.

Pastor Chamnap, Glory TMC (GTMC) and the TMC WSCS missions team have been praying hard for Paou. With God's great provision, Paou has been able to afford treatment through donations, including those from TMC's WSCS. Although the water from his lungs is now gone, his lungs are still infected. He has a severe cough and frequently suffers from disturbed sleep.

Paou has two young girls, aged one and two. His wife cannot work as she has to look after their two young children. Their family owns a small vegetable farm but it does not produce enough for commercial sales.

The only person who has an income is Paou's mother who works in a Christian organisation. Their family can barely afford their daily needs, let alone his medical treatment.

I often ask: "Why Lord, do trouble and distress fall on these persons repeatedly? Why is there so much suffering, yet many of us are caught up with fulfilling our own desires in life such that we have become apathetic to those around us?"

I find my eyes welling up with tears when I watch documentaries or read articles about abandoned children, families being torn apart by selfish decisions, teenagers getting themselves into trouble countless times because they lack self-control and act out of impulse, and those suffering from physical or emotional illness. As my tears flow, I feel my heart ache for the immense struggles of His people. I find myself crying out to God for comfort and solace for His beloved people.

We all yearn for the touch of God, but in different ways. But although we may not see the hand of God in our situation, we can definitely trust His heart. He is with us through it all. Our dear Abba Father will never forsake us.

As I was writing this article, the Holy Spirit reminded me of Psalm 121. This was a psalm I had often recited during vesper sessions at Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home where I grew up.

The Lord also reminded me of how He, our Almighty God, the Maker of heaven and earth, gave Joshua and the Israelites victory over more than ten kings and their cities (Joshua 10) despite the years they had suffered as slaves in Egypt. He is the same God who leads the way and fights many great battles for His Kingdom's sake in the world today. He is with us.



Paou with his wife and daughters

God promised in Joshua 1:9, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; Do not be discouraged, for the Lord, your God will be with you wherever you go."

As we, a sister church of GTMC, continue to support Paou with financial donations, let us all continue to pray earnestly for the hand of God to touch and heal Paou's kidney so that he will no longer require dialysis treatment.

And let us all come together in one Spirit, to yearn for something more than our mundane lives, to strive hard together to fight the good fight of faith and to fix our gaze on Jesus's face in our difficult and trying times in life. Let us all come and kneel before the King of kings and Lord of Lords, and ask Him to use us as we surrender our lives to Him.

"When pain is to be born, a little courage helps more than much knowledge, a little human sympathy more than much courage, and the least tincture of the love of God more than all."

-C.S. Lewis

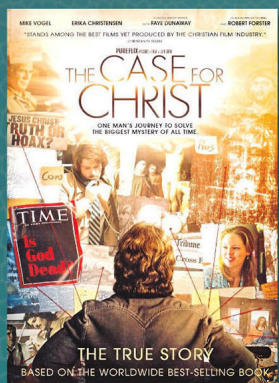


Andy, age 19, leading some of the village children in prayer and worship

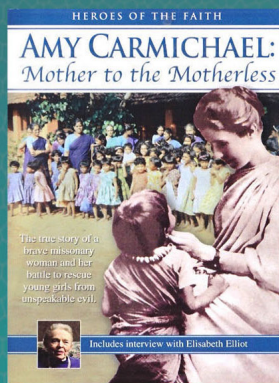
"I lift up my eyes to the mountains,
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip-
He who watches over you will not slumber;
Indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber
nor sleep.
The Lord watches over you- the Lord is your shade at
your right hand;
The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all harm -
He will watch over your life;
The Lord will watch over your coming and going,
both now and forevermore."

- Psalm 121

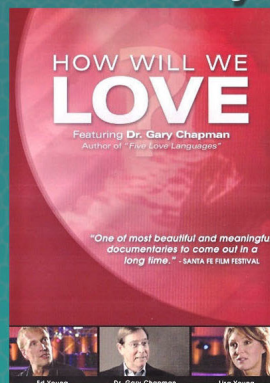
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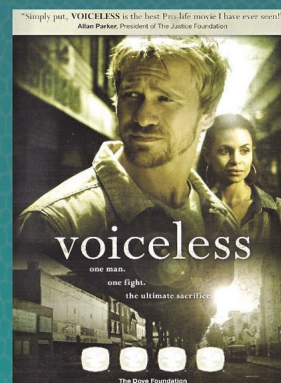
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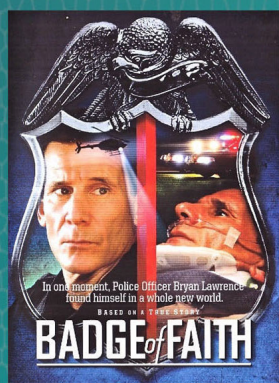
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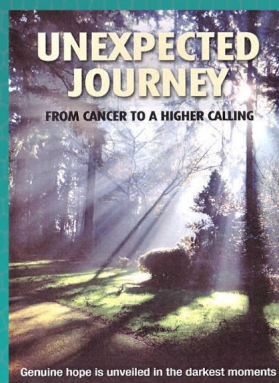
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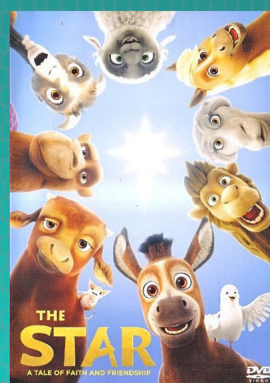
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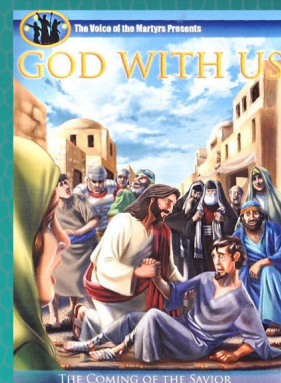
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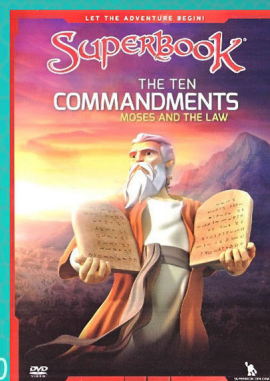
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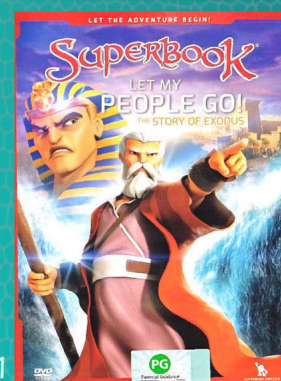
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1 DVD613 The Case for Christ

2 DVD614 Amy Carmichael
- Mother to the Motherless

3 DVD615 How Will We Love
Dr. Gary Chapman

4 DVD616 Voiceless

5 DVD617 Badge of Faith

6 DVD618 Unexpected Journey

7 DVD619 The Star

8 DVD620 God With Us

9 DVD621 The Messengers

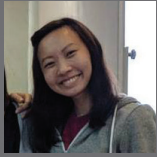
10 DVD622 Superbook - In The
Beginning

11 DVD623 Superbook - The
Ten Commandments

12 DVD624 Superbook - Let My
People Go!

and 10 other DVD titles in the Superbook Series

*These new DVDs and many other resources are available for borrowing
at the TMC Resource Centre, situated at Benjamin Room, Level 2.*



Sarah Ang

FACING OUR BURDENS

REFLECTIONS ON THE "PRESENCE" RETREAT

Two days before the "Presence" retreat in June 2018, my disciple-group (DG) mates and I shared with one another what we hoped to experience at the retreat.

While they had specific issues to seek guidance and direction for, I did not have anything in particular to seek God for.

Or so I thought.

I thought the retreat was just going to be a period of rest.

During the Lectio Divina session however, God showed me that I had not fully dealt with my inner fears concerning upcoming church commitments, fears which I thought I had already surrendered to Him.

Thoughts like "I am too young", "I am too spiritually immature", "Who am I to take on this task" started to cloud my mind, and I felt a heavy weight on my shoulders.

I asked God to take such feelings and thoughts away.

At that very moment, Pastor Alvin picked up the microphone. He said that God calls both the young and the old to do His work, and as long as we bring to Him whatever little we have to offer, He will take it and multiply for His glory.

And I instantly felt the burden lift from my shoulders.

This experience reveals how our hearts are sometimes deceitful. We may sometimes choose to ignore certain issues, but God, being the loving Father that He is, will lead us to face our fears and yet will still be gracious in making sure that we can bear them. God really surprises us and meets us when we least expect it, but we have to also avail ourselves in order to hear from Him.

Through the retreat, I also saw how God met my DG mates at their various points of need. Our sharing sessions built me up in my walk of faith as well. Since I have tasted and seen the importance of discipling relationships, I encourage all of us, if you are not already in a discipling relationship, to find out how you can be in one.



Sarah (extreme right) and her DG mates at the retreat



TUNING - BREATHING, JOURNALLING, WRITING

REFLECTIONS ON THE "PRESENCE" RETREAT



Jillian Goh

Being quiet before the Lord was an “activity” that I often associated with my bedtime ritual.

Was there a right way to be quiet before Him? Should I sit or lie a certain way? Maybe dim the lights and then stay perfectly still?

Those were the thoughts that ran through my head when the announcement on the “Presence” retreat in June 2018 was first made.

I was curious. I wanted to find out how I could actively seek Him at a silent retreat that honestly sounded pretty passive.

At the camp, God reminded me that I could approach Him as I would a parent or a trusted friend. The key to having that intimate conversation was a conducive environment where I could feel safe, calm and at peace.

It seemed rather intuitive and commonsensical at first but I soon learnt that getting into the right frame of mind to meet God was a process that required practice.

When Pastor Jenni brought us through the basic breathing exercises to help clear our minds, I felt as if I was transported to a wellness class, but after my fourth deep breath I started to realise how much of a bad “breather” I was. What I thought of as breathing was really just a series of shallow and hasty inhales and exhales. It was done without any intention or appreciation. But after some practice, I started to feel my heartbeat stabilise and mind clearing up. It

was like opening the shower door after a really hot shower, when all the foggy mirrors seem to clear up!

The exercises on journalling thereafter also reinforced the importance of engaging God in a deliberate and active way. I also learnt that silence is another a medium through which God can use to reach out to me, and vice versa

Writing is another important tool. Writing to God opened my mind to the many thoughts and emotions I never knew I had towards my circumstances and God Himself. As I tried to pen the complexities of what I was feeling and thinking onto a piece of paper, I not only began to appreciate the gift of writing, but also the growing feelings of intimacy I was having with God. As I wrote down the words which expressed how I felt, I could sense that He was reading the struggles and pain that came from the deepest parts of my heart, parts that I had often covered up with a quick prayer. Then, as I repeatedly read through what I wrote, I knew He was listening.

In short, I was really blessed by the process and by the lessons Pastor Jenni shared about learning to find and connect with God.

One of the most memorable things I took away from the camp was Pastor Jenni’s sharing about “tuning into God’s frequency”. As we continue to practise connecting with God, it is encouraging to know that one day, we will all be so tuned into Him and His prompting that even in a busy and noisy supermarket, we will be able to hear Him and find rest in the security of His presence.

IN & ABOUT TMC

YOUTH SUNDAY



INSTALLATION OF BOY'S & GIRL'S BRIGADES





PLEDGE SUNDAY



PARENTS' APPRECIATION DINNER



When Healing Tarries



Cheryl Sim

When I heard that TMC was hosting a TRAC healing service on 11 May 18, I was eager to speak to the TMC members who had attended the service, or who had served as altar ministers that night.

Rev Ling Kin Yew from Fairfield Methodist Church, and currently the chairman of TRAC Healing Service, had preached a short message testifying of God's healing power, and people had responded to the call for prayer.

Many altar ministers who served that night were encouraged by the healing they witnessed first-hand among those who responded to the call for prayer.

One altar minister, David Lee, said he was among those who had prayed for someone who had a viral fever that kept recurring and lasted for about a week each time.

"I felt God's presence very strongly," said David. "I heard from her mother that the fever broke when she went home, and hasn't recurred since."

Another altar minister, Katherine Loh, had reached out to a lady who was in wheelchair following a fall a year ago. She had stopped going to church, felt lousy and was depressed.

"But after we prayed for her, she felt that her misery lifted, and even said she wanted to go to church," said Katherine.

Like many others who can be counted among the faithful, I too have grappled with the concept of physical healing. I am sometimes sceptical when healing comes miraculously. At other times, I am hesitant of what my response should be when healing seems to tarry.

Should physical healing - delayed or denied - lead to doubt in the same God to whom praise is accorded when afflictions are alleviated? If God can heal, am I the reason why I haven't experienced healing (yet)?

We need to be conscious that no healing ministry can boast of 100% success rate at every healing service.

Like my small group member, Daniel Gwee, said: "Saying God *must* heal is akin to keeping God in the box. But saying that God cannot heal in miraculous physical ways is like locking Him *out* of the box."

God can heal (Exodus 15:26b), but physical healing is merely one of the ways in which He blesses and builds us. Healing, though a sign of God's love, is not the ultimate sign of God's love. In other words, if one is not healed, it cannot be concluded that God does not love him or loves him less. It is important to communicate this well to those seeking healing, especially pre-believers or young Christians, so as not to cause one another to stumble.

The Bible seems to point towards one or several reasons for healing not (yet) taking place.

• While we may be focusing on physical healing, we may actually also require spiritual healing. The Lord may be asking us to do something or refrain from doing something before He acts (Ex 15:26a).

One consistent theme of my conversations with those who attended the service was that God's purpose may not be solely, or even primarily, physical healing.

Choy Wai Cheng, who brought two friends to the service, mused: "You could be healed of, say, back pain but still have unforgiveness in your heart. Or you might still have a bad back, but God could use the healing process to free you from the grudges in your heart."

Rev Ling himself shared how the relationship between his mother and sister was restored after his mother came to know the Lord. That, too, is an example of healing that God brings about.

Pamela Lim, who was one of the intercessors at the service, explained: "Physical healing is always of primary importance to the sufferer, but sometimes, it is secondary – as intercessors, we need to ask God for discernment if physical symptoms have roots in other emotional and spiritual issues that must be addressed."

Perhaps, seeking God's physical healing also starts to awaken us to deeper areas in our lives that God wants to address.

- **We may need first to have an intimate knowledge of God through His Word, and ask for healing persistently and in faith (Mt 7:7; Jas 5:15).**

- **We may have neglected to ask for healing at all (Jas 4:2).**

There is no limit to what God is able to do and how He does it. But we cannot prescribe to God what to do and when to do it (Ps 115:3).

Wai Cheng put it well: "Healing is up to God. There is no formula – we cannot dictate how it happens."

"We should continue to fix our eyes on Jesus for healing because God loves us so much, but the end goal of a healing service should not only be about physical healing. Instead, it is for God's people to turn our eyes upon Jesus, cry out to the Lord and be restored to Him, and have the strength of the Lord to carry on the journey. We can and should walk alongside each other and give each other hope in the Lord."

God is able to heal miraculously, instantly. But sometimes He chooses not to do so. This is by no means an easy answer for many who struggle with unanswered prayer.

Even when we may not understand, the Bible reminds us that "...his work is perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." (Deut 32:4)

On our part, we keep trusting Him and in His love. We don't give up in asking for healing, for if we give up hope in praying for the sick, none may be healed. But "the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (Jas 5:16, NLT).

(Some of the above material was taken from the notes given out at the TRAC healing training sessions conducted at TMC.)

Q&A with Rev Barnabas Chong,

Chairman of TRAC Healing Ministry

(September 2014 to July 2018)



Q: "I was one of the first ones who went down to the altar to be prayed for at the Healing Service. I stayed till the end of the session, praying. During the session, I felt a warm sensation through my body. But my body still hurts after the session. I'm not sure this works for me."

A: The warm sensation has often been an indication of the Lord touching the person being prayed for, and assuring him or her that He is there. In many cases, those who felt the warmth while being prayed for, received healing.


There are also occasions when healing did not take place despite the presence of heat. But this is no indication that God was not at work at the time of prayer. We are sure that God is at work every time we pray for a person who is sick, although what He works on is not always as straightforward as physical healing.

I agree with Joni Eareckson-Tada who quoted her theologian friend, Steve Estes, in one of her books: "Sometimes God permits what He hates to accomplish what He loves".

The Bible reminds us to keep trusting the Lord with all our hearts and to lean not on our own understanding (Prv 3:5). The Bible also affirms that God is love (1 Jn 4:8) and righteous (Prv 145:17). That means He can do no wrong and everything He does and allows stems from His great love for us. The question is not whether "this works for me" but whether I truly trust the love and grace of God.



Credit: Samuel Gan



Q: "Telling someone, who is disappointed at not having received physical healing, that physical healing is 'secondary' to emotional and spiritual healing would feel like an excuse for God, or a slap in the face. Such words don't sound like they will comfort someone who is sick."

A: First, healing may take place instantly, over a period of time or sometimes not at all. We really don't have all the answers. But what we do know is that more people get healed when we persevere in this ministry.

I wouldn't say healing is "secondary" to emotional and spiritual healing, though I do believe that God's ultimate goal is to rescue us from our sins and deliver us from the destruction that sin can bring upon us. In God's eyes, where we spend our eternity is far more important than how well we live in our brief time on earth. Jesus said: "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" (Mt 16:26)

While we understand and know how difficult it must be for a person to experience pain and sickness, at the same time, we must recognise that God is God and we are not. The best among us put together does not come close to having the intellectual capacity to comprehend an ounce of God's wisdom because He alone is God and there is no other. Just as a child cannot comprehend his parents' wisdom or feel good and happy about some of the decisions his parents make, we as mere humans simply cannot come close to understanding how the sovereign and divine God acts.

What we do know for a fact is that He loves us and He can do no wrong. The perfectly righteous God is incapable of doing wrong and we must trust that He is doing what is truly right in His eyes. God's truth may sometimes disturb us instead of comforting us but that is only because our personal views and convictions may not align with God's. What we need to do is to keep going back to Him and His Word and let faith and trust arise in us as we build our faith on the Rock and not on the sand.

Q: "It's easy for one to say that God is able to heal miraculously, instantly, but sometimes chooses not to do so. However, a healing service allows real people to get their hopes up, only to be crushed when healing does not take place. My view is that healing services cause people to resent God when healing doesn't happen."

A: A lot of what I said in response to the first two questions would be a relevant response here too.

I don't doubt that some may go away after attending a healing service feeling resentful towards God and even the church because healing didn't happen for them and to make it worse, it happened to others. That is why I repeatedly remind the altar ministers to express love and concern for the individual and not be too fixated on the illnesses. In the event that someone does not get healed, my hope is that they would still go home feeling loved by fellow believers and more importantly knowing that God loves them and has not left or forsaken them.

It is also our practice to ask those who were not healed or only partially healed to keep laying hands on themselves and pray daily for God's healing. We tell them not to give up and we must keep praying believing that God will heal *unless* He shows otherwise. We also remind all that our walk with God is of utmost importance.

TO COMMEMORATE TEACHER'S DAY, THE SALTSHAKER HAS OBTAINED PERMISSION FROM SALTANDLIGHT.SG TO PUBLISH TWO HEART-WARMING ARTICLES ABOUT TEACHERS WHO HAVE GONE THE EXTRA MILE.

TURNING IMPOSSIBLE INTO I'M POSSIBLE



JULEEN SHAW

Salt&Light Managing Editor Juleen hails from the newsrooms of Singapore Press Holdings and MediaCorp Publishing. She has had two encounters with baptismal pools. The first was at age four when her mother, who was holding her hand, tripped and fell into the church baptismal pool, taking Juleen with her. The second was when she actually chose to get baptised.

When a struggling NorthLight School student failed to show up for classes, his form teacher visited his home 12 times, bearing his favourite McDonald's meal at each visit.

But the boy was too ashamed to return.

Undeterred, the teacher told his principal: "Let me visit him a few more times."

After the 14th visit, the boy returned to school, won over by the teacher's persistence and belief in him. He went on to graduate with a perfect grade point average of 4.0.

The source of the teacher's persistence? "I lived in a one-room flat myself for 12 years. I can identify with the student's struggles and adversities," he said simply.

This is just one of the many moving stories that have come out of the corridors of NorthLight School (NLS), a unique educational institution in Singapore where Primary School Leaving Exam (PSLE) failures have a chance to turn their lives around.

One educator, after volunteering in the school and witnessing the work of the teachers, pronounced that the system "didn't make sense".

Mr Chia Hai Siang, vice principal (instructional programme) from 2009 to 2012, agreed. In NorthLight's 10th anniversary book, *Empowering Youth for a Future*, he noted that indeed it "didn't make sense" to invest money, time and effort to "save the last starfish", especially when there was no guarantee that these students would turn out well.

"But I learnt in NorthLight that this was a place where children needed someone to hold on to them in faith and hope in spite of reason and contrarian evidence, and even when they themselves had abandoned all hope," he said.

CULTURE OF CARE

The extraordinary culture of care in the secular school was nurtured from the very beginning, and is widely attributed to its founding principal, Mrs Chua-Lim Yen Ching, 59.

“The kids who come to the school have all kinds of challenges, so we have to use a different approach to mentor them. Our goal is not just paper qualifications – though they do work towards an ITE skills certificate – it is to give them confidence and an opportunity for gainful employment, to allow them to be good contributing citizens.”

Her clutch of dedicated pioneering teachers came up with the idea of using CCTVs to record and reward honesty and good manners, in other words, “catch the students doing right” rather than wrong. Vandalism fell as a result.

Failure – a familiar feature in these children’s lives – was destigmatised. The teachers encouraged the children to read “Impossible” as “I’m possible”.

When Lydia Ang, a student suffering from the effects of hydrocephalus meningitis, shared a wistful dream of performing solo (she loved to sing), the teachers not only made her dream come true at a Mensa anniversary dinner, her music teacher even bought her a dress.

It was no accident that these sacrificial teachers gathered at NorthLight. Mrs Chua hired her teachers judiciously, believing that “passion alone is not enough”. Most of them were first put on attachment to ensure that they “can take it”.

“I tell them: ‘You are going to be discouraged and you must have resilience’,” said Mrs Chua, who looked for compassion, competence and calling in the team she hired.

Even after the students graduated and went on to jobs in retail, F&B, security and mechanics, the teachers continued to keep in touch, paying them visits to affirm and encourage them.

Mrs Chua, a Christian, had been advised by concerned friends and family against taking on the role at NorthLight – it was a tough mission.

But naysayers overlooked one small detail. Mrs Chua had a strong personal philosophy that said: *If your internal GPS tells you to do something, do it. Have the courage and conviction to follow your calling.*

FAITH THAT WORKS

Something happens when we bring our faith to work.

In education, where young lives are open and vulnerable to influence, this is especially clear.

No matter how many years have passed, we all remember that one teacher who slipped in a kind word in our moment of failure (and conversely the one who ridiculed us when we most needed guidance). And, of course, all the ones who bought us treats, gave us extra coaching, boisterously cheered us on at competitions and thrashed us at soccer during recess.

Mr Chew Hiap luh, 41, a polytechnic teacher, makes it a point to share with students his past mistakes and struggles.

“I want them to realise that we are not much different after all, and I accept them for who they are. They do not need to earn my acceptance,” he said.

“For a start, I think God has shaped my personal life to be a testimony to my students. Most of the time, I am able to relate to their difficulties and share my life’s experience as an encouragement to them.

“God reminds me that we are all a work in progress and He loves us unconditionally. I am able to love because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19 This serves as a constant reminder to me to listen to my students first, not to judge them. To show them that I am interested in their lives, not what they can do.”

Cherie Poon, 19, a former junior college student of Mr Chew’s, remembers him as someone who “exuded a lot of love, care and concern towards his students, and it was deeply representative of his faith.

“I remember a conversation I had with Mr Chew, where we talked about our families and challenges we faced. It was evident that Mr Chew cared for us and saw beyond us as students. He has a wonderfully gifted heart that is reflective of the Father’s love.”

SUMMITING THE MOUNTAIN

Mr Kuak Nam Jin, 46, who over his 12 years as an educator has led seven mountain trekking trips with his junior college students as part of a leadership programme, believes that the roles of teacher and learner are interchangeable.

“When a teacher is reflective and inclusive, students are willing to teach the teacher in return. In my own experience, my children have taught and helped me become a better man, father, husband, as well as educator,” he said.

“A teacher will never know everything and this is particularly true when it comes to real-world problem solving or serving the community. When a teacher is able to learn alongside his students, the power distance narrows, communication improves, discourse takes on a new level and learning becomes authentic.”

He spends a year preparing his students for each mountain expedition, journeying alongside them every step of the way.

“To capture our students’ minds, we must first capture their hearts and imagination. When this happens, teaching becomes transformational,” he said.

For Freda Mah, 19, one of Mr Kuak’s students, the mountain trek saw her turn a corner in her life.

“Mr Kuak’s advice and teachings still echo in the back of my mind whenever I face challenges in life, and he played a great part in shaping me to be the person I am today,” said Freda.

“He set high expectations for us, yet gave us space to stumble and fall, make mistakes, and pick ourselves back up again. Mr Kuak was very real to all of us. He never covered up his shortcomings, shared with us openly the problems he was facing, and found teaching moments in seemingly insignificant things.”

in my career. I was attending a parents' briefing in my daughter's school when, looking up towards the stage, I saw this verse and I felt the words burn in my heart. I broke down. Subsequently whenever I felt a little defeated these words reminded me that I am not perfect but God has a part to play in my life. He is with me.

"It is said that the world needs more smart people to solve our global issues. But we need more compassionate people just as much. People who are ready to love and serve the community."

TOUGH LOVE

Tough love works – both the toughness and the love, if you ask Mrs Dora Fernandez, 45, a teacher in an all-girls' secondary school who is approaching her 23rd year as an educator.

"I'm very strict with the girls. I scold and nag till they cry sometimes," she said. "I teach the way I would want my children's teachers to teach my kids – with tough love. If the classroom is a microcosm of the world, I feel I need to provide my students with the keys to survival. I always tell them: 'Ten years from now you may not remember the literary devices I taught, but you must remember the life lessons'."

Despite her strictness, there is never a doubt that "Mrs Fern", as her students fondly call her, cares.

She remembers their birthdays, baking their favourite Oreo cakes, attends their basketball games even after they graduate, and regularly hosts batches of former students at her home where she whips up feasts for them.

Over the years, she has been invited to countless 21st birthday parties and weddings of her ex-students, who involve her in their tertiary choices, introduce their boyfriends to her, ask her for breastfeeding tips and bring their babies back to school for the proud "grandteacher" to coo over.

"My prayer is always to be able to love those that God has put in my charge," said the Roman Catholic whose favourite verse is Isaiah 40:31. "He has given me a vast capacity to love those who are not my biological children."

"Mrs Fern showed me and many others that it is more blessed to give than to receive," said her former student, Bernice Yeo, 19. "She gives through her hospitality even when she's tired, by being present for us and giving without expecting anything in return."

We love because He first loved us.

In Mrs Chua-Lim Yen Ching's words: We cannot change the starting of our students' lives, but we can work with them to change their ending.



Photo credit: Weibo

SNOWFLAKE BOY'S GRIT MISSING HERE? NOT TRUE, SAY TEACHERS

.....
JULEEN SHAW

You've seen the picture: Little Wang Fuman, dubbed Snowflake Boy, with a headful of icicles, snow-speckled eyebrows and cheeks red-raw from winter frost.

The eight year old had walked 4.5 km for an hour in minus 9°C temperatures to get to his school in mountainous Yunnan, China, for his final examination.

His teacher photographed him (to some hilarity among his classmates) and the picture quickly went viral on social media, and was subsequently picked up by news agencies around the world.

Fuman, a "left behind" child, lives with his sister and grandmother in a mud house in impoverished Ludian town. He is one of 9,338 "left behind" children in rural Ludian whose parents work in the city, leaving the children in the care of aged grandparents.

When young Fuman's story hit local newspapers, Singapore parents everywhere turned to their school-aged children and said: "See this poor boy? No student in Singapore has this kind of determination!"

But you'd be surprised, say teachers here.

DETERMINED DESPITE THE ODDS

While disadvantaged schoolchildren in Singapore have the benefit of government and school financial assistance schemes covering fees, programmes and even recess meals, some of these children's challenges cannot easily be solved by financial aid.

And that's when they either give up ... or pull out grit from their innermost reserves.

"There was a girl in my leadership programme a few years ago. Her parents were not in good health and they could not work," recalled Mr Kuak Nam Jin, head of a junior college leadership programme. "Her family was financially tight but that never stopped her from chasing after what she wanted.

"She was a cheerful girl, humble and very caring. She had always wanted to be a doctor because she wanted to be in a position to do something for her parents and for those in need.

"During the mountain trekking phase of our leadership programme, I noticed that she was walking slower by the day. On the fifth morning, I asked her to remove her shoes. She had two big blisters on her feet and only broke into tears when I released the pressure. She went on to walk the next four days without ever complaining about the pain she was enduring.

"When I met her a few years after her 'A' levels, she told me she was in her third year in medical school. She was not taking any allowance from her parents but earning her keep by teaching music and giving private tuition between classes."

He added: "I know she will be more than alright because of her determination and heart. She is a good person and will be a good doctor."

Mr Chew Hiap Luh, a polytechnic teacher, has also come across students with exceptional determination. A number of students in his polytechnic are receiving financial assistance.

One student works after school and on weekends to supplement the family income. She often skips lunch, saying she is fasting, but the teachers know she does not have money to eat.

"Another student I know has nine other siblings," said Mr Chew. She is the eldest and has to work during the school term to bring in income for her family. Sometimes she has to skip school to babysit her younger sister.

“She has failed some subjects but has held on, hoping to graduate. She is smart but is often worn out by her responsibilities. Coming to school is a challenge in itself.

“I see the grit in these students in their daily effort to keep their lives in order despite challenges.”

FAILURE IS NO EXCUSE

Ask the teachers at NorthLight School about grit, and they have plenty of stories to tell.

NorthLight admits students who have failed their Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) once, twice, sometimes three times, and have been deemed “not suitable to progress to secondary school education or to re-attempt the PSLE”.

Students arrive at the secondary school with all kinds of challenges – physical, mental, financial, social – and have faced failure time and again. The school prepares its students for employability, giving students the chance to work towards an ITE Skills Certificate within four years.

Mrs Chua-Lim Yen Ching, the founding principal of NorthLight School, led her team of stalwart staff through many a challenge to both students and teachers.

One of the students whose grit inspired both staff and students is Lydia Ang.

Lydia suffers from hydrocephalus meningitis, an inflammation of the membranes of the brain and spinal cord. Untreated hydrocephalus has a 50-60% mortality rate. The 40-50% who survive have varying degrees of intellectual, physical and neurological disabilities.

“When Lydia arrived at NorthLight School at the age of 14, she was very fragile and weak because of her condition and her surgeries. She had to have shunts put in her scalp to help drain the accumulated fluid,” recalled Mrs Chua.

“Many children look forward to the school holidays, but not Lydia, because during every holiday she had to go to the hospital to check that there was no new accumulation of fluid in other parts of her brain.

“She could not walk upright and could not even raise her head at that time. She was also very quiet. I was worried. I wasn’t sure she could take the rigours of school.”

**"YOU
HAVE
TO TRY"**

But Lydia herself was thrilled about starting school at NorthLight.

“After I failed my PSLE, I didn’t know whether I could continue studying or whether I had to stay at home. So I was happy when my mum told me that I could go to school,” she said.

“On my first day at NorthLight, I remember thinking that this school is very big.”

Most students would not have bat an eyelid at the few steps leading down to the canteen and up to the classrooms. But to Lydia, who walked with a limp from severe scoliosis and had to pull herself up stairs using her arms, the walk to the hall and classrooms seemed interminable.

This she did every day in school despite a phobia of stairs arising from a bad fall at home, when she missed three steps on the way to the lift and fell, knocking her head against the cement staircase so that she bled profusely.

22 She could not play sports because of her weak legs, but would good-naturedly cheer her friends on from

the sidelines and watch their belongings.

Despite her physical challenges, Lydia pleaded with the school to allow her to go on the outdoor adventure camp with her cohort.

“It was a once-in-a-lifetime thing!” remembered Lydia. “Mrs Chua said: ‘Okay, you can go, but you must bring someone with you’, so my mother and sister came along!”

Lydia was game for everything, and even attempted rock climbing with the help of a harness.

When she expressed the desire to go on the water raft, she was put in the centre of the raft ... surrounded by her teachers.

“I wanted to try, just for the experience,” quipped Lydia, who said that what kept her going, despite some discouraging instances, was to “tell yourself if you have an opportunity to do something new and good, just try”.

An avid singer, Lydia joined the school’s performing arts group, Northstarz, and was selected to perform at NUS under the guidance of the Guildhall School of Music and Dance from the UK. She also gave a solo performance at the Mensa anniversary dinner and performed at the Youth Olympic Games Unveiling of the Torch Design Ceremony.

Upon graduation, Lydia joined the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry, working at Aston’s, the Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in Downtown East, as well as the Nanyang Girls’ High School canteen.

She would wake up at 5.30am, leaving her Bedok home by 6am in order to take a one-and-a-half hour bus ride to Nanyang Girls’.

Now 24, Lydia works at social enterprise and wheelchair-friendly café My NoNna’s as a server, taking two buses daily to the café, located within the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) in Changi.

Ms Geraldine Tan, founder of My NoNna’s, praised Lydia for her positive attitude, adding that customers liked Lydia for her cheerfulness. Lydia did not even have use of her left hand when she first joined the café, but can now hold a few plates and cutlery.

Said Mrs Chua: “In school, Lydia was an inspiration to her friends. This was a child who displayed true perseverance. She was always cheerful in spite of her condition.”

In her 24 years, Lydia has had 33 surgeries to her head, stomach, back and neck. But she is determined to live life to the fullest.

“My dream is to become a singer and also a worship leader in my church,” said Lydia, who attends Pentecost Methodist Church. “My father’s favourite song is: Thank You for the Cross.

“When I feel like giving up, I ask God for strength,” she said. “I cannot depend on people to live my life for me. There is no point dwelling on my situation. In life, you have to try. And if you try and you cannot do it, it’s also okay.”

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SEE [HTTP://SALTANDLIGHT.SG/NEWS/
SNOWFLAKE-BOYS-GRIT-MISSING-
HERE-NOT-TRUE-SAY-TEACHERS](http://saltandlight.sg/news/snowflake-boys-grit-missing-here-not-true-say-teachers)

EVENTS

Thursdays, 2 Aug – 11 Oct

2.00pm Precept upon Precept
(Acts Part 2)

www.tmc.org.sg/d&n.html#pup

Thursdays, 2 Aug – 18 Oct

7.30pm Precept upon Precept
(Exodus)

www.tmc.org.sg/d&n.html#pup

Sat 1 Sep, 6 Oct, 3 Nov

10.00am Youth Avenue Leaders
Captains' Development I

www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123

Sat 1, 8, 15 Sep, 17 Nov

3.00pm Youth Avenue sport activity

Fri 7 Sep

1.00pm Youth Avenue Movie Outing

Sat 8 Sep, 13 Oct, 10 Nov

10.00am Youth Avenue Leaders
Captains' Development II

Sun 9 Sep

9.00am TMC 62nd Anniversary

Sat 15 Sep

8.00am Last Local Conference

Sat 15 Sep, 20 Oct, 17 Nov

10.00am Youth Avenue Leaders
Captains' Development III

Sundays, 21 Oct – 9 Dec

2.00pm Baptism & Membership Class
www.tmc.org.sg/baptism.html

Sat 10 Nov

1.00pm Youth Avenue Deepavali
celebration

Sun 11 Nov

Primary Sixes' Transition to Youth
Ministry

11.00am Mandarin Service 15th
Anniversary

Thurs 22 Nov – Sun 25 Nov

WSCS Mission Trip

Fri 23 Nov

7.00am Youth Avenue Trekking
Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Tue 27 Nov

3.00pm Youth Avenue Indoor Nerf
Games

Wed 28 Nov – Sat 1 Dec

Children's Ministry Camp

Fri 30 Nov

11.00am Youth Avenue Cooking Class

Every Sun

9.30am Mandarin Service Prayer
Meeting

After the 11.15am service Young
Adults' Lunch Fellowship

Last Sun of the month

9.00am

Visit to Institute of Mental Health by
Outreach & Social Concerns.

Contact Yvonne Tan at 9091 8589 /
yvonnatangb@gmail.com
www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#imh

Every Wed

8.00pm Church Prayer Meeting
www.tmc.org.sg/prayer.html

Every 1st Wed

10.00am-12.00pm
Yum Cha@10 is an opportunity
for people to come together for
fellowship, and serves as a platform
for TMCers to meet one another
as well as non- Christians in the
community mid-week. Contact the
church office /
churchoffice@tmc.org.sg
www.tmc.org.sg/ministries.html#gym

Every 1st Wed

1.00-3.00pm
Rummikub

Every Thurs

9.00am A Tot-ful Morning

A time for caregivers and children
aged 0-3 years old to enjoy songs,
stories and other activity
www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#atm;
www.facebook.com/atotfulmorning

Last Thurs of the month

10.00am-12.00pm

St Luke's Eldercare Centre Devotions
at Blk 217 Serangoon Ave 4. TMC's
ministry to SLEC brings hope, help
and the love of Christ to many needy
elderly. If you wish to join in, contact
Eddie from the church office /
eddie@tmc.org.sg.

www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#slec

Every Fri

8.00 – 10.00pm

Healing Ministry at the Prayer Chapel

Every 1st and 3rd Fri

9.15am WSCS Bible Study (Acts)

2nd and 4th Sat

9.30am

Fellowship of Ukulelians

www.tmc.org.sg/regular.html#ukulele

Monthly

WSCS Visitation to Homebound.

Those interested to bring the church
into the homes of the homebound,
please contact Lucy Chan at
9678 4046.

Group leaves TMC at 10am.

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