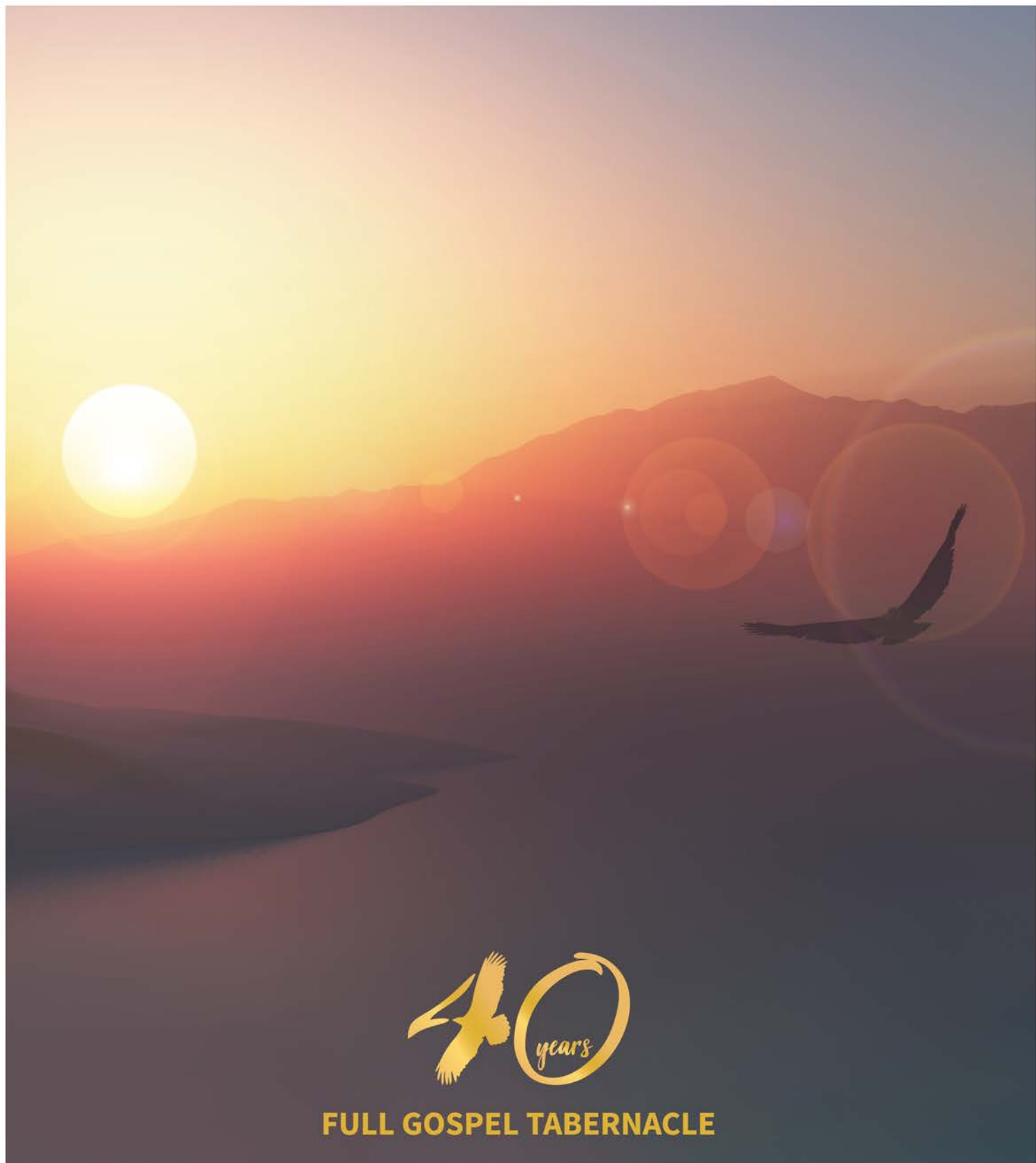


THE
GOODNESS OF GOD

2021



FULL GOSPEL TABERNACLE

Foreword from the Senior Pastor

Jesus unashamedly declared "... no one is good but One, that is God." (Mark 10:18b).

Today, we celebrate 40 years of God's goodness in FGT. He is wholly perfect, lacking nothing; He is the supreme and absolute good. That is to say, God is immutably incapable of becoming more good or less good.

I recall when I was still a young believer how tenaciously I clung on to His promises: "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him" (Psalm 34:8), and "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalm 81:10b). In my teens, I would prayer-walk in our house compound literally with my mouth open, saying to God "Aarh, my mouth is open, fill it!"

Since then, I have seen God's hand over my life - in school, in my exams (even though I was hardly an exemplary student!), in various leadership roles both at school and in church, as well as later in my secular career as an accountant.

Then on 1st February 1981, a small group of young adults and youth were called to pioneer Full Gospel Tabernacle. One would struggle to find anyone who was uncommitted then. We didn't know the meaning of the word "No" - everyone did everything and went everywhere, spent all the money we had to finance the pioneering work and shared the Gospel with everyone who came along.


Many who started with us have remained with us till this day. In fact, I am gratified knowing we have so many good members - loyal, faithful and still serving. This is evidence of the incredible goodness of God.

Naturally we have grown and planted many churches. We are now in 10 nations (including Malaysia) with more to come. In fact, some even think we are a denomination!

Indeed, we have become missional with many social ministries making their mark in the various lands we are in. The good hand of the Lord has indeed been with FGT through these years as His people selflessly shared their resources and generously devoted their time and talent towards helping the poor and needy.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD





**IT TAKES
MATURITY
TO SEE THE
GOODNESS
OF GOD
WHEN THE
TROUGH IS
NOT CLEAN**

I recount how a Muslim woman was moved to tears, remarking she had never seen such a motley crew of ordinary people pooling together millions to benefit total outsiders who require haemodialysis treatment. Our missional works indeed testify to the sheer goodness of God for the community through His church.

While I would hardly tout FGT as a mega-church, I am nevertheless certain that we are a strong church. Almost every year, many souls are ministered to and we are not short of full-time workers. The demographic of our main church in Subang Jaya is extraordinarily balanced in terms of age and gender. We have a vibrant youth group, with many among them willing to forsake secular work to serve fulltime in church. Our next generation surely holds tremendous promise and potential. We attribute all this to God's goodness in bringing forth fruit after years of tireless and faithful labour invested by our broad base of leaders.

Many are amazed and inspired by the amount of land and buildings that we have come to possess. However, these assets demonstrate only how good the Lord has been to us as a church. With each acquisition and building, members responded in faith, believing His goodness was leading us. Today our key leaders with their disciples continue to believe that "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me ..." (Psalm 23:6a). I would categorically state that our legacy is not brick and mortar but – the faithful men and women of God.

I am mindful that we are celebrating our 40th year in the middle of the pandemic and lockdown.

During the days of the prophet Nahum, the Assyrians had taken the northern kingdom of Israel. Having dispersed the people, they then tried to take Judah. Nahum's message was directed towards the aggressors, but he was careful to encourage the people of Judah as well. One such pronouncement to the people of God was "The Lord is good..." (Nahum 1:7a)

It takes maturity to see the goodness of God when the trough is not clean (Proverbs 14:4).

When we don't receive good things, and when circumstances are painful, will we still believe that God is good? On this anniversary, the question that begs to be answered is - are we merely 40-years-old in existence or are we 40-years-old in maturity?

We have most certainly had our share of hurdles, hardship, grief and setbacks in our journey as a church. As we reflect the past in gratitude, I pray we will arrive at this present place of maturity to recount like Nahum, "The Lord is good."

Part of the seminal song *Goodness of God* by Jenn Johnson goes, "I've known You as a Father, I've known You as a Friend, and I have lived in the goodness of God." Indeed no one can deny we all have lived in the goodness of God these 40 years.

Rev. Dr. Eu Hong Seng
Senior Pastor, FGT

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01 CHURCH



SERVING THROUGH THE DECADES

They say it takes a village to raise a child. If that is true, how many would it involve to build a church? Over its 40 years, FGT has grown its wingspan to cover more than just your weekly Sunday service, but also multiple services, language works, projects, community and nation-building initiatives, not to mention its multiple avenues to train, disciple and evangelize. How does a church of modest size and humble beginnings grow into such a multi-faceted enterprise? Well, it's not uncommon to see various groups of people flit in and out of Wisma Eagle at odd hours different times of the week...

FGT is not just built on the backs of its pioneers and pastors, but is also supported

by a strong fleet of volunteers who, over the years, have poured years of service and help to the church for any and all of her needs.

Having been with FGT since Day 1 of its inception, Goh Hock Keat reminisces, "There were so many opportunities to serve then. We started with washing toilets, fixing the cabinet, painting the walls. I then served as the church librarian, worked in the church office full-time and did a lot of running around to complete errands for the pastors. It was convenient because I rode a motorcycle at the time."

In its early days, the church's needs were pragmatic and rudimentary, often focused on keeping the basic things running and

fulfilling its primary concerns. But year after year, FGT continues to train its people to look out for practical ways to serve and be a part of the church.

Chong Huai Yaw, who leads an adult cell group, shares, "Back then, immediate options for serving included cleaning the church, ushering, helping out with transport and providing hospitality. It's still the same today!"

However, Huai Yaw adds that things are a little different today. During the church's infancy stages, most of the volunteers were young adults or students and thus could share similar life experiences.

"As the church grew in size and complexity over the years, we are more likely to serve and spend time with people only within the same department or ministry," she points out.

Nevertheless, the ethos of service and volunteerism has become the basis of many friendships, relationships and sometimes even families in FGT.

Pearly Loh, a leader in the 365 Students' Ministries, shares, "I started serving at 12, one of the youngest people in the youth fellowship back then. I started out helping in the OHP (overhead projector) team then. I remember how the sweat from my fingers would smear the hand-written lyrics; also when the OHP itself went kaput in the middle of worship!"

But despite the hiccups and challenges, she also remembers how she always had help and support from those around her. "I had older youths who would encourage me and teach me, even how to scrub a toilet bowl. Needless to say, we became close-knit very quickly."



Khoo Hsien Piao

Of course, the very idea of volunteering and service itself connotes a need for sacrifice, whether it be in time, money or even energy. Pastor Yapp Gaik Sim reflects on the church's early days and how she juggled between work, church and starting a young family.

"In the 1980s and 90s, our home was the 'hotel' that the visiting pastors would stay at. I had a secular job and was raising my family – oftentimes, I would put the kids to bed, turn the house around and prepare the rooms for new guests, sometimes on the very next day, on top of meals and laundry. The tiredness I felt back then was unforgettable!"

And yet, Ps Gaik Sim shares that some of her best memories were those times when she could fellowship with the visiting pastors and their wives. Because they would stay at her home, she could spend time talking, learning and gleaning their wisdom and experiences. "The benefit of hosting them has been the years of friendships that I've built with so many of them," she continues.



Goh Hock Keat

Forty years on, the call for volunteers to rise up has not changed as we see the church take on new dreams and projects. However, with these new plans come the need for new ideas and skill sets but the vision is unfazed.

Khoo Hock Huat, who has served in FGT since the 1980s, says, “When we do our best, God will provide the wisdom and resources. We always understood that we are not operating on our own resources but the Lord’s.”

As an example, he shares about the time when he was called to organize a church camp but fell sick during camp itself. Despite having to be on bed rest, he said the rest of the camp committee pulled off the camp without a hitch. “I’ve gone on to organize many more camps after that, and it is encouraging to see how God shapes our lives and our anointing when people grow in responsibility.”

Within this legacy of volunteerism breeds a more significant purpose; it is through service that we understand our calling in the bigger tapestry that God is weaving in His church. Khoo Hsien Piao, who has been a part of the church since his early 20s, reminisces of when he shared his decision to join the church to the youth pastor back then. “Pastor Timothy warmly accepted me with a ‘Welcome to the FGT family. Grab a mop, clean a toilet.’”

“During those long hours of projects and weekly service, we were setting an example for ourselves and those around us of what Christianity looked like behind the scenes. What is my character like after a 2-hour-long practice? How do I deal with adversity and negative feedback? Am I really concerned about the wellbeing of others or am I just getting the job done?” Piao remembers.

Intertwined in the errands, sacrifice, friendships and training, FGTians understand that therein lies the appreciation that our efforts go into something weightier than ourselves. May Tan, who serves full-time in the church office as well as an adult cell leader, shares an important reminder. “Serving in FGT always reminds me that it is ‘not by might nor by power, but by His Spirit’. He shows us grace and shapes our beliefs by knowing that He never fails me, my family or my church.”

Here’s to seeing the next generation of successors play a part in building FGT’s future.

OUR EFFORTS GO INTO SOMETHING WEIGHTIER THAN OURSELVES



May Tan



Pearly Loh



From L-R: Ps Yapp Gaik Sim, Sr Ps Eu Hong Seng, Goh Hock Keat, Chong Huai Yaw, Pearly Loh and May Tan



Eugene Koo

THE HEART TO GIVE

Giving sacrificially has been part and parcel of FGT's DNA even from its earliest days. When members gathered together at the small shop-lot in SS2, all but the oldest would sit on newspapers laid out on the floor during most meetings. While there may have been a shortage of chairs, there certainly was no lack in faith nor desire for the presence of God.

Most members then were students and young adults who had just started working. Hard-pressed for funds to pay the rent, each month saw everyone scrambling to empty pockets to pool their resources to ensure the church would still have a place to meet again the following month.

Fast forward forty years later, FGT has since been able to acquire land, purchase buildings and erect its own complexes. Through the years, every generation has been challenged to give sacrificially - thus many have had the privilege to play their part in seeing major projects of the church come to pass - whether through the giving of time, money or talent.

Eugene Koo still remembers parting with a significant amount of money back when he was still a young student at church. "We were building the Eagles Dialysis Centre when I was in Form One. My cell leader at the time challenged the young people to give. I contributed by giving up my pocket money. By then, we had also started praying for the construction of the Eagles Prayer Centre at our Saturday morning prayer meetings - as the land for the EPC had already been purchased," Eugene said.

Sharon Lim stepped onto the pathway of giving with FGT's first building project, Wisma Eagles 1 (WE1). She was just a fresh graduate and at that time, the church challenged its members to pledge a year's salary towards the building and she did, as an act of faith.

"Thereafter, I pledged again for WE2 and the Hebron project, and at that time I was still single. Then, following my marriage, my husband and I pledged towards WE3 and WE4. We just felt we had to do whatever we could because we love the church and we're glad to grow together with it," shared Sharon.

As both Eugene and Sharon learned to give sacrificially, they saw God move in their lives like never before.

"We always hear how God would honour our giving and bless us back - and I've seen God bless me in unexpected ways. There were times when the money just came in and I knew it was definitely God's doing. Through that, I decided to give God more and more. It's difficult, but we need to take the first steps if we really love God and are grateful for what He has blessed us with," said Eugene.

For Sharon, the decision to give by faith resulted in manifold blessings in her career - including two promotions within a year and a succession of increments. When it came to giving for the Hebron project, Sharon experienced a miracle. As the time to fulfill her pledge drew near, she did not have the amount required in her savings.

"But guess what?" Sharon smiled. "I then received my promotion letter, and the increment from that promotion was in four digits, and to my further surprise,

IF BEING SACRIFICIAL WAS EASY, EVERYBODY WOULD BE DOING IT. OUR GOD IS NOT A GOD OF CONVENIENCE

the increment letter was backdated three months. In other words, I received 3 months worth of increment, and the sum was exactly what I needed to complete my outstanding pledge!"

When Sharon and her husband, Shanker, resigned from their respective positions and started their own practice, they had zero clients to begin with. But in no time, God brought in client after client for them, much to their amazement.

Throughout the past decade of giving sacrificially, both FGT members have counted it a blessing to give towards the church.

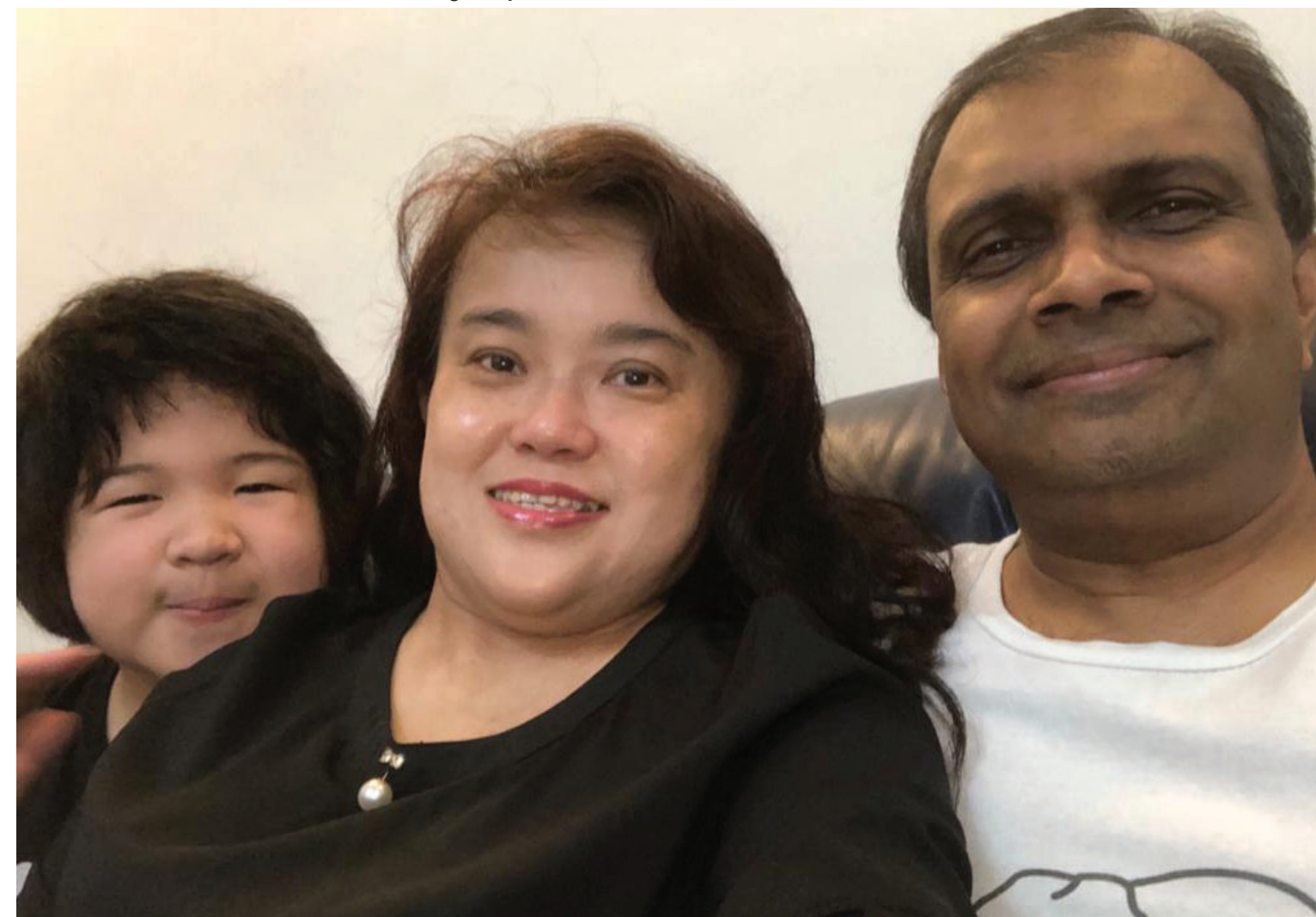
Eugene sums up the past decade of giving, saying, "Sometimes you give and you think it is a big amount until God challenges you again and you see the amount grow bigger and bigger. In the last 3 years, I have given the biggest amounts I have ever given in my life and looking back, God has been really surprising me in so many areas. At the end of the day, you cannot outgive God. From God's perspective, it is more about the heart than the amount."

For those who still hesitate to give sacrificially, Sharon's advice is to take the first step and watch God work out the impossible. "It is not a 'sacrifice' but rather a 'privilege' to be able to give. Our life will be more blessed when we give and it is truly a privilege to be able to participate in the vision and participate in the kingdom's blessings," said Sharon.

Although the church seems to be constantly challenging members to give, Eugene believes without the push, people would just give what is convenient and that would be akin to giving God their spare change.

"It has to be painful to really know that it is sacrificial. If being sacrificial was easy, everybody would be doing it. Our God is not a God of convenience, He is a God of sacrifice. He demands our time, our resources and our full attention and I think for us to really grow, it requires sacrifice," said Eugene.

Sharon and her husband, Shanker and daughter Lydia



ON OUR KNEES AGAIN

"For every time I pray, I move the hand of God; my prayer does the things my hands cannot do."

The lyrics endear to many as a song that has resounded in many churches both within and outside of Malaysia. More importantly, the words have become a mantra behind FGT's history, people and achievements in the last four decades.

For some, the journey of prayer began from a need found in their family. Ruth Cheah, a cell leader in FGT, reminisces. "My prayer life really started to grow in 1991 when I had Abigail. It was a turning point in my life when I had to take everything to God because I was in a situation that I didn't know how to handle naturally."

Abigail, Ruth's elder daughter, was born with Down Syndrome. Being a young mother of two children at that time and holding a job as a full-time teacher in a government school, Ruth clearly remembers the struggles for time every morning. She recalls, "I would wake up at 5 am in the morning, do my Quiet Time, get myself and my family ready and then we had to leave the house by 7 am so that I could get to work on time."

Ruth believes personal prayer time is essential as parents. "We need to surrender our home environment to God in prayer in order to see Him work out His faithfulness in our lives."

Prayer meetings are highly esteemed at FGT. The church holds at least four prayer meetings a week at last count - the main one being the Friday night prayer meeting held each week at 8.15pm since forty years ago. For many working members of the church, attendance at prayer meetings really requires commitment and sacrifice.

Ps Kong Choke Kee reminisces, "I used to live in Sungai Buloh and at that time, the NKVE was closed for a year due to construction works. It would take me almost 3 hours on Friday evenings to leave the office, pick up my family in Damansara before coming to the prayer meeting. We often had to take our dinner in the car!"



Ruth Cheah

Ps Michelle Phong, FGT's Prayer Pastor, shares, "I remember an incident from many years ago when I was pregnant with my younger son, Jason. We were renting a house in Kepong at the time and our Friday prayer meetings were held in Damansara Jaya. The roads from Kepong to DJ were long, dark and bumpy, and I was mostly alone as my husband was away for work."

"I was heavily pregnant at the wheel, with a toddler in tow, rushing to make it in time for Prayer Meeting and I started to question myself why I was doing such a crazy thing. While wrestling with God, I prayed for a parking spot as I approached the church premises. God responded by providing a parking spot right in front of the steps of the church," she laughs. "I felt God say that He really wanted me to be there at the Prayer Meeting because He wants us to be together in unity."

Beyond unity, the church believes corporate prayer causes members to grow in awareness and care for things and people beyond themselves, thus prayer becomes a catalyst for maturity.

"Many times, we come to prayer meetings not just for ourselves but for others, for the church," Michelle says. "Back then I didn't know what the church's needs were, but the more I attended prayer meetings, the more I understood what the church and her people were facing, and I learned how to pray better."

The sentiment for sharing burdens is one supported by other members. Ng Weng Hou, one of the cell leaders for the adults group, recalls, "In 1999, I was jobless for 9 months; in 2000 a cell member's husband was diagnosed with nasal cancer; in 2006 a family joined us whose 13 year old daughter had leukemia; in 2010, I had another cell



Ng Weng Hou

member with three teenage daughters, the youngest of whom was diagnosed with cancer. The pain came closer to home when my younger sister had cancer in 2014 and my younger brother in 2016. In 2017, my business of four years could not be sustained and had to fold up.”

When faced with these seemingly insurmountable challenges, Weng Hou struggled through his prayer life. “Very often I would find myself lost for words to pray. How do I sustain praying? How do I get into God’s heart in praying? How do I pray relevantly? How do I persevere in prayer beyond three sentences?”

This caused Weng Hou to remember his first visit to FGT 35 years ago. “My girlfriend then (now wife, Gaik Suan) invited me to visit her church on a few occasions but I had never wanted to go to a charismatic church. However, I agreed on that particular Sunday as I was having a very difficult week due to pressing issues at the university, my final year thesis and on top of that, my mother’s

deteriorating health condition. I felt alone and powerless in those struggles.”

During the service when a call for testimonies was made, he felt a strong tug in his heart to read and share Psalm 63 to the church.

*O God, You are my God;
Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.*

“By the time I reached the third line, tears were welling up in my eyes and by the fourth they were rolling down my cheeks. I was no longer reading the Psalm, it was really my prayer, it was exactly my heart’s cry to God. I didn’t know how to handle it, I need You, God, to help me.”

To Weng Hou, this was a pivotal moment in his prayer life as he realized that spiritual growth is impossible without the practice of prayer, just as how the key to quality relationships laid in the time spent in

communication. Praying through Scripture turned his prayer life more personal and dynamic. This habit has continued for him up till today whenever he leads the pre-Service Prayer Meetings on Sundays.

Another member of the church who saw God’s hand at work through prayer is Sherry Sung. Despite the frustration of a colon cancer relapse in 2020 after 3 years, Sherry recounts how persevering in prayer on a daily basis became the source of her strength. “I try to begin every day with praise and prayer,” she shares when asked what carried her through the darkest hours of her illnesses. She admits that there have been times when she was tempted to lose hope, but continues to draw strength from Isaiah 53:5, ‘...by His stripes we are healed’ during her time spent with the Lord in prayer. Sherry confidently adds on, “Even when He seems distant, I know God’s healing power is at work.”

As the church began to grow in size and maturity, FGT corporate prayers started to take on community and even national burdens. Soon, the church leaders felt the need to have more time dedicated in prayer - which led to the start of the weekly Saturday 6am Prayer Meetings.



Sherry Sung

Kathy Liang recalls, “The first 6am Prayer Meetings were small; the focus then was primarily on the church and her projects and building funds. Over time, our prayer items have evolved to cover the salvation of our loved ones, supernatural miracles in healing and even nation and community needs.”

As a family with two young children then, attending 6am Prayer Meetings every week was a challenge for Kathy and her husband, Choke Kee. “I would feel so tired, as I worked at a full-time job and had to take care of the

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER, JUST AS HOW THE KEY TO QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS LAID IN THE TIME SPENT IN COMMUNICATION



Ps Michelle Phong

family and the home. But I wanted my boys to have the discipline of trusting and seeking God in their lives; to become inspired and empowered in their own walk with God,” she adds.

Sia Ling Beng, a full-time worker with the church shares, “Bringing our kids to 6am Prayer Meetings at the time was a practical decision – we had no one else who could take care of them then! Plus I was assigned to open up the prayer hall too.” Typical Saturdays include driving two cars to prayer meetings because their teenage kids have various school activities; running errands and doing house chores; or when either spouse has to stay back to lock up the hall after meetings.

Despite the struggles, Kathy, Ling Beng and their respective families continue to be faithful to the 6am Prayer Meetings every Saturday. “We have seen breakthroughs in



Sia Ling Beng

PRAYER IS EVERYBODY’S MINISTRY; IT IS A MULTI-GENERATIONAL & MULTI-DEMOGRAPHIC INITIATIVE

our lives and in the lives of others; my kids have seen breakthroughs firsthand in our family and they are now even willing to part with their ‘angpau’ to contribute to church projects without us asking,” Ling Beng laughs.

Calvin Low describes how prayer has become ingrained into his family’s routines. “When my wife and I first got married, we brought our children (who were just toddlers then) to every church service and event we attended. When they become parents one day, I expect them to pass on this practice to their own children!”

Michelle adds, “I hope that through prayer, many people will come and seek God, catch the fire and bring it to their workplaces and families.” For her, prayer is everybody’s ministry; it is a multi-generational and multi-demographic initiative. These days, she can be seen praying and working with people from the 365 Student Ministries and children’s work to serve together through prayer and worship.

“I’m hoping that fewer people would see praying as a ‘sien’ [bothersome] thing, but that we would have intercessors from across the church who will come together to see their ministries excel, to evangelize and to disciple others.”

Calvin Low



FAMILY TIES

With many who were literally born, then mature, marry and progenerate while remaining with FGT in the last 40 years, multi-generationalism is a common trait of several families here.

Opportunities to expand and enlarge families come not only by means of birth and marriage, but also through persistent and faithful witnessing by members to their loved ones. By God's grace, the church is privileged to see many families grow into sizable 'clans' (maybe even 'dynasties'!) over time.

So what is it like to see generational growth happening in your family and worshipping together in the same church for years?

Wong Sheue Yann celebrates her 39th year with FGT this year, having first stepped into the church when she was 15 years old. "When I started becoming more committed to the church, my parents banned me from continuing. They were suspicious of FGT because back then it looked far from being an orthodox church and everyone was so young."

Despite a rocky start, her sister, Sheue Ling also decided to call FGT 'home' and years later, Lucilla Tan (Sheue Yann's mother) eventually joined the church too. Today, both sisters have their own families who also serve in different ministries in the church. For Sheue Yann, the decision to stay on was due to the fact that FGT cultivated the right values and principles for building an individual, family and community.

"I like that we have solid, biblical teaching combined through a practical, well-rounded approach," she adds. "There is a 'grounded-ness' to the people in FGT, which also becomes the basis for many integral relationships with people. This has helped to anchor my faith. And because I was so networked into the church already, it was just a natural progression for my family too."

Sheue Yann's 15-year-old daughter, Hui Xian recalls, "I thought since I grew up in a church-going family, that made me a Christian!" Thankfully, this thought has since been corrected.

Hui Xian realizes her parents' involvement in the church has enabled her to be the recipient of many blessings from church, and this in turn has sparked an aspiration to learn how to be generous. "Growing up in FGT, so many people have blessed us and taken care of me; I also want to be able to give back," she says.

For Cheng Tyan Min, FGT is home for her and her family because the people in church have walked with her through the different seasons in life.

"I joined the church when I was 18 years old – from inviting me to youth camp to helping me organize my wedding; supporting me as a new mother even until my ministry now – the church has been like family," she shared. "My mother and sisters also joined the church in my early years - we were even water baptized together. This is also where I met my husband and now my kids are



In clockwise direction: Wong Sheue Yann (furthest right) and daughter, Lee Hui Xian, niece Caitlin Tang, sister-in-law Yeoh Ee Leen, sister Wong Sheue Ling and mother, Mdm. Lucilla Tan



Cheng Tyan Min (third from left) with Adelyn, Andrew and husband Mun Leong

also in FGT. Seeing three generations of my family in God's house together each week really, really blesses my heart!"

Mdm. Tan Siew King (more fondly known as Mrs Cheng), Tyan Min's mother who until recently served as a cell leader and usher, echoes the same sentiment. "Looking back, I cannot deny that FGT has helped to grow my family spiritually. They have helped us stay rooted in the Word of God."

For Tyan Min, things have come full cycle as she recalls it was through the youth fellowship she received a defining word from God to make FGT her home. Today, she serves as a pastor in charge of the 365 Student Ministries in which her two children, Andrew, 21 and Adelyn, 18, also attend.

For Andrew, growing up in FGT has helped him weather obstacles in his life. "I feel honoured to be in such a Christ-centered family and church – it really pushes you to grow in a Bible-guided way."

"From when I was in Kids Alive (the children's church ministry) up till today in 365, I have been cared for and guided by an

extended family of aunts and uncles, and leaders who continue to show me a bigger perspective on life and God as I serve," Adelyn shared.

Chan Yan Wee and his family landed in FGT through a comedy of errors almost 25 years ago. He had been handed a flyer to join a church meeting in KBU college, but ended up in KDU college by mistake. At that time, FGT was holding its Sunday services at KDU Hall. The combination of sound preaching and friendly atmosphere eventually sealed the family's decision to stay with the church.

As father to two teenage daughters at that time, Chan was both relieved and proud when his girls started to get involved and serve actively in the church. "They were learning, serving God at that young age and building relationships with peers and elders. So we had complete peace of mind about joining this big, extended family," he said.

Chan's eldest daughter, Judith, now 40, has celebrated many milestones throughout her lifetime in FGT. From surviving a health



Judith Chan (furthest left), Chan Yan Wee (fourth from left) and their family

challenge to getting married, moving into different ministries and even having kids of her own, she shares, "The people whom I journeyed with from my teenage years to adulthood have shaped me to become who I am today. Even now in a cell group with members who are twice our age, I get to learn how they tackle life through their Christian walk."

With three grandchildren in the Kids Alive ministry, Chan says, "Today we have three

generations of our family in FGT. I feel blessed to see my grandchildren building their spiritual foundation with their parents' guidance, learning to pray, say grace and reading the Bible daily."

Judith adds, "I know I have a big role to play in guiding and raising them. I pray that they will encounter Christ for themselves, find good friends to journey through thick and thin, and like their parents, be able to call FGT home too."

“I FEEL BLESSED TO SEE MY GRANDCHILDREN BUILDING THEIR SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION WITH THEIR PARENTS’ GUIDANCE, LEARNING TO PRAY, SAY GRACE AND READING THE BIBLE DAILY.”



Goh Gaik Suan



Timothy Wong leading an SOTB lecture in a pre-Covid era

CUSTODIANS OF THE TRUTH

“I felt intimidated and unqualified,” reflects Joyce. “Being the youngest in the team only accentuated those feelings. But I desired to study the Word; to know it well enough to teach it. So despite being young and unprepared, I took it as a faith journey in my walk with God and learned along the way.”

One Sunday morning in 2007, Bernard Tan observed a new Christian beside him flipping helplessly through the pages of the New Testament, unsuccessfully looking for that day’s sermon text.

That particular morning, the sermon was on the book of Jonah.

“I thought it was so sad,” muses Bernard. “These are basic things about the Bible, but he never had the opportunity to learn, so you couldn’t blame him for not knowing it. It made me think about how we should teach people about the basics of the Bible.”

So when Senior Pastor Eu Hong Seng shortly afterward mooted classes to improve Bible knowledge in the church, Bernard immediately set to work on a white paper outlining his ideas. His aim was to enable ordinary church members to easily gain comprehension of the Bible.

Bernard’s passion for the Bible stems from a time when he, as a new believer, was questioned by an uncle about his faith. “The first thing he said was, ‘You became a Christian? You believe in all that fairytale nonsense?’” recalls Bernard. “I didn’t know how to defend myself. For years to come that question haunted me – is the Bible a fairytale? That made me want to study the Bible – to understand it – so I can say: this is not a fairytale; I live my life according to it.”



Joyce Eu

A basic format for what would become the School of the Bible (SOTB) was soon hammered out. Held four times a year, classes would each cover a book in the Old Testament, a book in the New Testament, a topic, and a Christian doctrine. The search for teachers soon began.

For R. Jayashanker, volunteering to teach was the fulfilment of a long-cherished prophecy over his life. “Back in 1987, [visiting speaker] John Jacks prophesied that I would one day teach the Word,” says Shanker. “While listening to all the teachers the church has been blessed with, I used to pray: ‘Lord, help me to do that one day.’ When the opportunity came, I felt: this was it.”

Joyce Eu remembers being roped in to the SOTB team when a junior class was set up

for students aged 16 and below. Having previously sought guidance from SOTB teacher Timothy Wong in studying the Bible, she was stunned when she was later approached to teach it.

“I felt intimidated and unqualified,” reflects Joyce. “Being the youngest in the team only accentuated those feelings. But I desired to study the Word; to know it well enough to teach it. So despite being young and unprepared, I took it as a faith journey in my walk with God and learned along the way.”

Bernard himself admits misgivings about teaching without a theological qualification. “It’s my prime burden to ensure I’m teaching the Bible the way it should be taught,” he says. “So I do a lot of personal reading – as much as I can on every angle.”

Plenty of reading is involved indeed. The teachers study and make detailed notes on the Bible passages, then read commentaries and sermons for context and perspective. They then condense their prolific notes into a concise explanation of the book or subject, incorporating practical applications of the verses to everyday life. It’s a process they execute meticulously to ensure their teaching is accurate; yet not one they always relish.

“It’s a challenge to maintain self-discipline and not leave the preparation until too late,” says Timothy. “Sometimes when I have been really busy and just want to laze around after a full day’s work, it is difficult to sit down and start plugging away at research or study.”

“I have always disliked reading,” confesses Joyce. “So I had to consciously make an effort to change my disposition towards reading in order to expand my knowledge.

Not long after agreeing to teach, I had my daughter Lydia – it was tough juggling time between attending to her, work and church commitments. I learned to be more creative in managing time – I read online on the LRT, print notes to read over lunch and listen to audio sermons.”

But it is this very process that may hold the greatest blessing, for it is impossible to study the Word without being transformed by it. “As I prepare the material, I get conscious of an inner voice asking me, ‘Are you doing what you’re teaching?’” says Shanker. “It challenges me to not just feed information, but teach life and pass that on. I’ve changed; I’ve a new respect for the Bible.”

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO STUDY THE WORD WITHOUT BEING TRANSFORMED BY IT

There are also man-made difficulties. While registration for SOTB begins three weeks before the class, only two-thirds of participants actually do so by the Sunday before. To accommodate as many as possible, Bernard and his wife Esther wait as long as they can before sending the notes for printing and confirming lunch orders with caterers. Some people sign up without paying, or don’t turn up for class, complicating efforts to balance accounts and estimate numbers for the materials and food. In the early years of SOTB, Bernard and Esther occasionally made up for any deficit at their own expense, having earlier resolved to minimise any burden on the church and its full-time staff.

Giving so much of oneself can be draining,



Participants below age 16 have a separate SOTB experience

and the teachers are not immune from discouragement when they feel unable to live up to their own high standards. Still, the blessings received outweigh the challenges of the job.

“I always believe those who gain the most from SOTB are the teachers themselves,” says Timothy. “Teaching has increased my knowledge and understanding of the Bible. It’s also very fulfilling when church members tell us they enjoyed our teaching and learnt a lot – we know all our effort is not being wasted.”

“I am very encouraged to see changes in the students’ postures, when you know an ‘aha’ moment happened; or when questions are asked,” says Melinda Ong, who teaches the junior SOTB class. “Once, I had my stories mixed up and a student pointed it out. I was really blessed because he was paying attention and wasn’t afraid to tell me my mistake; besides, it showed he knew his Bible stories – even uncommon ones.”

In keeping with FGT’s vision to be a blessing to the nations, SOTB is now positioned to become an instrument for increasing bible literacy in churches lacking the capacity to do so on their own. Recordings of SOTB classes already grace FGT daughter churches in Malaysia and abroad. The Covid-19 pandemic and resultant movement control order has actually served to accelerate this process. With SOTB classes shifting online, teaching is now pre-recorded, making it easier for the church to build a library of material for the use of any churches who request it.

Despite such lofty goals, the teachers remain modest about their work. “My desire is that the next time someone talks about Jonah, nobody will start looking in the New Testament for it,” says Bernard. “If we can take away our own ideas, and replace them with a solid Biblical foundation for the things we think, say and do, then there’s an impact. If I’ve impacted just one person, then praise the Lord.”

WORSHIP THROUGH THE DECADES

Lai Mun Leong stands silently behind his microphone, a slightly tense half-smile occasionally flickering across his otherwise calm face. His team of musicians and singers wait as Senior Pastor Eu Hong Seng welcomes the congregation to the Sunday worship service, then cues them in. A click of a button, a flick of Mun Leong's finger – and the sound of worship fills the scores of homes signed in to FGT's online worship service.

"I was initially very hesitant about the Zoom worship sessions," Mun Leong says afterwards, voicing the apprehension of many in the worship team about appearing at close quarters before a camera. The global upheaval caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has reverberated even through the little world of FGT worship, compelling the team to step into the unknown realm of online worship (see accompanying article).

A stalwart of the FGT worship team since the 1980s, Mun Leong has a wistful note in his voice as he reminisces on worship in the early days of the church in SS2. For a group of young people who couldn't afford chairs to sit on, music equipment was out of the question; but to Mun Leong, nothing compares to the memory of those humble first meetings. "Worship was very simple and straightforward. We could sing one simple song and break into worship, and sense God's presence."

A prayer-soaked beginning, a powerful sense of destiny and an overwhelming hunger to see God move combined to give an electric atmosphere to those early meetings. Here, boldness fostered by the strong camaraderie between the members allowed the Holy Spirit wide latitude to move. "We had something called 'open time': we got to stand up and read a verse, sing, speak in tongues or give an interpretation," says Ang Kim Hong, FGT's current audio-visual department head. "That was when I built my confidence; to hear from God, get up and read the Bible. It made me who I am today."

The members' eagerness translated naturally into service. Although the church eventually graduated from newspapers and borrowed tambourines to chairs and amplifiers, the desire to serve far outweighed the need. "After service, there would be a line of guys waiting to wash the toilet," grins Kim Hong. "We did everything – from folding curtains to arranging chairs to selling honey and Christmas cards to raise money for the church."



Christmas play in KDU

That culture of service continued when the church moved on to Damansara Jaya. Chien Min Choy, a PA (public-address system) industry professional who served for many years as FGT's PA department head, describes his team's dedication. "We'd come two hours before every service to set up the system and test the sound with the musicians and singers; we were also the last to leave, after packing up to ensure all was safe for the following week's service."

Louanna Loong, who served as a keyboardist here in the 1990's, remembers the challenges posed by the awkward layout of the space spanning three shop-lots. "Because of the structure of the place, we couldn't see each other easily on Sunday mornings; the worship leader faced challenges keeping people engaged with many pillars in the way," she says. "The musicians had very little space – it was good for communication, but the drums were too loud and we couldn't hear well when the music got louder!"

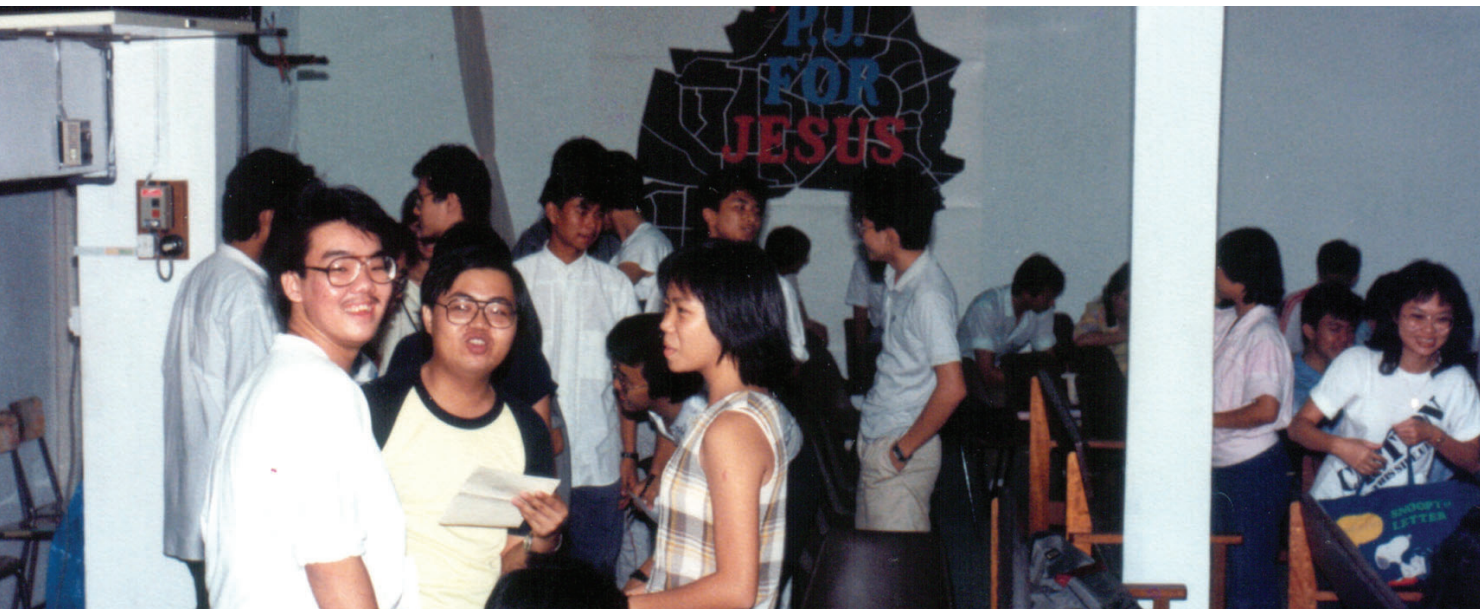
As the church grew, Sunday services eventually moved to the Kolej Damansara Utama (KDU) auditorium. After the cramped conditions of the DJ premises, the expansive hall with its soaring ceilings and unobstructed space provided a greater sense of freedom to worship. We could engage the congregation better, with all the pillars out of the way!" says Louanna. But the large hall posed challenges to the PA team, who had to manipulate their old, clunky, manual system to suit the new location. The painstaking task of moving the heavy equipment, laying cables, and adjusting the volumes of every microphone and instrument became a weekly routine.

"We were no longer shop-lot-size; expectations and level of technical competencies were higher," says Min Choy. "There was a sense of purpose and fulfilment that I could put experience from my workplace to good use for the church."

To save time on Sunday mornings, most equipment was stored in the workers'



Praying for the Main Sanctuary in Wisma Eagles in the midst of construction



FGT Damansara Jaya in the 80s - Note the pillars!



Min Choy handling PA in KDU

homes. “I had to carry the 18-kilogram, 16-channel audio-mixer and bags of wires and microphones up and down the five flights of stairs to my walk-up apartment every week,” says Min Choy. “I had to make two trips: once to set up and the next to bring my family to church.”

For Louanna, the convenience of living literally steps away from KDU was balanced by the responsibility of having assorted music equipment take up residence at her home for the next seven years. “I thank God that my parents, who weren’t believers at that time, were kind and understanding enough to allow all the extra clutter to be stored at their house!” she exclaims. “It was an exciting season of faith – it really tested our perseverance and commitment in serving God.”

And what a commitment it was.

“We were there by 6.45-7am to set up the PA, lug out the OHP projector and the huge, heavy box of transparencies, and find the songs,” remembers Kim Hong. “I would attend worship practice before going to help in children’s church; then I went to help bring my grandfather to the hall before rushing back to sing. After service, we had to make sure everything was kept before leaving.”

After years of faithful toil, FGT’s move into Wisma Eagles was met with immense relief. “Everyone was so happy to finally have a home for the church – no more transporting our equipment back and forth ever again!” says Louanna.

The church’s ‘promised land’ came complete with the ‘milk and honey’ of new instruments, video projectors and

a state-of-the-art PA system. The joys came with greater responsibilities, as the teams quickly realised: standards and expectations would thereafter only increase.

In the twenty years since, various efforts have been made to continually improve facilitation of worship services. A new digital sound system was recently installed, triggering changes in the PA department.

“The new system is more sophisticated... we had to dig deep to learn to operate it and find solutions to improve our workflow,” says Loke Yew Joe, who currently heads the team. “Despite having very little training in exploiting the system to its full potential, I am thankful for the tight-knit team who is committed to giving their best every week.”

Also giving their best is the worship team, whose job has become progressively more challenging as worship music evolves, requiring a higher degree of technical ability and team coordination. To facilitate this, each worship team now includes one music director, whose job is to plan and instruct the team on musical arrangements for each worship session.

In her twenty-eight years of serving, Louanna has rarely had to expend as much time and energy in preparing for a service. “I need to remember every detail of the musical arrangements for a worship service set, so I go through it many times, writing down everything to the letter,” she says. “I still sometimes find it difficult to coordinate my piano playing while giving live instructions to the rest of the team.”



PA team setting up in KDU



Worshipping on newspapers in the SS2 shophot

In all their efforts, every worker has one aim: to help others worship. “Every time I’m on stage, I pray: ‘God, You lead the worship. I want everyone who steps into the hall to get a touch from You – not because I sing well, or the musicians play well, but because Your presence is there,’” says Mun Leong. “It is the presence of God that brings a change in the atmosphere. He can see the hearts of people desiring to seek Him.”

But therein lies the dilemma: though the teams strive to usher in God’s presence, people must want to be there for worship to happen. Mun Leong laments that even as facilities and processes have become more sophisticated, the hearts of some have drifted further away. “It’s more challenging doing worship now, in the big hall, where I can see some people not worshipping. I wish we could go even higher in worship... but it depends on people’s hearts.”

What does he make of the online meetings, then? Leaning forward in a confidential manner, Mun Leong grins. “I like them. I even prefer them to the physical meetings! Because every time we have a Zoom worship session, I really sense the presence of God. We don’t even need complicated instruments – sometimes we only have one guitar. In a way, back to simplicity is good – it’s how I enjoyed it last time.”

Ironically, despite all the technology involved in today’s virtual worship services, it is essentially back to basics. God ultimately still seeks true worshippers, to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The younger and slimmer Ps Eu Hong Seng taking the pulpit



WORSHIP IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

Excited barking cuts through the muffled sound of singing when I ring Pastor Michelle Phong's doorbell. Princess Adora, a rust-brown toy poodle, gives me a warm, wet welcome into the house.

Michelle, framed by a large green screen, waves as I enter, though her eyes remain glued to her laptop screen and her voice swells in song. Her small team – two singers, a keyboardist and a guitarist – follow her lead; but the keyboard is conspicuously silent. The cable channelling its sound is one of a mass of wires criss-crossing the floor, eventually connecting to Michelle's laptop via a small mixer sitting on a cloth-covered side-table in the middle of the living room.

This is Sunday worship, but not as we know it.

In March 2020, with the forced closure of churches under the nationwide Movement Control Order (MCO), FGT moved swiftly to ensure continuity of worship, setting up a WhatsApp account to communicate directly with members and send out weekly pre-recorded sermons. On Easter Sunday, the first church-wide Zoom meeting was held to enable the partaking of communion together. Eventually, full-length online Sunday worship services



Socially distanced worship service



Checking in for church service

began, featuring worship music videos and pre-recorded sermons within the Zoom meetings.

Michelle, FGT's worship coordinator, was responsible for sharing the worship videos, but felt something amiss. "One day, after watching some videos, I felt that the church needs to see us. They need to see humble, non-professional FGT singers singing with them, not to them," says Michelle. "I realised that, with people scattered, they needed to see our faces – we had to show them that FGT is still here to lead them into the presence of God."

So Michelle, a former music teacher, got out her old keyboard and pressed her two musically talented sons into service. With Benjamin playing a *cajón* drum and Jason a guitar, the trio recorded Christian worship hit *Waymaker*, marking the debut of FGT online worship.

"We received encouraging feedback – that it was good to see local faces doing worship, even with just a simple song," says Michelle.

"Then we began to explore multi-frame recordings."

As meetings were prohibited under the MCO, worship team members had to record individually at home. But with no prior knowledge in producing recordings, they found themselves groping in the dark for methods. After getting help from a more experienced church, going through reams of reading material and holding numerous team discussions, the lengthy, tedious recording procedure was ironed out.

"Once we have a song, a music director does an instrumental recording of it. On top of that, he gives music instructions. He sends this to the 'base singer', who sings the melody. Other singers later match their singing to this," explains Benjamin, who functions as the team's audio editor. "Once everybody has recorded, I export the individual tracks into my computer program, match the vocals and adjust their timing and volumes. When the audio's done, I send it to the video editor, who puts in all the video frames."



Behind the scenes with the worship team during a Zoom worship session

If that process appears arduous on paper, it is even more so in practice. Every musician and singer involved in the recording spends hours practicing, recording and re-recording each song. Added to the many hours of meticulous work by the audio and video editors, it means entire days are spent on a short three-minute worship video. It was a relief when restrictions under the MCO were relaxed, enabling live worship sessions to commence.

Michelle gestures at her living room, which, with its assortment of music and sound equipment, bears greater resemblance to a recording studio than a living space. She and certain members of the worship team have invested significantly in purchasing equipment to make recordings and run sessions with adequate audio quality. “The team comes to set up on Friday, and my house is like this all weekend. Then after Sunday service we pack it up, and I have my house back for the week,” she laughs.

At a signal, chatter in the house ceases, as each team member scurries into place

in preparation for the service. Princess, hitherto snuggling by my feet, abruptly disappears – bundled upstairs by the family. “We have to hide her away, in case she barks during the service,” grins Benjamin. Wearing large headphones, he is hunched over a laptop in the corner, intently observing the screen.

“About three weeks after we started online services, we realised people were unmuting themselves, interrupting the service; or walking around with videos on, so I floated the idea of having co-hosts to my mum,” says Benjamin. He became one of the pioneers of the ‘tech team’, responsible for the smooth running of the weekly Zoom services. Their duties include muting attendees who inadvertently turn their audios and/or videos on, playing the worship and sermon videos, and sharing the pre-service, collection and announcement slides.

“We had no background in this, so we did lots of reading, exploring all the things Zoom can do,” says Benjamin. “Then we made suggestions to the pastors on what



Our worship leaders investing in their own equipment and green screen

we could do – we did all the research, so they didn’t have to.”

It has been a steep learning curve for all those involved in these virtual worship sessions. Step by step, the process improved as the team learned to use the right microphones, apply virtual backgrounds with song lyrics, and keep their sound even to avoid spikes during the service. For Michelle, one of the most gratifying improvements is in her team’s musical ability.

“When we record our sound with a proper microphone and play it back, we can hear ourselves, so we know where to improve,”

she says. “People were humble enough to admit their shortcomings and were willing to improve. I think we’re going to be better because of this pandemic.”

Perhaps the greatest joy for Michelle is the fresh appreciation of her team that this journey has given her. “It’s so heartwarming to see everyone taking up their ‘weapon’ and ‘building tool’ to serve the church. We have a really amazing team,” she says. “I pray that through us, everyone in their homes will be connected with God – that there will be an open heaven over everyone in the congregation.”

Michelle Phong's setup to lead worship



DUTY, DISCIPLINE, DESTINY

In January 2018, history was made as FGT Subang appointed the first set of elders since the pioneering generation. We get to know the three men taking FGT's vision to new heights.

Pastor Kong Choke Kee: The Making of a General

Pastor Kong Choke Kee had presided over countless funerals, but this one was like no other. It was April 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was sweeping the country – and he was conducting this small, simple ceremony in the very crematorium designated for the city's Covid-19 dead.

“My family was worried. But I couldn't say no,” says Ps. Choke Kee. Armed only with a surgical mask, he was in and out within the strictly-enforced ten minutes allocation.

It was all in a day's work for the elder tasked with overseeing FGT's adults group. Responsible for the welfare of over 400 people, he is by the bedside of every ill member, at the negotiating table with every broken relationship, and in the confidence of every troubled soul.

“My phone is like rescue 911,” laughs Ps. Choke Kee. “They call me for any emergency, even at 2a.m.!”

Ps. Choke Kee's devotion to duty was drilled into him by his disciplinarian mother, who mandated weekly church attendance for her 12 children. The

grandson of a missionary brought from China to Sitiawan, Perak by the British in the early 1900s, Choke Kee accepted Christ as a teenager and served faithfully throughout his university years. After graduating, he steadily climbed the corporate ladder in the banking and oil and gas industries, culminating in a high-ranking position in Malakoff Corporation, the largest independent power producer in South-East Asia. During his early career years, God took a back seat in Choke Kee's life – until he met his future wife, Kathy.

“It was a blind date,” smiles Ps. Choke Kee. “I married into FGT, and because she was a leader, I had to attend prayer meetings. Before that, I'd never attended a prayer meeting in my life!”

The discipline of attending cell, prayer and Sunday meetings became the training through which God worked to revive Choke Kee's passion for His purposes. He became particularly passionate about prayer, occasionally battling through three hours in traffic to attend prayer meetings. Soon he too began serving, rising in the ranks to become a cell leader, then deacon, then adults' cell coordinator. Eventually, Ps. Hong Seng challenged him to become a full-time pastor.



From L-R: Elder Lee Choong San, Sr. Ps. Eu Hong Seng, Elder Kong Choke Kee, Elder Lim Wai Hin

“I WANT TO BE KNOWN AS SOMEONE WHO BUILT THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS – THEY MUST BE BETTER THAN ME”

“I said, ‘You must be crazy!’” recalls Ps. Choke Kee. “I didn't think I had a calling, nor could I preach.” For five years he struggled with the decision and its consequences, including giving up his well-paying job and his concern for his sons' education. But as he served, his compassion for people and his sense of calling grew. After obtaining Kathy's approval, he finally decided to bite the bullet and obey the call. Just months before quitting his job, a bombshell dropped: a family crisis, with significant financial implications for many years to come. Still, Ps. Choke Kee stuck to his guns. “I told God I would obey, so I had to, whatever the obstacles,” he says.

It is a position of tremendous pressure, even today, as Ps. Choke Kee navigates the myriad issues facing the large adults group, most of whom are senior to him. Every day, he draws strength from God, praying for anointing and authority to lead his people. His dedication to his work has led to the birth of five new cell groups and earned the respect of the leaders under him. Ps. Choke Kee's desire is for an army of leaders to rise up to do the work of the kingdom.

“I want to be known as someone who built the next generation of leaders – they must be better than me,” says Ps. Choke Kee.

Elder Lee Choong San: Going for Gold

When Elder Lee Choong San qualified as a chartered accountant in the mid-1990s, he vowed never to study again. Yet nearly thirty years later, Choong San is now midway through a two-year Masters in Practical Theology course under Mathersey Hall, a Bible college in the UK.



From L-R: Elder Lim Wai Hin, Elder Kong Choke Kee and Elder Lee Choong San

“It’s like pulling teeth,” he wryly replies, when queried on his progress. Choong San admits the discipline of planning study days and assignments isn’t always enjoyable. But it’s par for the course in his quest to expand his knowledge and understanding of the Bible.

On the surface, Choong San appears an unlikely candidate for theological training. After spending several years in Sunday school as a child, God was far from his mind as he pursued a high-flying career as a tax consultant in accounting giants Arthur Andersen and Ernst & Young. But upon returning from Australia in 1997, those early lessons in faith tugged at his heart, prompting him to embark on a journey to seek God on a personal basis.

“Because of that seed planted long ago, I didn’t seek out anything else,” says Choong San. “For me there was only one God, the Christian God. Though no one shared the gospel with me, I started reading the Bible and attending various churches.”

A former colleague, Sheue Yann, invited Choong San to FGT. Choong San very quickly found himself pledging to the building fund, cementing his commitment to the church. Through attending prayer meetings and Evangelism Explosion (EE) training, his spiritual muscles were honed, setting him on track for greater roles in the church. While assisting Sheue Yann, now his wife, with shepherding her cell, he discovered the incomparable joy of seeing their cell members’ spouses come to faith in Christ. This passion now drives his current role as an EE training coordinator.

In 2013, Choong San called time on his career, retiring after 11 years as a tax partner to help manage his family business. This gave him more time to devote to church work, while still providing for the church’s financial needs. Not long afterwards, Ps. Hong Seng invited Choong San to work with him toward the role of an elder.

“[Visiting speaker] Neal Patterson was a great encouragement. He said, ‘If you’re a ship that never leaves the harbour, how do you know you’ll survive the rough seas?’ I decided to take the plunge,” says Choong San.

Today, Choong San manages the young adults group, which ranges from young graduates to parents of school-going children. Its members are as dynamic and challenging as they are diverse, and it’s sometimes difficult encouraging them to devote time to God and the church amid the pressures of career and children. But Choong San presses on, finding great joy in seeing young adults maturing and contributing their talents and resources to the church.

“Many think that they can go out there and ‘fly by night’ in all sorts of ministries, but we need to serve God under the covering of the church,” says Choong San. “I want to be known as someone who has sacrificed and served God through the church.”

**Pastor Lim Wai Hin:
Growing a Godly Generation**

On Lim Wai Hin’s first day in his new secondary school, God spoke to the shy, introverted 13-year-old, telling him that he would serve Him and make an impact in his school.

“I felt like Moses,” grins Pastor Wai Hin. “I just wanted to hide in a corner. But God said I would be equipped.”

By the time he left the school, Wai Hin had held multiple positions including head prefect and pioneering editor of the school newspaper, besides being a leader in the Christian fellowship. It was a

foretaste of the power of God’s purposes.

God’s hand has always been strong on Ps. Wai Hin’s life. At a young age, he became a Christian after researching the major religions and finding the Bible to contain the most coherent and consistent teaching. FGT’s close proximity to his parents’ home in SS2 led him to join the church in its early years, where he built relationships and grew in serving. His thirst for answers to life’s difficult questions led him on a journey of Bible study and reading Christian books, most significantly *The Father Heart of God* by Floyd McClung.

“It helped me to understand God as my good, heavenly Father first, on which Christian walk and servanthood builds,” says Ps. Wai Hin. “Today, I love talking about knowing God as our Father – it must be the foundation of every Christian.”

It was perhaps a desire to embody the Father’s heart that made Ps. Wai Hin readily agree to Ps. Hong Seng’s request to serve as youth counsellor 6 years ago. Although the 365 youth ministries had two full-time pastors, both were women; a father figure was needed for the boys who made up over 60% of the group. It was only a matter of time before the invitation to full-time ministry came.

“I had prophecies that I would serve in the youth ministry full-time. One day, I was at a prayer altar conference, and during the break, the worship team began the song ‘You are Worthy of It All’, recalls Ps. Wai Hin. “The Spirit of God touched me – I felt God saying ‘I am worthy of it all’. That was the turning point – it helped me decide joyfully to come out full-time.”



It was a major decision for Ps. Wai Hin, his wife, Lisa, and their three children. Besides financial implications, the pressure of being an elder's family and sacrifice of family time weighed on them. But the family resolved to work together, and have grown stronger as they see the joys of doing God's work.

The labour is fulfilling, albeit challenging. In addition to pastoring the youth and planning outreach to campus students, Ps. Wai Hin provides spiritual oversight for the Eagles Grammar International School, organising the Chapel Service and Bible Knowledge classes. His flock include many youth struggling with disorders and various life and family issues, whose testimonies greatly encourage Ps. Wai Hin.

"The joy of seeing lives changed and transformed; seeing youth maturing, making right decisions and growing into their destiny keeps me passionate and positive about this responsibility," says Ps. Wai Hin.

The world of youth ministry is fast-moving, as youth culture and technology constantly evolve. In this demanding environment, Ps. Wai Hin's dreams are two-fold: for the youth to influence their community and the nation, and for younger youth pastors to emerge who can better connect with the youth.

"I always encourage youth to take on responsibility in their schools. To my surprise, in these two years we have seen several becoming head prefects, Christian Fellowship presidents and sitting on committees," says Ps. Wai Hin. "That's what I hope to see: more youth take hold of their call, face their fears and see what God wants to do in their life. Soon, we will have a full-time youth worker serving on staff in the church. In a couple of years, we will have more youth pastors!"

This, perhaps, is the greatest validation of Ps. Wai Hin's work. For a man can only reproduce what he is – and in this respect, Ps. Wai Hin has come full circle.

“THE JOY OF SEEING LIVES CHANGED AND TRANSFORMED; SEEING YOUTH MATURING, MAKING RIGHT DECISIONS AND GROWING INTO THEIR DESTINY KEEPS ME PASSIONATE AND POSITIVE”

02 COMMUNITY



THE CALL TO LANGUAGE WORKS

FGT started its language ministries in the mid 1990s. Alongside geographical church planting, the church's pastors worked hard to establish the Mandarin, Tamil and BM works to meet the language needs of a congregation that was growing in diversity.

Not content with ministering only to English-speaking urbanites, the church leadership strived to reach out to the loved ones of church members who were more conversant in their mother tongue - be it Mandarin, Tamil or Bahasa Malaysia. Today, FGT has set up church work in various languages including Mandarin, BM, Tamil and Myanmarese.

The back stories of how individuals rose up to take the challenge of setting up language works in FGT give an insight to how God calls faithful men and women to reach the multitudes from different tongues and races.

For Pastor Wong Soo Lan, FGT's Mandarin church pastor, God first revealed to her in a dream that she would lead a Chinese-speaking congregation. She remembers the dream vividly in which she was going for a student meeting but upon arriving at the destination, saw elderly people instead.

Meanwhile, her prayer partner also had a dream of an old factory and an old bicycle. After they both prayed together, they felt that God was directing Soo Lan to work with elderly people. Coincidentally, FGT's Mandarin congregation then predominantly comprised of old folks. Not long after this,

Soo Lan quit her 20-year old career as a real estate agent to become a full-time pastor.

As for Pastor Yahya Okit, pastor of FGT's BM church, becoming a pastor never even crossed his mind. Growing up in Sabah, Yahya worked in various industries including logging, agriculture, even taking up roles as fisherman and rubber tapper. When he moved to the Peninsular, he landed up in a Chinese restaurant where he remained working for more than a decade. As his workplace was located right beneath FGT's church office then, Yahya got involved in the initial setting up of the BM ministry.

"It was God who chose and called me into ministry. I heard the Holy Spirit say it was time to leave my secular job to follow Him. By faith, in 2006, I quit from the restaurant to join FGT as a full-time worker," said Yahya.

Both pastors confess facing hardships in their early days as pastors, but they persevered and relied on the strength of the Holy Spirit to guide them through the crests and troughs of their roles in the church.

Soo Lan admitted language was a barrier in the beginning as she had not been speaking Mandarin for a long time prior to leading the Mandarin work. She had picked up Mandarin during primary school and by the time she entered secondary school, she had pretty much neglected the language. When she assumed the responsibility of pastoring the Mandarin church, she had to rely on her church members for support.

Ps Wong Soo Lan





Ps Yahya, his wife Forina and their children

“It was God who chose and called me into ministry. I heard the Holy Spirit say it was time to leave my secular job to follow Him. By faith, in 2006, I quit from the restaurant to join FGT as a full-time worker,” said Ps Yahya

“I was not that good in Mandarin but there were students from mainland China whom I was shepherding those days, so I would ask them for help,” Soo Lan said.

She would often work on her sermons in English and asked the students to assist with the presentation slides that she would subsequently preach from. “I did not know how to type in the *‘Hànyǔ Pīnyīn’* (romanisation system for Mandarin) so I would rely on Google Translate. I often preached with the wrong pronunciation and the congregation would correct me... so it was a very interesting time,” Soo Lan recalled. “I did what I could and my church members were so gracious; they accepted me as their pastor even though I wasn’t fluent in Mandarin at that time.”

While Yahya did not encounter problems with language, he certainly saw other hiccups as a pastor at FGT which included financial challenges in his early years with the church.

“I come from a difficult background and upbringing. Therefore, even from a young age, I have been accustomed to hardships in life. What I can say is that these experiences have proven to be useful for me. When faced

with life’s adversities, prayer is the key that brings me closer to God,” Yahya shared candidly.

Although the BM congregation has not grown significantly in size during the past decade, Yahya is grateful to God for the establishment of several new FGT BM church plants in both East and West Malaysia. He is particularly thrilled that one of these churches has been built in none other than his beloved hometown of Beaufort in Sabah!

For the past decade, Soo Lan has thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to reach out to more Chinese-speaking senior citizens. Thanks to the persistent outreach work of the Mandarin church and its leaders, many elderly parents of the main church have come to know Christ and been discipled over time. This had led to significant growth in the congregation numbers, a fact which is particularly rewarding for Soo Lan.

“The diversity of languages shows how colourful and rich our country is. It is important to have the opportunity to worship in a language that one is comfortable and fluent in, as this can only further enrich our experience of God and His Word,” said Yahya.

A LABOUR OF LANGUAGE AND LOVE

FGT’s Mandarin church started its official service back in 1992, but the Chinese language work had actually emerged years before. Pastor Irene Goh, currently leading FGT Genting Permai, was at the helm of the FGT Mandarin church and played an active role in laying the groundwork for the Mandarin ministry.

“I came to FGT in 1984 and started serving like other ordinary members. I distributed songbooks for service, I ushered, I brought flowers - just normal things lah!” Irene recalls. “When Ps Hong Seng announced the plan to begin the Mandarin church, I decided to get involved because I knew a little bit of Chinese.”

The Mandarin church started with bilingual worship services at first - with the message being preached in English and interpretation done live for the Chinese-speaking congregation conveyed via headphones. Irene shares, “I was the translator then because nobody else spoke the language!”

After 11 years leading the Mandarin work, Irene remembers her conviction to come out full time as clear as day. “Ps Hong Seng was looking for someone to take on a full-time role in the Mandarin church and asked me to do it. I was heavily involved in the Mandarin ministry and had been praying about it for a while, so it was just the right time.”

Fast forward to the present, the church has blossomed into a comprehensive ministry. Almost every element found in the main church is also replicated in the Mandarin church. “We have our own SOTB (School of The Bible) and V-Courses too, and everything now done in Mandarin, of course!” Irene adds on.

Being more fluent in English and Bahasa Malaysia, Irene had to work hard on her Mandarin when she first started. “My command of Mandarin was really not great - I was simultaneously preaching in and learning the language! But God showed me that even though I thought my Chinese was only ‘half-past six’, whatever little that I knew could bless people and make a difference - and I saw that happen in my ministry,” she remembers.

In 2014, Irene relocated to pastor FGT Kota Kinabalu where her roots in the Mandarin church proved useful to lead the congregation in her new location. “FGT KK is technically an English church, but KK people mostly speak in Mandarin. So it felt like I was back leading a Chinese church!” Truly, in God’s timeline, no experience is wasted.

Returning to Subang Jaya in 2019, Irene is proud to see how far the Mandarin church has grown in her absence. Despite her initial lack of fluency in the language, she believes God can multiply one’s work if one is obedient. “Whatever little I knew, God used it. And as you surrender to the work of the Father, you yourself will be blessed,” she smiles.

Ps Irene Goh



CARING – OUR BREAD AND BUTTER

Meet the humble grocery shop that feeds hungry mouths and hearts



CAREmart - An FGT Community Project

One of my earliest memories of CAREmart was counting the number of Maggi packets on the shelves as part of a ‘stock take’ exercise alongside Tan Chin Chin, one of FGT’s deacons overseeing community work, and by natural extension, FGT’s grocery shop that was founded in 2008.

Chin Chin, previously an IT consultant before choosing full time church work, has helmed CAREmart for over a decade. If there is anything she would tell you about managing the shop, it is that it is no walk in the park!

Running a ‘normal’ grocery store has its fair share of operational challenges, which requires creative solutions - including feeding stray cats in the neighbourhood to keeping rodents at bay! Store manager, Chan Thit Meng, goes through the daily checklists of ordering and checking stocks, monitoring prices, handling customer enquiries and deliveries, managing second-hand clothes and books that the store offers on the cheap, and much more.

CAREmart, though, is not your average shop. Chin Chin revealed that behind the humble kedai runcit business was a vision to show God’s love to B40 communities. “We wanted a sustainable way to help the poor,” she says. “All profits from CAREmart go towards helping the poor.”

However, as simple as it sounds, Chin Chin’s work in CAREmart goes way beyond selling products, getting the profits and using the money to send groceries to lower income groups.

Food – the most basic of necessities – is the language that the ministry uses to reach many families struggling to put food on the table. “For many of these families, we don’t just give them food and a bag of rice. We want to also reach them with the love and gospel of Christ,” she says.

But it’s no use to talk about love and Christ if you’re sitting in front of someone who is hungry and has nothing to eat. Chin Chin and a few volunteers and pastors from FGT make it a point to visit every B40 family who needs help. “You won’t know their situation unless you visit them,” she explains.

She tells me of the mother of three children whose husband was in jail, and how her visitation team helped the family with groceries numerous times until her

husband was released. There was a family who was abandoned by their father, and how the ministry supported the mother for six months with food and a pastor helped her set up a roadside business. She has met families with several children living in one small rented room, where the kids miss out on online classes for months due to the lack of a smartphone as the country went into lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic. In some cases, she has even tried to source for jobs for these families and assisted in designing flyers for their cleaning and food businesses.

Chin Chin and church volunteers have even had to educate the families on nutrition and budgeting. “They’re poor but they’re eating junk food,” she reveals. “We had to educate them on food that is nutritious, yet cheap, such as eggs, tempe, spinach, cabbage and sawi. For example, we saw many Myanmar refugee children frequently drinking sugary isotonic drinks. The parents thought that these were nutritious drinks!”

Church members such as Hardeep volunteer their time to manage the grocery store





Store manager Thit Meng with a customer at CAREmart

Her endeavours are not always successful. However, she says she gains joy from seeing families come out of their dire situations, knowing the church had done its part to help. Some, who were estranged from their families, have also found a ‘new family’ in FGT when the visitation team brought them to church.

Still, many in church view the act of helping the poor with rose-tinted glasses. Chin Chin’s frequent interaction with lower income communities have made her wiser. “We go through a thorough interview process to find out which families really need help. Some are “professional” help seekers, they know where to get help from many sources, and will even get stuff to resell,” she explains. “Some will keep asking for money. So we have to be wise.” Hence, CAREmart does its due diligence on every request for assistance.

The work laid out for CAREmart is great – there are thousands of urban poor in Subang Jaya alone, a city that has both dingy dilapidated flats and fancy bungalows with parked Lamborghinis within a mere 5- minute driving distance of each other.

With more sales, more households would benefit. But for a grocery shop situated in a quiet factory area and frequented mostly by migrant and office workers, Chin Chin and Thit Meng have had to think of solutions to keep the business sustainable. “We face a challenge in finding ways to be self-sufficient in terms of profits,” notes Thit Meng. “It’s not easy for us to sell our products at a price that can match, or is cheaper, than market price.”

Hence, the team looked beyond the standard grocery shop sales model, discovering new opportunities to help the needy such as offering pre-loved clothes, books, and electrical items in the store. “CAREmart also has a platform for single mothers to sell their goods, such as cookies and handicrafts,” Chin Chin says. Every Chinese New Year, we also help

some single mothers send their cookie samples to companies who are willing to order from them.

“Also, some church members approach their companies to buy their pantry and stationery supplies from CAREmart - this is where they have come in to help in a practical way,” she says, adding that these organisations include churches, kindergartens and employers of FGT members.

During the Covid-19 pandemic when the country was in lockdown, FGT’s Senior Pastor Eu Hong Seng realised the potential of an online platform and embarked on an online shop, Care2U. The CARE2u team (helmed by Jacquelyn Yong, Nancy Woo and Lum Ye Sheng) has been able to source and offer premium items at very attractive prices for unique goodies ranging from La Gourmet kitchen utensils, Ayam Penyet condiments and even Musang King durian mooncakes.

Not only did the lockdown period birth an online business, but it proved to be a time where CAREmart showed its true potential

and became a lifeline for many families who hit rock bottom due to the lack of economic activity and income. “During the lockdown, many shops had to close but we could remain open and travel freely because we were a grocery shop. We helped over 40 families for the 3 months of lockdown,” Chin Chin reveals.

Thanks to church members’ contacts, CAREmart received donations of hundreds of chickens and eggs for distribution to the poor, and these had to be distributed very quickly before they turned rancid. “We wished more of our church members have contacts with lower income folks. Then we can reach more families,” Chin Chin says wistfully. Nonetheless, she adds that the food donations were really timely as many refugees lost their jobs and were in dire need of help.

The team is grateful, of course, for the church members who volunteer their time in CAREmart. “We’re grateful for the people who help us, such as Hardeep who opens the shop on Saturday mornings, volunteers who deliver rice to the Myanmar refugees in

Food is the language used in the CAREmart ministry to reach needy families





Ps Subashini and church worker Kala distributing rice and eggs to poor families during the lockdown via CAREmart

CAREMART IS HERE TO PRICK THE CONSCIENCE OF THE CHURCH, TO ALWAYS BE SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

Klang, and FGT members who assist in our yearly stock take exercise,” says Thit Meng. “On Sunday afternoons, some FGT guys will take turns to sit in the shop for added security.”

What is encouraging for Chin Chin was to see how CAREmart has begun to expose the church to the needs of the community. “Our youths have previously organised a clothes donation drive on behalf of CAREmart. They also visited a home caring for abandoned senior citizens to liven them up with songs, and gave them haircuts. During the recent lockdown, some cell groups chipped in funds to help B40 families in need with food and even rent,” she says. “If it were not for CAREmart, many in our church would not have visited any lower income families, nor ministered to refugees in our entire lives.”

Chin Chin hopes that Christians will go further. She points out that some talk about helping the poor, but they are not

willing to make time, or spend the money. There is sometimes the tendency to ‘refer’ people in need for others to help, or conduct ‘event-based’ good works, such as a Christmas outreach. “All these are good, but do remember these families need help throughout the year also!” she says.

“Many people still ask me – do we really need a grocery shop? Isn’t it easier to just buy food from the supermarket and donate that?” she says. She admits it is also a question she occasionally asks Pastor Hong Seng.

Pastor Hong Seng’s answer is simply this: “CAREmart is here to prick the conscience of the church, to always be sensitive to the needs of the community.”

And Chin Chin agrees.



Jacquelyn, who manages the Care2U e-shop, taking photos of items sold on the Care2U platform



Tan Chin Chin says CAREmart is a ministry that reaches the poor through groceries

A GIFT OF HOPE: THE STORY OF THE EAGLES DIALYSIS CENTRE

EDC's mission goes beyond treating the body, but also the soul and the spirit

It is no secret that Malaysians love their nasi lemak, curry puffs and teh tarik among other delicacies. It is no surprise then that diabetes and high blood pressure is common among locals – the two leading causes in kidney failure.

Affecting approximately 50,000 Malaysians in 2020, the next logical step for kidney failure patients is a lifetime of medication and dialysis (three times a week, four hours each session), or a kidney transplant for those able to afford it.

What is missing in this narrative is the fact that aside from medical care, many other areas need to function cohesively in order for a kidney failure patient to thrive.

In every aspect, the Eagles Dialysis Centre (EDC) aims to journey together with its patients. Indeed, EDC has a tagline on their signage that says 'Together for a Healthy Community'. Keyword: together.

The Financial Conundrum

The most crucial aspect for kidney patients is often finance and closely related to it is family support and their willing participation in the patient's treatment.

It starts when a patient receives the bad news – the kidneys are failing. "When I first heard the news, I was scared, and cried and cried," says Renu Gopal, who pastors his own church and is a patient in EDC. "I didn't

want to undergo dialysis." He had many worries, money being the most pertinent of all.

Lain Yen Phin, an FGT member who volunteers her time to manage EDC's accounts and visit EDC patients, tells of how Renu was distraught when he realised he did not have the funds needed to carry out dialysis, which easily costs upwards of RM250 per session in most centres, or roughly RM3,000 a month.

"A lot of renal failure patients come from lower income households, likely because of unhealthy diets and lifestyles," says Lim Fang Say, EDC Head of Operations. "The household has to set aside a whole month's salary for this. Many of the patients are senior citizens and not working so it's a huge burden on their family members."

Fortunately for people like Renu, kind donors in FGT were able to subsidise his treatment, on top of EDC's already subsidised rates for patients with similar financial constraints. For other EDC patients like Eraliammah, her husband works two jobs to pay for her treatment while her daughter quit her job to care for Eraliammah full time, as she has become immobile.

"We try to charge minimally, with normal rates of about RM170 per session. For patients who qualify, we give them a subsidy of RM60 from EDC – so they pay RM110. All



Eagles Dialysis Centre journeys with its patients in aspects of the body, soul and spirit

our profits help offset the costs of these subsidised patients who make up 30% of our total patient base," says Fang Say.

"But just because our fees are cheaper doesn't mean our service is compromised. We're quite a decent outfit!" she says, adding that the centre now has 12 machines and has a capacity to treat 48 patients over morning and afternoon shifts.

Matters of the Heart & Soul

Finances aside, another important need for patients is emotional support.

"Many patients come in depressed and don't want to live. We have to tell them – you can still have a life worth living! Some children think the treatments are too expensive, so we try to convince them to make the sacrifice and effort for their elderly parents," says Fang Say.

Head nurse, Theresa Liew, says she tells patients to focus on positive things. She and her team of nurses understand that often patients go through a lot of distress with their physical ailments compounded by financial woes and family issues. Additionally, her



Renal failure patients need to undergo dialysis treatment 3 times a week and 4 hours each session



Lain Yen Phin, an FGT member who volunteers in EDC, often engages and visits patients and their families

team has to advise patients on nutrition, such as avoiding sugar and salty food, and limiting their water intake to 500ml a day.

Volunteers like Fang Say and Lain make it a point to engage and visit the patients and their families. Lain makes sure they can manage their bills and their families have enough food. “We don’t throw our patients out just because they can’t afford treatment. It’s about demonstrating love and kindness, like how Jesus did,” says Fang Say.

This level of care has gotten the attention of some patients’ families, such as Eralliammah’s, who have begun to attend FGT’s Tamil services. “The people here (EDC) love me, and the nurses are good and kind,” says Eralliammah. “I don’t want to go anywhere else.” She adds that the church has given her family food and other essential goods that have been of great help to her.

“When patients see Lain and I putting our energy and time purely as volunteers, our testimony becomes significant,” Fang Say notes.

EDC’s role and the church

The third item which a majority of renal failure patients rely on is the national health facility. Lain reveals that most patients are only allowed treatment at public facilities for one month, after which they have to search for other options and apply for government subsidies. Fang Say explains that government hospitals have been doing their best but cannot cope with the rising number of cases. Hence, private organisations, churches and NGOs have stepped in to set up dialysis centres.

“Pastor Hong Seng saw the need and began to have a vision for EDC when he visited the Christian-based Charis-NKF Dialysis Centre 15 years ago,” says Fang Say. “It took us more than seven years to raise funds to set up the EDC building, which was completed in 2011. Due to several issues, we only got an operations license in April 2013.” The whole building now hosts the Elements badminton courts, Eagles Physiotherapy Centre, Eagles Grammar International School, and the 365 Youth hall.



Many renal failure patients like Eralliammah come from lower income families and rely on subsidies and donations to make treatment viable

Previously a media practitioner, Fang Say has come a long way, not expecting to end up heading a dialysis centre. But she has no regrets.

“What I did in EDC in the last 10 years has been more fulfilling than the preceding 15 years of my professional working life. Fulfillment-wise, I can’t put a value to it – you counsel families, you offer hope, and not any job can offer you that kind of privilege. When God’s hand is in it, it’s an amazing experience - considering I knew absolutely nothing about dialysis when I first came onboard, and I still can’t stand the sight of needles and blood!” she laughs.

The road for Fang Say was rocky as she did not have a clue on how to go about setting up a dialysis centre when she quit her job in 2010 and yet had put her hand up for

this task. She is very grateful for the various individuals who showed her the ropes. “I’m quite amazed because I’m not a qualified healthcare professional but God caused me to meet the right persons for each stage. It was all divine guidance,” she reminisces.

Reflecting on the past, Fang Say is thankful. However, she is wondering what the future for her – and EDC – would be like.

She points out that there is a shortage of good nurses locally, as many try to find jobs in Singapore. “We require nurses with qualifications in renal care but most nurses come to us without post basic qualifications. So we have to hire young graduates with zero experience; let them work with us for a year to assess their commitment and aptitude. Then we send them out for renal care training for 6 months on scholarship

“My hope is more young people from church will take up nursing and have the vision and heart to serve the community. I would like to pass this ministry on to young people. The work is not difficult, it’s just about having a genuine heart.”



Renu Gopal, an EDC dialysis patient, has found hope in his situation thanks to EDC's support and encouragement

with full salary in exchange for a 5-year bond with the centre,” she reveals. It is a risk, she admits, and staffing problems would impact patients. “It’s not like someone can just jump in and do dialysis,” she remarks.

“My hope is more young people from church will take up nursing and have the vision and heart to serve the community,” she says. “I would like to pass this ministry on to young people. The work is not difficult, it’s just about having a genuine heart.”

This, in her opinion, is not about doing something good to appease one’s conscience. “If you want to get involved in people’s lives, you need to be consistent and be prepared to sacrifice,” she says. “But the fulfilment you get is beyond what you could ever imagine.”

After 10 years, there are two things that Fang Say is certain about; firstly, God will take care of His projects, as proven time and time again. Secondly – EDC needs you.

TO SERVE A KING

Love compels FGT to invest in a ministry to the differently abled



Children with learning disabilities in the Superzone ministry trying safety jackets during their visit to the Fire and Rescue Dept

“God gave me a word back in 1997 that I would be called to serve a group of people, that not many would want to serve,” reminisced Pastor Jenny, who oversees the Superzone and KidsAlive ministries in FGT Subang Jaya

If you were to walk into FGT on Sundays, you would not see a concert-worthy stage set up, a rockstar band, or barista coffee in the foyer. Not that there is anything wrong with those, but one of FGT’s defining characteristics would be observed in the back row of the church.

Differently-abled boys and girls, facing various learning challenges, would be accompanied by helpers serving in the Superzone Ministry. They might be laughing, interacting with members in their own unique ways, or running up the aisles during a service (usually with a Superzone

helper chasing them close behind!), but the congregation accepts them as family.

In Matthew 25, Jesus reminded his followers; “And the King will reply; ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.’”

Serving the ‘least of these’, ones whom are always on God’s mind, is what Pastor Jenny Liew believes she is called to do.

“God gave me a word back in 1997 that I would be called to serve a group of people, that not many would want to



Superzone Teachers and Helpers. From L - R: Tan Zhi Yang, Wendy Loh, Tai Kim Chin, Jadelyn Lee

serve,” reminisced Jenny, who oversees the Superzone and KidsAlive ministries in FGT Subang Jaya. “This ministry was birthed in 2004 because there was a need – families whose children had learning disabilities were coming to church.”

Since then, many children and teenagers with autism, Down Syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and developmental disorders have come through the church doors.

Every Sunday morning, before the start of the main English FGT Subang worship service (while the Mandarin service is running), ‘teachers’ in the Ministry will spend 45 minutes with the children either in small group or one-to-one sessions, engaging in various activities such as learning simple Bible stories, physical exercises, psychomotor activities involving blocks, puzzles and knots, and ending with prayer.

It is a labour of love that usually does not attract much attention or glory – but potentially makes a world of difference

to the families of children with learning disabilities.

Jessica Yap, whose son Shaun was diagnosed with autism and ADHD, says her family had to navigate many everyday challenges with Shaun.

“Initially he had no eye contact, laughs inappropriately, experienced difficulty dealing with change and he lacked confidence,” Jessica reveals. “He liked round objects, tearing papers, had poor speech, lacked awareness of danger, and kept repeating words – in fact, he would repeat his requests every 10 seconds. To teach him basic skills, such as brushing teeth, takes many years.”

Jessica says her family is very thankful for the Superzone Ministry. “With the classes and lessons given by Superzone ministry, we finally understand how to teach Shaun ourselves,” she says. “Shaun improved in communication with family members and he has gained a lot of confidence in expressing himself in front of us! We are so happy to see this.”

She adds that with her son attending Superzone, she treasures the time she is able to have to herself on Sunday mornings, no matter how brief the respite. “Spending quiet time alone with God is very important to me. As a mother of three, I truly enjoy focusing on learning more about God during the Sunday’s Mandarin service,” she says.

Tai Kim Chin (Kim) and Wendy Loh are two Superzone teachers who have assisted Jenny for many years. For Kim, having a brother with developmental disabilities made her service in the Ministry all the more personal to her.

“Seeing my brother grow old, and attending to his and my family’s problems gives me a better insight and understanding into the needs of families and their children with different learning disabilities,” says Kim. To serve in Superzone, Kim admits that one needs to have great patience and understanding.

She would know – she’s had to clean their faeces and vomit, endure the occasional tantrums and bites, and manage destructive behaviour.

However, having served in Superzone for 15 years, Kim says it is all worth it. “I grow old with them, and I see their progress and that brings me happiness,” she admits. Even

though many of the children she works with are unable to utter prayers independently, she tells of a child, Joshua, who had a special gift of sensing if someone needed prayer. “His mum texted me to say Joshua prayed for me, and kept saying my name. At that time, I was actually feeling down. This should remind us, and I want to emphasise, that these children are of value to us!”

Wendy agrees with Kim. “The highlight for me would be when I see improvement, no matter how small, in the children with regards to their behaviour, or their learning and attentiveness in class,” she says.

She adds that she has become a friend to the children and their parents, and working closely with parents is crucial in a child’s development. “We need to know what the children like or dislike, what triggers their meltdowns, and how to calm them.”

Being close to the families also enable the teachers to help the parents in their domestic issues, as stress on the family have resulted in some becoming single mothers. “Having a special needs child is not easy, especially if a family has two children with severe disabilities. The parents’ marriage will face problems, and sometimes it causes arguments in the family. All we can do is pray, give support, and encourage them to rely on God,” says Jenny.

Superzone teachers and helpers have an outing with families of children with learning disabilities



OUR PRIORITY IS TO REACH THESE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WITH GOD'S LOVE. BUT OF COURSE, WE WANT TO SEE IMPROVEMENT AND HEALING IN THEIR LIVES

However, the families are not the only ones facing challenges, as the Superzone Ministry itself has its own mountains to climb.

For Wendy, one of the biggest hurdles is only being able to spend 45 minutes with the children every Sunday. "It's challenging to strike a balance between giving them spiritual input and getting them settled for worship and lessons, especially if they're not emotionally ready. Hence, working together with parents to overcome specific issues of readiness is also crucial towards achieving steady progress over time."

Jenny says that although she and Kim have some certification in Child Psychology and Special Education (as of the time of writing, Jenny was sitting for examinations in her Advanced Diploma in Special Education), most helpers and teachers in Superzone do not have any experience and training. This would mean that most people who

are new in the Ministry may have trouble understanding the children's behaviour.

"The Superzone ministry can be challenging for many people because if a person does not have some basic understanding why these children are the way they are, it's very hard to handle erratic situations. You need to be mentally prepared," she says.

"At the end of the day, we are not a 'special needs' centre where there are experienced and knowledgeable staff to help them – we are a ministry. Our priority is to reach these children and families with God's love. But of course, we want to see improvement and healing in their lives."

But Jenny notes that all members volunteering in Superzone have been a great help not only to her, but to the children and their families. She hopes more would come forward to help, and she believes it begins with awareness and exposure.

Children with learning disabilities engage in simple physical activities during the Superzone classes on Sundays



Ps Jenny Liew, FGT's superwoman in charge of the children's work, including those in Superzone

"About one in 13 kids in Malaysia will have special needs, so we really need to be more aware and welcome them. Some don't even dare to go near and shake their hands. Maybe it's the fear that's causing this – but you just need to take the time to help out. Sometimes I wonder to myself, how do we expose these children and teenagers with learning disabilities to our community, youth and families? If you are not exposed to them, you won't know how to relate to them," she says.

"People need to realise that although these children have different abilities, talents and functions, they have the same physical and spiritual needs as us. Treat them as how you would normally treat others," urges Wendy. "Parents with special needs children also need support, encouragement and motivation from 'normal' parents. Even practical help like buying groceries or bringing them out for 'makan' is welcomed."

Despite Jenny's frankness on the limitations of Superzone, the church leadership recognises that more needs to be done, and are taking the next steps.

As many Superzone attendees are now teenagers, their aging parents have grown worried for their future, knowing that there

is not much support in Malaysia for these communities.

"We're planning for the Eagles Prayer Centre to have a space that will provide living skills and vocational training to youth with special needs. As a church, we hope to cultivate some jobs for them, and to give them some skills to earn an income," says Jenny. She's mulling the possibility of a launderette, or a bakery. "There are a lot of things to be looked into – we need staff, money to start a centre, and people who will enroll their child for this centre to be viable."

It goes without saying that such a centre in the future would need much help and prayer, and Jenny hopes more youth would desire to become special needs teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, Applied Behaviour Analysis therapists or even shadow aides and job coaches.

But for now, the Superzone team has expressed their wish for more volunteers, especially men, who would be better equipped to handle the more physically active youth in Superzone. "We need more able-bodied male helpers!" Kim exclaims.

So men – you are wanted, in the service of the King.

CHANGING YOUNG LIVES, ONE AT A TIME

What is the value of seeing a lost child return to light, or a mother's grief turn to joy?
Priceless.



EGIS is marked by a culture of hope, redemption and training students in the way they should go

I was a teacher before, for several years – in a preschool. Needless to say, when I interviewed Madam Chong Ik Poh, principal of Eagles Grammar International School (EGIS), I immediately recognised the fire in her eyes and passion in her voice. I knew I had met someone who had teaching in her blood, loved children, and loved them fiercely.

Chong, who taught in government schools since 1978, retired from civil service as a principal at 60 years old. Many students in her previous schools will remember her with a mix of fear and awe, as she was a disciplinarian who believed in tough love.

Despite her retirement, she decided to find ways to continue in the education line as she had 'nothing to do'. "Since this is my last lap in life, I wanted to do something in direct connection to the Church and to God that would bring meaning to me," she says.

Hence she found her way to the School that was borne out of FGT's vision to impact the next generation and the community with the love of God.

"FGT provides overall direction to the school through its representation on the school's board of governors," says Justin Oei, School Governor of EGIS and Finance Manager of Full Gospel Tabernacle, adding that FGT also provides facilities for the school's use such as the carpark, the graduation hall and sports facilities.

However, unlike a regular school, the church's involvement in EGIS goes beyond governance. "FGT pastors and members have contributed their time and friendship to the school's students and families through the chapel sessions, Bible Knowledge classes and personal counselling," Justin says.

Indeed, this proves the adage that it takes a village to raise a child. Although EGIS has only been established for five years, Chong has many stories to tell of instances where the School, parent and church had to invest in a child's education and character.

"There was a student who came to EGIS in Year 8. His mother fought to have her son come into EGIS and came crying to me every day. She came to FGT and poured out her heart in church as well, and all the pastors knew about her. This is because in her son's previous school, he was involved in wayward activities and he was struggling in his studies," says Chong.

"When he came to EGIS, I realised I needed to strategise – because he was a smart boy. After a couple of months in Year 8, I pushed him to Year 9 so that he could be in the company of students with the right ethos for learning. With that, he changed and he achieved 6 distinctions in IGCSE! Now he is studying in a pre-university course. I'm so proud of him!" says Chong.

Justin himself tells of a student he personally befriended due to tragedy in the boy's family.

"When one of our student's breadwinning parent passed away, as a school, we made sure he could continue his studies to the end and as a church, we tried to help the family and especially the student as best as

Celebrating Merdeka when school reopened in 2020



we could,” reveals Justin. “I spent quite a bit of time with him, trying to inject common sense into him on the need to mature and grow up. But most of all, it taught me that you find friendships in unusual circumstances, and that even in tragedy, God can make a way.”

Speaking of making a way, Chong believes that what children need—and are looking for—is hope.

“A mother brought her son to EGIS, telling us that her son’s previous school said he had ‘no hope’. He was in the worst class in that school, but he wanted to enter Year 11 in EGIS. I told her, ‘I will try to chart a path for him. Every child has hope’. I foresaw that he could achieve some A’s in Mandarin,

Malay as a Foreign Language, and some credits in Science, and other subjects, and I devised a goal for him. He came in and got 2 distinctions and 3 credits in IGCSE!” recalls Chong. She says children need to be given a way to envision their future. “We chart a path for them to move forward and when they have no hope, we give them hope.”

Chong believes that the culture of hope and redemption sets EGIS apart, but also the fact that the School is not afraid to correct or counsel students who are walking down the wrong path.

“We take great pains to correct, and even rope in the help of pastors and refer the family to psychologists,” she says. The process of correction takes a long time as it



Primary level students and teachers for EGIS Class of 2020



Some of the younger students at EGIS



EGIS students take a group shot at their Sports Day in 2019

involves gaining the student’s trust. But she notes the importance of a credible Christian testimony in winning the hearts and minds of others.

A Christian testimony, however, needs to go beyond words and requires action. And while running a school or managing children may not have been a great leap of faith for Madam Chong, she readily admits that the beginnings of EGIS required much faith amidst circumstances fraught with challenges.

“In 2015, we had initially no children enrolled. Due to approval issues, we were not allowed to do any form of advertisement, not even through flyers or signages, and we had to find children to be enrolled in order to start a school – I was asked to call ‘here and there’. I cried out to God! I was really not used to marketing,” reminisces Chong. “It was truly the work of God, all the children came in through prayer.”

Justin chronicles the bumpy road for the School in the early months.

“Establishing the international school was a long series of trials, the first of which was fulfilling the Ministry of Education’s requirement of five acres of land for an international school license,” he says. “It seemed to be an insurmountable challenge but we decided to proceed with a home school by faith.” He adds that the School opened its doors in January 2016 with 9 classes and 51 children, occupying Wisma Eagles 2 premises.

It was by divine appointment that led to FGT acquiring a new building for EGIS to meet the requirements of becoming an international school. “In November 2016, a dance studio rented our EDC youth hall to conduct their concert. In April 2017, I received a call from one of the concert organisers, who was the building manager of the building beside FGT (now called Education Block),



Madam Chong Ik Poh, principal of Eagles Grammar International School



Justin Oei, school governor of Eagles Grammar International School



Year 1 and Year 2 Students setting up a booth during a school carnival

BEING A TEACHER IS A CALLING. I'M NOT SOMEONE GREAT, BUT I COUNT IT AS A PRIVILEGE TO DO THIS. THERE IS HEARTACHE BUT IT IS VERY REWARDING.

asking if we were interested to purchase the building. One miracle of finance later, we were officially an international school in December 2017, albeit an international school that was slowly running out of space in Wisma Eagles 2,” says Justin.

“Our next hurdle was to submit an application to the city council to allow the Education Block to be used as an international school premises. It was a process that began in February 2018, and after mountains of correspondence, many nights of prayer, and three court appearances, we finally received approval in December 2019 by God's grace,” he adds.

Despite years of red tape and almost no marketing efforts except by verbal recommendations among church members and friends, EGIS grew to 16 classes and over 230 students in 2020. Chong looks forward to 2021 where the students would move into the Education Block, which would have a capacity for 500 students.

“Many have sacrificed their resources to acquire this new building, and have contributed for the school to grow,” says Chong, with reference to FGT members who pledged and donated financially to purchase the Education Block. “We’re so blessed to see the sacrifice many have put into this work. The children benefit at the end of the day.”

Needless to say, Chong is very familiar with the concept of sacrifice, and most teachers would be too. “Being a teacher is a calling. I’m not someone great, but I count it as a privilege to do this. There is heartache but it is very rewarding. Think about it, how many students ‘have made it’ because you are a teacher? In this vocation, you are blessing others, you bring meaning to them. When you close your eyes at the end of your days, you know you have impacted others,” says Chong.

On the other hand, Justin believes that being in the education ministry does not only impact others, but also impacts the one who serves, and is well worth all the sacrifices made.

“With many hours, sweat and prayer, I have fought for this school even in the times when I didn't have enough faith that the school would be birthed or continue to exist. I have given 18 months of my personal time to pursue a qualification as a just-in-case scenario for business continuity planning of the school. I have made time outside of work to help students with their pursuit of understanding the knowledge they wish to master,” says Justin.

“EGIS has changed my life. When I saw our first batch of graduates, our first annual concert, and our online learning during the lockdown – I truly believe that it has all been worth it.”

03 COUNTRY



A BRICK AND A PRAYER: THE STORY BEHIND THE EPC

Perhaps to the unfamiliar, it may seem like another one of FGT's building funds (we must have had a gazillion building funds over our 40 year history). However, as we launched the start of the Eagles Prayer Centre (EPC), it was the culmination of weeks, months and years of prayer, hard work and revelation not just of the pastors and leaders, but down to the very grassroots of the church.

When asked how the idea of building the EPC came about, Senior Pastor Eu Hong Seng recalls, "There is no other way to put it, other than it was the Lord dropping a word into our hearts to build a prayer centre."

Moving on a word and a vision, a small group started to gather every Saturday at 6am to pray. "It was simply amazing what happened after that. On 20 August 2003, we had a breakthrough when we managed to purchase the plot of land right next to the main church building for RM3.2million," Ps Hong Seng said.

But why a Prayer Centre? After all, FGT had many community works under its belt and a prayer centre seemed to be less pragmatic than its other projects.

"The intention has always been to provide a place for people to come and intercede for souls, for the nation; it is a place for people to come and meditate, press in, cry out. In other words, we wanted a 'Gethsemane' for our people," he explains, referring to the biblical garden in which Jesus himself contended in prayer.

"We envisage it to be a place to train pastors to develop a passion for prayer and how to build prayer meetings. We have in mind to establish a school to train intercessors for the benefit of the body of Christ," says Ps Hong Seng.

Doing a quick math would reveal that 18 years have passed from the purchase of the land to finishing the construction of the EPC building in 2021. What transpired during this period and what were the main challenges?

"You mean, besides finances?" Ps Hong Seng laughs. "The challenge was raising intercessors and training people to pray!"

For Bernard Tan, the architect in chief for the EPC, the road to get here was arduous and the obstacles were more practical in nature, especially when it came to dealing with authorities, who were not only bureaucratic but also had bias particularly with granting the needed approvals. On top of that, limited finances also placed constraints on the design and build options.



EPC Prayer Meeting

Nevertheless, the journey did not lack its high moments. Bernard shares how he has seen God's hand work in bringing the EPC to fruition. One of the major encounters experienced was when the authorities delayed the approval of the building plans by almost a year, it caused the application time frame to lapse. "We had met all the requirements then; the only reason why our application lapsed was because they had held on to our documents too long! Through no fault of ours, we had to resubmit all our documents with new fees, amounting to thousands of ringgit," he sighs.

The team decided to seek out the ADUN of Subang Jaya, who then helped to solve the issue without further complications. "Without having to resort to underhanded means, it really was God's favour and protection for things to happen at the right time, right place and with the right people," says Bernard.

Bernard is not a novice when it comes to designing FGT's building projects, yet he confesses that there is always so much to be learned each time. "It's not just spiritual

lessons; I learned that there are a lot more pitfalls to be wary of when it comes to authorities and building proposals," he shares. "It is a blessing from God to be able to learn all these because it made each subsequent project for the church a little bit easier."

Ps Hong Seng also believes God has been working in FGT's favour. "We have seen God bring in world-renowned intercessors to train our people, and have been privileged to see many return to the house of prayer especially during the pandemic in 2020," he testifies.

With EPC on the cusp of completion (at the time of publishing), it is exciting to anticipate what God has in store for FGT and the nation. "My hope is that people all over the nation and even in Asia would come together to pray – not merely because of the building, but because of His tangible presence in the place," Ps Hong Seng says. "Like Anna the prophetess, in Luke 2:36-38, we want to see God's people serve Him in the building with prayer and fasting, night and day."

PASSION IN PURPOSE

As a nineteen-year-old student at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom a long time ago, Pastor Kong Choke Kee sat on a committee at his local church tasked with buying a building to house the congregation. It didn't take long to find their eventual purchase: a beautiful, four-storey Victorian-era church building with two acres of land. The cost? A paltry £70,000 .

“We got it very cheap, because the Methodist church preferred to sell it to a church instead of having a mosque or discotheque take over the building,” says Choke Kee. “In the UK, I saw this happen to so many big cathedrals and churches.”

Choke Kee's story underscores a very real danger confronting churches today: that with passing generations, progressive decline can reduce churches to ghosts of their former selves, their empty buildings remaining as relics of a long-forgotten glory. Like that of individual Christians, the life of a church is a journey with God; how that road is travelled often determines how it ends. It is pertinent, then, to examine our journey as a church, and map out the routes we will travel. We sit down with the elders as they reflect on FGT's journey thus far, and articulate their hopes and dreams for her future.

From L-R: Elder Lim Wai Hin, Sr. Ps. Eu Hong Seng, Elder Kong Choke Kee, Elder Lee Choong San



Elder Kong Choke Kee

In FGT's early years, our journey was a literal one: we moved many times prior to the completion of Wisma Eagles. What are your thoughts on the church's spiritual growth then and now?

Choke Kee: In the first 25 years, we didn't see much expansion; we were building our foundations – in the word and prayer. These two elements cannot be neglected even as we move on to other things.

Elder Lee Choong San: I would like to see more people being strong in the Word – going beyond basic understanding of the Bible, and more people involved in corporate prayer – to come for prayer meetings not because they are forced, but because they really want to pray. I'd also like to see more people challenging themselves to be trained to share the gospel. Right now in the church, we have some people hungry for God, but also some on 'cruise control' – happy to sit things out until they get called home.

How then do we grow stronger as a church?

Choke Kee: I think at the end of the day, the strength of the church is how many true disciples are in it. Only disciples produce disciples. Ordinary members have a consumer mind-set – they ask, 'What can you provide for me?' We need to move from that to a covenant mind-set – to ask, 'What can I contribute to the house of God?'

Elder Lim Wai Hin: In the youth ministry, we hope to come up with a more structured curriculum for discipleship. Every youth could take on this curriculum and shepherd someone 3-4 years younger than themselves, and in turn be discipled by another older youth. Everyone would then be growing: in their conviction, understanding and serving.

As Choke Kee said, a mature disciple aims to serve others. If we extrapolate that principle to the church, could we perhaps say that FGT has attained adulthood? Moving into Wisma Eagles spawned the birth of so many new – some would call ambitious – works.

Choke Kee: Over the last 15 years, we have moved to the next level. Once we've built the foundation, we can impact the community. We now have the dialysis centre, physiotherapy centre, CareMart, and the international school – the community in Subang know us.

Let's talk about some of these works, starting with the Eagles Dialysis Centre (EDC), and the plan to purchase a new building for it – Wisma Eagles 5 (WE5).

Choong San: We'd like to see EDC have a bigger workforce and space for more machines. In government facilities, one could be on the waiting list for 2-3 months... time that some people don't have. There's a growing need for treatment, and demand outstrips supply. That's the whole purpose of WE5.

Elder Lim Wai Hin

Wai Hin: WE5 is actually very suitable – it's a single-storey building, as opposed to the current multi-storey building, so patients don't have to be climbing up and down. When EDC moves to WE5, the current building can be used by the school.

That school – the Eagles Grammar International School (EGIS) – has certainly come a long way in the short time it has been operating. What are the immediate and long-term plans for the school, and what do you hope to see it achieve?

Wai Hin: Right now the school is at maximum capacity – we have a waiting list for some classes. With more space, the school can grow: we can have more students and teachers. In the long term, we are looking at having one building for the primary school and one building for the secondary school.

Choong San: I'd like to see more of our people rising up to become teachers – they would want to invest more in influencing the kids. We need people to become teachers, to take up Bible Knowledge teaching, to do the Chapel Service. The youth are the future battleground for souls.

Wai Hin: We need teachers who are the cream of the crop. For many years teaching has not been the choice of career for the best minds – generally these people want to do other things. But we need a higher percentage of them to go into teaching and impact the education world. I see this already taking place. Some of our youth have been inspired to be teachers – some are in training and some are already teachers. Three from our 365 Student Ministries are taking up teaching roles in Eagles, despite not having studied education. One was a top student at university, but felt he wanted to impact the young people. These are people with very good values, who will be impacting students – there will be a long-term, very powerful impact.

With all these works thriving – and the ongoing financial implications of each – it's natural to wonder why we decided to push forward with the building of the Eagles Prayer Centre (EPC). Share with us some insight behind EPC, and why it is so important to the church.

Wai Hin: In a journey, there's always something to work towards. Church growth is often like a mountain: the church grows, then plateaus, then goes down. Unless there is a new vision, a new journey or a new goal, people will slowly grow cold. In fact, the spiritual growth of part of the church has already stunted and slowed down. I believe the EPC will help bring the church on another, very needful, journey.

Choke Kee: EPC is the next level for us to cross over – from impacting community to impacting nations. That's why it's been so difficult... we've spent more than 18 years praying and soliciting funds. When we first bought the land for the EPC, I gave

ONLY THROUGH PRAYER CAN WE TRANSFORM NATIONS

a significant amount; I knew it was so important. My burden is to see this come to pass. Only through prayer can we transform nations. I foresee we are going to be sent out to other states and countries for this prayer movement. We need more intercessors and more teachers to teach on prayer.

Choong San: The Prayer Altar is the foundation stone to building new intercessors. We need to train intercessors to pray for different items, not only on Tuesdays, but every day. In the future we envisage different people coming every day to anchor different ministries. The core group that comes regularly for the present Prayer Altar can split up to become leaders for different days. We want to help train up other churches to build their own prayer altars – to lead in the area of community prayer and prayer for the nation.

Prayer will undoubtedly be the core activity at the Centre, but it clearly is not the only purpose for the building.

Choong San: The EPC is more than a prayer centre. It will provide accommodation for people doing courses in Tung Ling. There's a banquet hall that can hold 70 tables – people can have wedding banquets there. There will be an open area between Wisma Eagles and EPC, which we could use to provide refreshments when there are church seminars. It will also be a school for special children.





Elder Lee Choong San

Wai Hin: One of the things we want to do is teach special-needs individuals to live independently as much as possible. We will set up rooms and areas for them to practice and learn simple living skills – things like how to wash and iron their own clothes, cooking and basic computer skills.

Another vision for the EPC – still in the idea stage – is to set up a vocational school. There is a segment in the community who are more suited for vocational work than academic study. We are thinking of offering practical hands-on training like plumbing, wiring and air-conditioning. There are many good practices that can be implemented in this nation. We hope to see the institution run properly, and in the end issue certification. We'd be helping young people obtain a skill, and contribute to the nation's technical capability.

Those are exciting plans indeed. Let's talk about the other aspect of impacting the nation: church planting. Are there any immediate plans for new church plants locally?

Wai Hin: Locally, we are exploring the concept of 'satellite churches'. These are not new church plants, but an extension of the mother church. For example, they may meet three times a month in the satellite church, but come back to the mother church once a month. The Saturday service in Crystal Crown Hotel is one such work.

Choke Kee: I was asked to plant FGT PJ in Crystal Crown. The initial work is always difficult, lots of contacting visitors to come, and following up with them afterwards. We'd been running it for over a year before the lockdown was imposed. We then had to stop, because it is hard to do physical distancing in such a small hall. We will have to start all over again after this is over. Tenacity is so important in the ministry

– I ask God to grant me the strength and strategy to do it again.

Since the birth of the first overseas FGT church in the UK in 2003, FGT's dream to reach the nations has grown by leaps and bounds. How would you like to see this vision continue to grow? Do tell us about your personal experiences with any international church plants.

Choong San: Starting the first overseas church in the UK was really a key event. For many years we were focused on building the church in Malaysia. But the moment we started FGT UK, it opened the door for us to start so many overseas churches.

Choke Kee: It's a reversal of roles – my grandfather was brought over as a missionary by the British, but now we need to go back to evangelise to them. My heart is for places with a very low Christian population, like Japan. Also the European countries – we've opened churches in Bulgaria and Poland; we should also look at places like Greece and Turkey.

Wai Hin: I have been involved in FGT Nepal for nine years, going there at least once a year to teach in the Eagles Bible School. There is a unique strategy and system already in place, where we select some of the students who come to the school for training to go and plant churches in unreached areas of Nepal. We have over 50 churches there now.

WE WANT TO SEE THE CHURCH GROW FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

As we look forward to the next 40 years, what are your hopes and dreams for the church, and what legacy do you hope she will leave for future generations?

Choong San: I'd like to see the church strengthen itself in the areas we're already involved in – education, dialysis, church planting and prayer, with the resources that we have. Personally, I've invested financially in all of FGT's projects. I believe that what we do now is for future generations. It will be more and more difficult for future generations to do this – if we, the current generation, can do it, let's do it now; so we can release the future generations to do all the work of the kingdom without having to worry about the finances. We need to build a strong spiritual and physical foundation, so that the work can grow.

Wai Hin: I sense at this time, God is leading us to be more involved in the community. There will be more and more opportunities to move beyond the church walls. I hope the young people will catch the vision to continue the work, and every youth would see the meaning and joy in their work. We want to see the church grow from strength to strength.

Choke Kee: The last thing I want to see is for FGT, with all our infrastructure, become like the old churches or cathedrals of Europe one day; something that could happen if we don't continue to groom dedicated leaders. I really want to see the next generation of leaders rise up – people who are faithful, available, submissive, teachable, and with a tenacity to last. To grow from strength to strength, we need a next generation on fire!

OUT OF THE BOAT, ON TO THE WATER

Emulating the courage, faith and perseverance of the pioneering leaders in FGT of 40 years ago, a younger generation of church planters have arisen to win more towns and cities for the Lord across Malaysia. Continuing the spirit of sacrifice and selflessness, these leaders have left their successful careers, hometowns and families to pursue their calling to move FGT beyond the frontiers of familiarity and comfort.



FGT Seremban BM opening service

Pastor Kenneth Wong – FGT Seremban

“Pastor, saya rindu lah, saya rindu sangat gereja sampai menangis! (Pastor, I miss the church so much that I weep!)” With churches closed amid a nationwide lockdown in April 2020, Pastor Kenneth Wong had been shepherding his Bahasa Malaysia (BM) congregation via telephone and video recordings. But for this church member, it was a pale shadow of the real thing.

“I have never seen people miss the church like that,” says a visibly touched Kenneth. “It was so heartwarming to see their love for the church.”

Since leading some key members of his BM congregation to Christ, Kenneth has been constantly encouraged by the fervency of their faith. From their hunger for the word of God to their eagerness to share their faith, their testimonies amaze and inspire him by turns.

“They treasure their faith,” reflects Kenneth. “Where previously Christianity was a dead, dry religion to them, today they have a tangible relationship with God and can cry to Him. Seeing their changed lives makes me want to keep doing this.”

Kenneth’s drive to be constantly busy about God’s work had been nurtured since he was a youth growing up in FGT Subang. As a key leader in the 365 Student Ministries, Kenneth had volunteered to start a cell group in Multimedia University, driving 50km from his own university campus in Serdang to Cyberjaya every week to lead the group. In the process, he experienced the occasional discouragement of having no one attend the meeting and the frustration of laboring for a whole year with no fruits to show for it. Yet through persistence and prayer, his work eventually resulted in a busload of students coming from Cyberjaya to FGT Subang every Sunday. It proved to be vital training for his future ministry.

Following graduation from medical school, Kenneth was posted to a hospital in Seremban. In 2012 he came to a crossroad in his life: would he pursue the Master’s programme he

Worship service in FGT Seremban



had been offered and become a specialist doctor, or respond to the call to full-time ministry?

“I struggled to decide,” says Kenneth. “But after much prayer, I decided to reject my Master’s offer and agreed to come out full-time from January 2014.”

After taking over from Ps. Voon Yuen Woh as pastor-in-charge of FGT Seremban and FGT Seremban 2, Kenneth and his wife Eunice pioneered several new ministries. Among them were a children’s ministry, birthed out of a vision for reaching the community’s children; and a BM cell group, inspired by Kenneth’s work as a BM XEE clinic trainer. In 2019, these two ministries unexpectedly converged.

“We realized that some of the children coming for our children’s church were BM-speaking,” says Kenneth. “One day I went to their house and shared the gospel in BM, and three people were saved. Then we thought: let’s start a BM service!” The group very quickly grew to over twenty people.

It hasn’t always been an easy ride for Kenneth and Eunice, who often have to

bring their young children along to the night services, sacrificing rest and family time. Conducting the service in a less familiar language also meant more time spent preparing the worship and sermon. “Initially I had to write down every word I said, even the prayers,” recalls Kenneth. “But now I can preach without looking at the paper.”

Kenneth has never seen his work as a burden; rather, he envisions this ministry as a stepping-stone to reaching areas of the nation with low Christian populations. “I see the BM ministry as the key; if we don’t train them now, we can never send people out to start new works elsewhere. Starting the BM work was just the right thing to do, no matter how difficult it was – to see where God leads us,” says Kenneth.

It is this forward-looking attitude that may well hold the key to Kenneth’s future endeavours. “In our lives, there must be more than one faith event – there must be many milestones of faith,” says Kenneth. “Never be afraid to take a step of faith: to do something beyond yourself. A life of faith is a life worth living.”

FGT Seremban has grown to accommodate 3 services per week (English, BM and a bilingual English and Chinese service)



Ps Tony representing FGT Melaka at a Workers Conference

Pastor Tony Yong – FGT Melaka

Having been jolted awake by an unexpected telephone call at 2a.m. one morning some years ago, Pastor Tony Yong was even more startled at the sight of the caller, who showed up at his doorstep shortly afterwards – covered in bruises.

“He was a student from the Middle East, who had been to our church several times,” says Tony. “He told me he had been beaten up and held to ransom, and had his passport stolen. I loaned him some money, and managed to share the gospel with him.”

After ten years pastoring FGT Melaka, Tony has learned to be surprised at nothing. The role itself, in fact, had come to him out of the blue: he had been extremely busy juggling the leadership of three cell groups and multiple responsibilities in the FGT Subang church office, when the call to take over FGT Melaka came.

“If you’d asked me twenty years ago to come down to Melaka, I would have said no; why would I want to go to Melaka? There’s nothing much down there!” says Tony. “I

might have said, I’m not qualified, or not up to it. But when the time came, there was an urging deep within – that God was saying ‘this is what I want you to do.’”

It was by no means an easy decision. Becoming pastor of FGT Melaka meant sacrificing time with his wife Ps. Soo Lan, who pastors the Mandarin congregation at FGT Subang, and their two then-teenaged daughters. To manage his duties in Melaka as well as his home life and church office responsibilities, Tony must commute to Melaka mid-week, spending the latter half of the week there before returning home after Sunday worship service – a situation he describes as a delicate balancing act.

“It was okay initially, when I was younger, but now it’s not so simple – the body doesn’t respond in the same way,” admits Tony. “I miss my family... I wasn’t able to see the girls growing up. I got them to come down with me occasionally to help out, especially during their holidays – so they could see the work and struggles for themselves, and hopefully identify with it.”



FGT Malacca pastor Tony Yong with some members of the congregation

Sleepy, laid-back Melaka at first appeared ironically relaxing compared to Tony's jam-packed schedule in Subang – but the town's slow pace belied a strong undercurrent of spiritual activity running against and threatening to undermine the work of the gospel. Few churches thrive in this hard ground, and Tony has had to contend with language barriers, cultural complexities and spiritual strongholds in his efforts to grow and strengthen the church.

“Sometimes, when I look at the results, I wonder: God, is this what You really want me to do? I think I can do more in the main church,” muses Tony. He describes the frustration of seeing his hard-won flock dwindle as the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown caused some to move from the city and others to drift from God. “We just need to leave it to God... at least they know where to find us,” he says.

But in God's economy, quality trumps quantity – and Tony cherishes the privilege

of sowing into the lives of people he would not be able to reach back in Subang. “You never know whom you'll touch – they may be a student today, but something else tomorrow,” he notes, reminiscing on his encounters with various colourful personalities over the years.

The caller who woke him in the wee hours of that memorable morning was just one such instance. He had returned to his home country soon after the incident, but after six months of silence, contacted Tony through a friend to repay the loan – giving back double the amount he'd borrowed. He later got in touch to check on the money transfer, and told Tony he had become a Christian after returning home.

“Sometimes when working in the field, and we don't see or hear anything, we wonder if our effort is wasted,” says Tony. “So these little feedbacks encourage us: though some people are beyond what we can do, God can do the rest.”



Ps Bee Ling ministering to the local community in JB

Pastor Low Bee Ling – FGT Johor Bahru

In 2013, Pastor Low Bee Ling was approached by FGT Seremban's senior pastor Voon Yuen Woh to take up the pastoral role at FGT Johor Bahru. Would she go?

“Yes,” she replied instantly, without thinking.

It was only afterwards that the enormity of her decision sank in. There were the children she had been working hard to reach whom she would have to leave. There was the worry of where she would live in an expensive city where she had no friends or family. Then there was her fear of driving – how would she get around in that big city with her poor sense of direction?

“I said, God, I surrender,” says Bee Ling. “The fear was real, but with God, I overcame it. I thank God that he prepared people to help me. It was quite an adventure!”

Bee Ling is no stranger to relocating, having been posted to various towns in her previous vocation as a teacher. She had always known that her true calling was to do God's work. A stint at Tung Ling's School

of Ministry confirmed this, and she became a full-time pastor in FGT Seremban in 2010.

But the move to FGT JB proved her greatest challenge yet. Without the security of an established congregation or the support of trusted friends, her first year was a long lesson in depending on God. Through much prayer and tears, Bee Ling has grown stronger, wiser and closer to God. “When you have no friends, God is your best friend,” muses Bee Ling. “You learn a lot through the difficulties; you appreciate them after you've overcome them.”

Ps Low Bee Ling



In 2017, Bee Ling was challenged to take over the Bahasa Malaysia (BM) congregation. Despite her many years as a teacher, she felt unprepared. “Were it not for God calling me, I would not do it!” she exclaims. “But God was good; He quickly taught me how to pray and preach in Bahasa. Now I enjoy sharing in Bahasa more than English!” Bee Ling has since been instrumental in translating sermons and teaching materials into BM, which are now being used by other FGT churches.

After years of patient sowing, Bee Ling is now reaping sweet fruit. She enjoys a close bond with a group of leaders she has trained; they are helping lift some church responsibilities from her shoulders. Through the faithful efforts of XEE teams, both the English and BM congregations have grown tremendously, and she has started a youth group and children’s work.

Bee Ling has never lost her teacher’s heart; her greatest burden is for the youth and children. “I pray there will be people who can replace me, and I know it will be the younger generation. Let us help the children take the baton and carry the fire of Christ to the people of JB!”

Christmas with the FGT KK team



Pastor Vivienne Voon – FGT Kota Kinabalu

Twenty-three-year-old Vivienne Voon looked out over her class on the first day of the XEE Clinic she was teaching. Staring back at her were a group of church leaders including seasoned pastors in their sixties and seventies.

“It was intimidating and scary,” admits Pastor Vivienne. “But today, after ten years of teaching, I have grown in my confidence, experience and maturity.”

The eldest daughter of FGT pioneer Pastor Voon Yuen Woh has always been precocious in the things of God. Growing up in FGT Seremban, the church encompassed her whole life: at ten years old, she was the church pianist; at sixteen, she began serving as a cell leader; by twenty-seven, she was a full-time pastor, overseeing FGT Seremban 2. Five years later, she took up the challenge to lead FGT Kota Kinabalu.

In retrospect, every step of her accelerated spiritual journey had been preparing her for her current role. “I learnt how to be a pastor in Seremban first; to understand my calling and have the heart of a pastor. I experienced hardship, discouragement,



The young and young at heart in FGT KK

and being misunderstood – without those five years, I wouldn’t be able to do what I’m doing today,” says Vivienne.

It was also in Seremban that Vivienne refined a skill that would be crucial for ministry in KK: a solid grasp of the Chinese language. Although she had attended Chinese schools, her church experience had always been in English; having to lead a Mandarin cell group in Seremban meant her language skills had to be brought up to par quickly.

“When I first started, I didn’t know how to continue a prayer I started!” laughs Vivienne. “Now in KK, I have to communicate with a mainly Mandarin-speaking congregation, so I had to quickly learn to preach in Mandarin.”

Her years as a pastor and XEE clinic teacher had brought Vivienne to KK several times, connecting her with FGT KK members and leaders of other churches there. These relationships would be key in smoothing over what would otherwise have been a

difficult transition. Alone in a foreign city, the church immediately became her family.

“I have to thank the church for making me feel welcome very quickly. They were so helpful in the practical things. I appreciate being able to have open and honest conversations with them – they make me feel like I’m one of their own,” says Vivienne.

Walking with her church members has provided Vivienne with some of her greatest joys: seeing non-believers coming to church, elderly folk coming to Christ, and members coming to maturity and into positions of service. With a new perspective of God’s power, Vivienne now challenges others to step out as she did.

“Out there, when your limits are being pushed, when you come to a place of surrender – that’s when you see God take over, that’s where the magic happens,” says Vivienne. “Step out of your comfort zone when God calls you to go. If you never step out of the boat, you’ll never walk on water.”

04 COSMOS



GOING TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

To share the joy of celebrating the 40th anniversary, we caught up with the leaders of our wider family around the world to find out how FGT churches are faring in carrying out the Great Commission to the “ends of the earth”.

FGT UK – Pastor Rafael Casela

I remember back in 2003 in my living room with Pastor Hong Seng, I suggested we could start FGT UK as a cell group first, but he immediately stopped me and said, “The Lord said church, not cell!”

At that time, my wife, Julie and I waited patiently until we believed it was the right time to go into full-time ministry and funnily enough, the call from God came when I just got promoted at my job with the local government - I never had the chance to enjoy my promotion! But we had enough money in the bank to start a church, so we immediately obeyed God’s call. In spite of the inevitable pay cut as a full-time minister, our hearts were ready. To this day, I have no regrets.

Planting and growing churches is never easy, however fulfilling it can be. When we first set up FGT UK, we learned that we couldn’t simply apply evangelism the way we do in Asia. Our growth was slow initially as our contacts here were always busy and not open to visitations.

Thankfully, we were supported by much prayer and help from Pastor Hong Seng, as well as from FGT Subang. Through training and summer camps, our people eventually started to relate more closely and came around to our vision that our work was for the long haul and for a reason beyond ourselves. By God’s grace, today we have three wonderful FGT churches planted, namely in London, Croydon and Purley.

My hope and prayers for FGT UK moving forward is to be able to raise more workers, plant more churches (and maybe even a training centre) and to be financially independent from FGT Subang. I will never forget what Pastor Hong Seng once shared with me - “Build the church or house of God, and He will build yours!” I can testify to that throughout the past 17 years with FGT UK, and I am excited to help further the Lord’s work here in the UK.

Ps Rafael Casela



FGT India – Pastor Francis Gnanasekhar

I was saved in 1993 and I remember receiving a clear call to serve the Lord then. Not long after, I made the decision to go to Bible College to equip myself better and serve Him. It was in 2007 when I met Pastor Hong Seng, and the rest was history. I have been serving the Lord with the FGT family ever since, which I consider a great privilege.

Despite my clear calling to ministry, it was definitely not without struggles. When we first started FGT in Chennai, the Lord put a vision in my heart for 1,000 churches. At that point in time, I did not share this with anybody except for Kala, my wife. During the inauguration service for our church, I got a confirmation from the Lord – as he was preaching, Pastor Hong Seng mentioned that FGT would be happy to plant 1,000 churches in India. This was before he knew that the Lord spoke to me! Ever since then, we have been working towards this vision.

Of course, the journey has not been easy. We have struggled greatly with health and church growth. Not only was it difficult to get the right church planters, maintaining consistent mentorship with our leaders

Ps Francis Gnanasekhar

have also been challenging due to distance. We have faced opposition in various areas where we have planted churches and open evangelism has been an uphill battle ever since the fundamentalist government came into power. This is why we pray to keep ourselves inspired and heartened through the joy of the Lord. The vastness of the harvest field and the need to bring Christ to nearly 3,000 people groups in India is what keeps us inspired to continue to serve the Lord of this great nation.

We carry out various tuition classes for the kids in the community as well as provide financial help for needy students and are looking to do more in the future. On top of that, our first church here serves as a mission's base for church planting across the country, and a place where we carry out the operations and supervision of all our missional work.

Since we have started FGT in India, we have 44 churches and many other house churches in India and we have witnessed all our churches mature into disciple-making churches. Whether big or small, they have been able to reach out to the community

within their capacity. It has been a blessing to see them evolve in this way – expanding into outreach, and some even planting their own church branch.

My hope is for the impact of the churches in India to be great according to the capacity of each and every church. Regardless of its size and location, we want to see transformation in the places where we have been planted. Making disciples for Christ in this great nation is a dream we live for. May we continue to see God's good hand over FGT in India and all over the world.

FGT Myanmar – Pastor Peter Cung

Church planting in Myanmar has not been the easiest journey for us. As Christians here, we do not have much freedom and favour like the Buddhists do. Even within the Christian circle, Evangelical and Charismatic denominations are considered minorities. However, through the outreach work being done here, we are seeing more and more souls saved and growth among the underground churches.

As a church, we also do our best to reach out to those who are most in need. Poverty is a huge issue in the more rural areas of Myanmar, people typically live in areas with no reliable roads, electricity, proper housing, and education. We face many challenges in reaching out to the community here, such as insufficient access to proper medicine, and water. Sometimes even our missionaries fall sick.

However, it is only through learning to live like them and understanding their culture that we are able to set the foundation to reach out to them and to share the gospel more effectively. We have seen the fruits of our labour through people who have



Ps Peter Cung

received Christ and have completely changed their lifestyles and mindsets because of the hope of Christ in them.

Within our outreach to these communities, we also have our Eagles Home for young children, where we provide basic needs to children from remote rural areas who have little to no clothes, education, and money. We focus on nourishing and admonishing them with the Word of God in our day to day interactions. We also send them to government schools for education.

Some of the children from our Eagles Home have graduated and those who are more spiritually mature do return to help us with the children's activities. It has been a privilege to see them grow spiritually and physically, and we praise God that we have been able to see them serve the Lord in ministry and give back to the community by blessing others with the gospel. We give glory to God for the past 13 years and believe that we will continue to see our vision for FGT Myanmar fulfilled.





Ps Ramesh Bhandari

FGT Nepal – Pastor Ramesh Bhandari

It was back in 2009 when Pastor Hong Seng and I were in transit travelling to Nepal from New Delhi when we came up with the idea for a Bible school in Nepal. Sure enough, we eventually kept our word and decided to go ahead to start what we now know as FGT’s Eagle’s Bible School (EBS).

The purposes and goals of EBS are to train and equip lay people for the ministry, to share our vision and motives with our students, to train our people to fulfil the great commission, and to teach sound doctrine and practical steps for church planting. When we first started, we struggled with getting students in because we were not very well known at that point in time, and our local community also tried to stop EBS from happening. Our lack of experience also meant it took us some time to learn how to properly instil a sense of discipline into our students. However, with time and prayer, we were able to work through these difficulties and now are blessed to see the many fruits of EBS.

EBS has now grown to become a place that our students love and enjoy. Many claim that it is not just a place for head knowledge and training, but also for learning soft skills such as handling church problems and mingling with our community. Beyond our lessons on leadership, doctrine, and practical education, we also ensure that our students develop their character while at EBS. So far, our EBS students have been doing amazing work in Nepal. Some of them work as chairmen for whole districts, whilst others are chairmen for the Christian societies in their respective districts. They are even now being recognised by the local government!

With FGT, EBS Nepal has been equipping leaders to work in different cultures and communities, as well as under any pressure or circumstances. We also hope to be able to own our very own EBS building one day. It has been a privilege to see the role that EBS plays in the community and we are thankful for FGT’s vision and mission to support the growth of the gospel to the outer parts of the world. Happy 40th Anniversary, FGT!



Ps Roberto Ting

FGT Philippines – Pastor Roberto Ting

The first FGT church planted in the Philippines is FGT Las Pinas in October 2008 but to date we have three in Tondo, Malate, and Gensan respectively.

Building churches in the Philippines itself is not considered very hard, since it is the only Christian country in Asia. However, this also makes the differentiation within Christian denominations less apparent to Filipinos as most tend to look at all religious events as one and the same - be it Catholics, Protestants, or any other denomination.

We are purposefully situated in towns that are lower income areas, so this has made the financial aspect of church planting a bit of a struggle. Nonetheless, through God, we have still been able to help the poorer students here continue their education by sponsoring them with scholarships and we work to take care of the financial, material, and spiritual needs of the community here, especially during difficult times.

Despite all our struggles, it is a blessing to see how God has provided for us throughout our time here, including through the mother church. My hope and vision moving forward with FGT is to see more FGT churches being

planted in partnership with committed workers in the Lord’s vineyard.

FGT Bulgaria – Pastor Filip Rashev

Even though many refer to Bulgaria as a “new democracy”, the fact is we are living under a post-Communist regime and sadly, many people here still harbour the coldness of this regime in their hearts. As believers, we know that only the love of God and His saving Grace can fill that void and warm the hearts of His people, which is our goal and aim in church planting here. We find that it is of uttermost importance to be in places where people may have never heard of or understood the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I passionately believe that God wants to revive us here again and that God wants to reverse the narrative of Europe being known for her wars and hostile relations and turn this place into a place of joy.

As I see FGT Bulgaria grow and people maturing in Christ, my heart and prayer is that we will become an influential church that would impact society on every level with the good news of Jesus Christ. We believe God will provide as we continue to work, build and raise up leaders here to go forth and plant more churches across this nation.

Ps Filip Rashev



SITTING DOWN WITH THE PIONEERS:

A BLAST FROM THE PAST AND A LEAP INTO THE FUTURE

Multi-generational ministries, language works, a dialysis and physiotherapy centre, a charity-focused non-profit sundry shop, an international school and 154 churches, locally and internationally and a growing congregation of hundreds of faithful members – this is just a quick overview at some of the milestones that Full Gospel Tabernacle have achieved in 40 years.

How did a group of skinny, bespectacled youngsters in the 80s manage to build such a work that many can only dream about, let alone accomplish? We sit down with our 4 pioneers (Pastors Eu Hong Seng, Goh Hock Huat, Ng Wah Lok and Voon Yuen Woh), each of whom are now pioneering their individual ministries and daughter churches across Malaysia, to pick their brains for some stories, lessons from the past and a glimpse into the future.

FGT Founding Fathers. From L-R: Ps Voon Yuen Woh, Ps Eu Hong Seng, Ps Ng Wah Lok and Ps Goh Hock Huat



From L-R: Ps Goh Hock Huat, Sr. Ps Eu Hong Seng and Ps Voon Yuen Woh in the early 80s

How did the story of FGT begin? Who did you speak to about starting the church, and how did your friends and family take the news?

GHH: We were from a brethren church and in the late 1970s, the church leadership then asked whether we wanted to adhere to our non-Charismatic background or not. The people who left the church at the time started the first Charismatic church but they wanted to relocate to KL.

NWL: A bunch of us wanted to remain behind in PJ because we were only students! Only 2 people in our congregation had cars and a few owned motorbikes.

EHS: I think we were anxious that none should be left behind if the church were to move to KL. Hence, I think the decision was somewhat ‘forced’ upon us to pioneer a work in PJ.

GHH: After we started the church, we had nobody to mentor or counsel us. Did we receive a prophetic word or vision or confirmation? No, it was just a concern that we had. We didn’t have anyone to consult with on spiritual matters, and so we became each other’s spiritual family and co-workers, we just encouraged each other to go ahead.

That seems like quite an ordinary start – a church born out of a practical concern rather than a dramatic spiritual encounter. Did you have an end goal in mind then? What would you have pictured our church to be like 40 years later?

VYW: What end goal? [laughs]. All we wanted was to succeed as a church, any size! I wasn’t thinking ahead to 40 years; I think we were just living day by day, week by week. Especially in the first year, when there was so much loneliness and the initial lack of success.

GHH: We definitely did not have an end goal. I was only 24 at the time, not even gone into the world or planned my own future. It was just a desire to serve God and see how God would lead, one step at a time. [Pauses] Though I think, maybe because of his personality, Hong Seng may have had an idea of what it could be like.

NWL: No one at the time could imagine the FGT we have today after 40 years. We were just following Hong Seng at the time, and I believe his vision grew over time as God spoke.

What about misconceptions? Anything about starting a church that you had to discover on your own?

VYW: There were many. And here I am including my own experience from pioneering the Seremban church as well. Misconception #1 – I thought that it would be easy. Misconception #2 – that Seremban people would be just like Klang Valley people. Misconception #3 – English would be sufficient for me to communicate with others. Misconception #4 – my church members and community would be supportive of what I do.

GHH: After we started the church, we were very much on our own. The charismatic movement was so new and not recognized anywhere yet. We had to come up with our own statement of doctrine – I remember looking at the statements of the Brethren church and we just fine-tuned these beliefs to include the person of the Holy Spirit. From there, we did everything ourselves: speak at the pulpit, plan camps, teach Sunday school and Bible class.

EHS: We were quite naïve, now that I think about it – all we had was just a confidence

that God was with us and the faith to just move forward. We thought we would be just one church and make strong disciples, that's it. We had absolutely no idea we would be where we are today. I think we were just like Abraham in Gen 12:1, we just had to “get out of your country, from your family and your father's house, to a land that I will show you.”

40 years have passed since then, and I am sure the road along had its highs and lows. Looking back, what are some of FGT's key highlights for you personally? Do you have a favourite milestone?

NWL: For some of the significant milestones, I captured these moments in our key songs. I think this is my biggest contribution to FGT [laughs]. In 1981, I wrote 'Every Time I Pray' which highlighted prayer as the foundation of the church; then in 1982 came 'Approved in Every Way' which was when the church started to grow because of the church members' personal sacrifices at the time. Then in 1999, I wrote 'We're Here By Grace'; at this time, Wisma Eagles was almost complete and the church had grown larger and stronger. It reminded me

of God's faithfulness and grace towards all of us. Finally, in 2001, I wrote 'Make My Heart Your Resting Place', which was a song dedicating FGT to become a house of prayer and healing, and be God's dwelling place always.

GHH: I remember coming out as a full time worker (which had always been my desire since young), FGT had a need and I felt that opened the way for me to leave my secular job and serve God full time. And then when Evangelism Explosion (EE) became a part of the church, it became a formal way to train and lead and win souls. Then in the main church, the worship ministry took off and it was exciting for me because it was all so new then, being able to sense the presence of God through songs. It was a joy for me and looking back, I would not have grown as much as I did if not for FGT because I was now put in a position where I had to teach, lead, study the Bible, speak, etc.

VYW: For me, I think my key highlights include seeing my daughters serve the Lord and then for them to come out full time in their own ministries as well. We pioneered the church with only our family back then and now to see our children wanting to continue doing so? There is a tremendous sense of joy, especially in passing the baton on to the next generation of leaders.

[Editor's note: At this point, Ps Hong Seng gave us a laundry list of his favourite milestones, which would have been too lengthy to include all here!]

EHS: I came out full time, Gaik Sim (his wife) came out full time, our first church outside of Malaysia (FGT London in 2003), our first plot of land and the subsequent plots, Wisma Eagles, EDC, EPC, CareMart, EGIS – there are just too many to recount. It is an incredible testimony of God's goodness towards us.

Ps Voon Yuen Woh



Ps Goh Hock Huat



Ps Ng Wah Lok

What has kept you going all these years? Do you think your motivations today are the same as what they were 40 years ago?

GHH: Purely, the love of God. Frankly speaking, shepherding is challenging because people have problems and you often don't receive any appreciation in return. But the fact is, I love God and whatever God tells me to do, I do.

NWL: I agree. It is because of our deep love for God. His word and His purposes in our lives – our passion has always been to remain strong and serve him all through the years.

VYW: My motivation today I think is greater than it has ever been. We have started 3 churches in Seremban and Melaka, sent people away to Johor and Sabah and taken on national and regional leadership in EE. Every time a target is reached, there seems to be another one – following and pleasing the Lord is more exciting than it has ever been and God's grace is always sufficient for the task.

EHS: For me, I grew up believing that discipline was never an option and my life scripture (Matthew 6:33) keeps me motivated all the way. I feel just as passionate today as I did 40 years ago.

If you could go back and re-do any part in FGT's history, what would you have done differently?

EHS: I think I can honestly say that I don't have any regrets; there isn't anything I would re-do differently.

GHH: Hmm, I don't know. I'm not the kind of person who looks back; I think we did what we felt was the best way of doing it at that time. We are where we are today because of how it was in the past.

How would you summarize FGT's impact on the nation or even the world? What do you think makes FGT different?

NWL: I think Ps Hong Seng's leadership positions on national bodies are significant, and I believe that our church planting

efforts and our support for missions in countries like India, Nepal and Myanmar are also what sets us apart from other churches. We are not as big, but our culture is that our own church members are the ones praying and sacrificing to make a big impact, like Gideon's army. Our church is not a comfortable church! We're always on the go!

EHS: I have had the privilege of being Tung Ling Seminary chairman, NECF chairman and CFM chairman - so I have the opportunity to influence the nation in a small way. But I won't venture to make any guesses today; only in eternity will we know our full impact. In many ways, all we're doing today is sowing seeds though we have seen many of our pastors rise up to function in apostolic roles in different countries. This is just the beginning of their impact where God has placed them!

VYW: In some ways, FGT provides leadership to the gospel work in the nation and world. It is the result of our own struggles to break through barriers that we hope to have blazed the trail for others to follow. There's nothing that we haven't sacrificed for the sake of the kingdom.

GHH: I don't move extensively enough through the country to know our distinction, but I think our strength comes from discipleship and commitment. We dare to challenge people to be serious, make commitments and sacrifices. I think that's how we try to stand differently.

What about the future? What is something that you hope to see in FGT in the years to come?

NWL: Of course, we would like to see the growth of all our churches in Malaysia,

especially the daughter churches. We also want to see our missions and overseas churches grow stronger and be impactful.

VYW: Yeah! And we want most of our own people to be the ones going to plant new churches, local or elsewhere.

EHS: More souls to be saved and everyone to be prepared for His return. We also want to believe God for a youth revival.

GHH: I agree, I do think we need to see continuity and the next generation must build their foundations in the word of God, loving and knowing God personally. Then I think we can release them to their own giftings, talents and skills and do what God wants them to do – the way we do church the next 40 years may not be the way we did church 40 years ago. The world is big and work must continue, so the foundations must be strong.

And finally – what do you hope for FGT's current and future members to inherit from our history?

EHS: FGT must always focus on the following: prayer, make disciples, obedience to His word, sacrificial giving. We can't move away from these pillars.

NWL: Yes, that's right. They must be strong in our fundamentals - prayer and sacrifice.

VYW: It's just like what the Bible says in Romans 15:20. My hope is that all of FGT will "preach the gospel in places where Christ is not known."

GHH: I hope that they see our commitment to build the church – we had no money but we made sacrifices. In order for God's work to flourish, there must be sacrifice and humility. I hope they inherit these attitudes from the pioneers.



WHAT LIES AHEAD: A PERSONAL MUSING

As far as CEOs go, most choose not to get involved in working level details and would be pretty hands-off about the way things are run. However, for our Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Eu Hong Seng, details and plans are what he thrives at even while leading a church comprising nearly 160 local and international church plants, holding multiple national leadership roles and being a grandfather of three. It would seem easy for him to put up his feet after 40 years of leading FGT, but Ps Hong Seng firmly believes that ‘there is much more to come’ for FGT. We sat down with our energetic church father to learn more about his boundless drive.

“I think FGT is somewhat mature, though we are obviously still in the process of maturing some more,” Ps Hong Seng quips as we ask for his thoughts on the present stage of the church’s growth. “Souls are being saved every month; many are happily serving the Lord; we have disciplined workers praying and nurturing young believers all the time.”

Indeed, in a time where many churches struggle to find significance in the clamour for society’s attention, FGT remains a strong church with a vibrant vision.

Of course, friends and family of FGT would know that there’s more to the church than just its meetings and services; we have a hand in many different projects and community works locally and internationally – CareMart, EDC, the Physiotherapy centre and the International School, to name a few.

“All these works started with the aim of being a blessing to the community, to help

the poor and needy,” Ps Hong Seng shares. On top of these, there are plans to set up the Eagles Vocational Centre with the aim to equip special needs children with living skills for future independence as Malaysia sorely lacks facilities to meet this need.

“In Myanmar, we have the Eagles Home for impoverished children; in the Philippines, we have an Eagles Scholarship Program; we also fund some students in Nepal.” He explains that it is not about amassing a quantity of projects to FGT’s name, but the initiatives are a practical outworking of our faith and beliefs. “We hope that all these different works are timely and meet the needs of the people.”

Indeed, it has never been about doing more for more’s sake. Each endeavour has significance in their respective local communities through FGT’s international churches. To date, we have 154 churches

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“LIKE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AFTER 40 YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WE NEED TO ‘TAKE OUR LAND’. I THINK WE HAVE YET TO DO SO”

in 10 countries, including our local daughter churches here.

“FGT is not merely about sponsoring a pastor’s salary or about flying another flag in the country under the guise of church planting – if a church is not saving any souls, we will close it,” Ps Hong Seng affirms. “We are looking at Japan and South Korea, Eastern Europe and Spain next – we have been to Barcelona three times so far, and I would love to see FGT planted there.”

Having 40 years of church-planting and disciple-making under his belt, we pick his brain further to understand which of the church plants have been the most challenging to break through. “It’s not so much about the area or country, but rather the character and work philosophies of the overseeing pastors and full-time workers,” he says. “When pastors are immature, expect funding all the time, are weak in accountability or are not interested in relating to us, there will always be difficulties. You cannot pioneer without pastors who are strong shepherds and disciple-makers.”

But the call of shepherding and disciple-making isn’t meant to be heeded only by FGT’s pastors and full-time workers. Rather, Ps Hong Seng hopes that this is something all members will take seriously. “As every year passes, we hope that more and more will rise up to volunteer their time and talents for the cause,” he stresses.

Despite the church being 40 years old, Ps Hong Seng believes it is still too early to talk about legacy. “Like the children of Israel after 40 years in the wilderness, we need to ‘take our land’. I think we have yet to do so,” he explains. It is interesting to observe that although FGT has dabbled in so many endeavours covering various causes, communities and nations, he still believes that there is more to come.

“I’d like to think that FGT is a significant church in our nation; by the grace of God if there is a revival movement here, I pray that we would be right in the thick of it. If it’s not up to us, then the next generation must take the land,” he states with an affirmative smile.



40 TODAY

BY LINA LOONG

40 today

These battle-scars show:
We've fought some and won some;
We've loved some and lost some;
Still, now that we've lived some -
We won't shy from the battles we find ourselves in,
Cause you can't be a victor with no victory to win.

40 today

Don't write us off now!
We can run quite as fast
As we could in the past;
Still what matters, at last,
Is not how we look, or what tales we can tell -
It is staying the course, and finishing well.

40 today

But this fire still burns...
We've put our hands to the plough,
No looking back now,
Wipe the sweat from our brow;
No time to idle with so much left to do,
We're keeping the faith: we will see this work through.

40 today

This call is for life.
Though storm clouds may gather,
We're in this together,
Great tempests to weather.
So give us this mountain - no giant's a threat -
Cause pleasing our Commander's the best reward yet.

40 today

How far we have come!
But our shoes aren't worn,
And our strength's far from gone,
So we're pressing on:
Trusting that He who brought us to this land
Is faithful to carry us through to the end.



GOODNESS OF GOD