

AG TIMES

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OCTOBER IS Pastor *appreciation* MONTH

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★ 17th Teen Challenge Charity Golf 2017 ★

Guest of Honour

Mr Lee Yi Shyan

MP for East Coast GRC

Executive Adviser, Chairman's Office, OUE Limited

September 14, Thursday, 2017

Singapore Island Country Club
(Island Course)

Tee Off: 1.00pm

Enquiry: 6793 7933

charitygolf@teenchallenge.org.sg

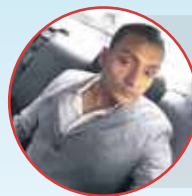
Yvonne Tan/Puah Jia Hong

Meet Our Beneficiaries



"My transition into life after prison has been difficult and frustrating at times. The residential program in Teen Challenge provided me the opportunity to be with people who accepted and understood my struggles. I am grateful for their support."

- Bruce Stevens Mathieu



"I learned to cultivate and live out the positive values of life during my residency at Teen Challenge. I also allowed God to come into my heart, to renew my mind and to revive my soul. It has been an uplifting journey."

- Jag Mohan Rai



"Teen Challenge was like the beacon that kept my focus when I was wallowing in the pits of hopelessness and discouragement. I rediscovered hope and purpose for living during my recovery journey in the residential program. I feel ready to contribute again and make a difference."

- Matthew Poh

About Teen Challenge

An approved Institution of a Public Character (IPC) and a Voluntary Welfare Organisation set up in 1976. We provide solutions through faith-based intervention programs to the pressing needs of the marginalized in our community. In particular, to those struggling with substance abuse and alcohol addictions.

Gathering of The Eagles

By Teen Challenge Singapore

Teen Challenge (TC) Singapore truly encapsulates 2 Corinthians 5:17 in the many lives that it has touched through its programs. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new is here."

July 4, 2017 was an extraordinary day in the Drug & Alcohol Recovery Centre (DARE) of Teen Challenge Singapore. Close to 100 people were in attendance at the XTC Fellowship evening. Former residents shared how God had transformed their lives to become overcomers in Christ.

The people gathered to celebrate how God had indeed led them to break free from their old selves and become new and transformed believers of Christ. Brother Dave Chai, our longest serving staff at TC, with 34 years of service under his belt, had organized this event.

Among our guests were volunteers, former residents who are now overcomers in Christ, staff of yesteryears, current residents and the present TC team. It was a day of homecoming to all who had left and gone on to become contributing individuals of our society.

The events of the evening were facilitated by former residents of TC. They served as Emcees, Worship Leaders, Testimony-givers and the Messengers.

The evening began with a warm welcome by the Emcee Matthew Poh, followed by Dave Chai the Assistant Director and Luke Tan the Executive Director. Then, there was a beautiful time of worship led by Josiah Chua.

After the worship session, Brother Zacchaeus Ong opened his heart as he shared his story. Zach had served lengthy prison sentence for drug offence and had struggled with anger all through his life. He thought his anger would go away when he left the prison. But it didn't turn out the way he expected.

The spirit of anger remained with him. His time in two halfway houses didn't help either. His negative attitude contributed to him dropping out of the program. He had argued with a staff and almost got into a fight. The only positive outcome of this was he knew that he was the problem, there was no one else to blame.

Zach sees himself like Zacchaeus – the chief tax collector described in Luke 19. Zach noticed two similarities with this Bible character: He is short and he also climbed "trees", except that he kept falling from the "trees" he had climbed. Zach was sick and tired of his own issues.

And Jesus sought the Zach of the 21st century, found him and healed him. As Zach surrendered his life to the Lord Jesus, transformation began. Today, Zach is no longer the angry man he used to be. He has

been freed from the spirit of anger. He is happily married to a lovely woman who accepted him, warts and all. Zach is a brand new man. He has learned to follow the ways of God. He subscribes to this godly value: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

He wrote a Chinese song when he was still in prison. The lyrics of this song speaks volumes about the fear we all face on a daily basis. The God who loves and cares for us will never let go of His Hand.

*"Sometimes I don't know where I am going.
Maybe I have missed my way.
This weariness is weighing me down.
Sometimes I feel your absence.
Doubts have clouded my eyes.
I yearn to put aside this baggage.*

*Perhaps this heart of mine has grown cold.
I could find no release for this weary soul.
Lord do not let go of me.
Heal my hurts with your touch once again.
In the midst of the rain and storms,
I wait upon you with a heart of peace.*

*Lord take me by your hand.
Help me overcome all my sorrows and pain.
Only through You, I know I can.
I wait upon you with a heart of peace."*



The song written by Zach Ong

Then, Pastor Joel Shunmugam came up to share the Word of God. The presence of Pastor Joel was divinely arranged. He was here to visit his family as he was residing overseas. Through Glenn Lim, a director of TC Board, we decided to invite Pastor Joel and turn the regular Eagle's Wings session into an XTC Fellowship evening.

Pastor Joel himself was a resident of DARE Centre 15 years ago. Prior to his admission into TC, he was so desperate that he had contemplated suicide by jumping off a building. That was in 1992. He shared about how he could recall the very spot he stood

Photo credit: Teen Challenge Singapore



Our guest speaker, Pastor Joel

in the chapel where he surrendered his life to God. He was subsequently delivered from an addiction to drugs and freed from his deep-seated anger.

After his recovery, he served as a staff in the Centre before relocating to Canada. Today, together with his wife Ruth, they pastor a church under "Ignite Life Ministries" in British Columbia. (See AG Times May-Jun 2017 Issue, Page 20 for his full testimony)

Pastor Joel delivered a powerful message taken from John 5:1-9. He exhorted the hearers with this stirring question – "Do you want to get well?" Many residents knew God was speaking to their hearts and they raised their hands in response to the message.

Then, those in attendance enjoyed fellowship over a light meal and had their photos taken. This very event testifies of the goodness of God and how many lives He has touched and transformed through TC. Truly, 2 Corinthians 5:17 ties it up nicely:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

Our God is an awesome God. To Him be the Glory!



Worship the Lord together



Feasting and fellowship

TOGETHERNESS - AG COMMUNITY

From Delinquency to Dedication

By Paul Tan, Teen Challenge Singapore

God, together with Teen Challenge, shaped and transformed my life.

I came from a middle-class family. I had this erroneous idea that a “pai kia” (hokkien for bad boy) image was really cool. I was young, angry with the world and easily influenced. Soon I would associate myself with bad company, getting involved in street fights, gangs and drugs.

To keep me off the street and away from negative influences, my parents sent me away for an education overseas. It was in this foreign land that I went from bad to worse. I was into gangs, addicted to drugs and even dealt in drugs to feed my habit. I was caught for trafficking and was repatriated to Singapore.

Back home, I reunited with my old friends and returned to my former ways. I was caught by the police several times but was let off with stern warnings. A fight I was involved in, along with the use of a weapon, led me to be charged in court for rioting. The year was 1999.

Prior to my sentencing, I agreed to be admitted to the rehabilitation program of Teen Challenge at Old Choa Chu Kang. I had hoped that voluntary admission to a halfway house might help to reduce my time in prison.

I was not an easy person to get along with. I was a recalcitrant rule-breaker. My leave privileges were forfeited for first two months. However, even as I faced the consequence of my wrong actions, I experienced care and concern through the tough love that was administered by the center staff.

I was told that I could expect at least five years’

imprisonment along with 12 strokes of the cane for my kind of offence. So I was expecting the worst. Imagine the relief I had when I was given a 13-month mandatory supervision in Teen Challenge and another 12-months’ probation at home. Upon hearing the sentencing outcome, I knew that this was an extension of God’s mercy through the presiding judge.

I continued my probation at Teen Challenge but remained an angry young man who refused to accept responsibility for my delinquent ways. I continued to break rules which led to frequent confinements in the Solitary Ward, along with the loss of privileges.

Every time when I was in solitary confinement, the staff on duty would come by and strike friendly conversations with me. They shared about the love of God they had personally experienced, their past struggles as residents in the program and the transformation that had taken place in their lives.

In that place of solitude and quietness, I began to communicate with this God who I had heard about as a young boy but never really knew nor experienced. My image of God was someone to be feared and not to be loved. I desired a relationship with God who died and rose again to conquer sin and death but did not know how. Deep down in my heart, I felt undeserving of the love and forgiveness of God.

I decided to take the step of faith and opened my heart to God. I began to understand that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old had gone, and only the new remained. I began to enjoy reading the Bible, experiencing the love of Jesus and was eventually water baptized.

While at Teen Challenge, my relationship with my family was restored. As I came to the end of my

Photo credit: Paul Tan



probation period, I felt that one day I might want to help others in the same predicament. I completed my National Service and went on to obtain a Degree in Psychology. I met a beautiful woman who became my wife and we now have two lovely children.

Over the last 20 years, I had been blessed in the course of my career, receiving blessings of favor and abundance. My heart yearned to return to the call to be a “people-helper”.

Earlier this year, I responded to an opportunity to transit into the Social Sector under the “Professional Conversion Programme for Social Worker” (PCPSW). I was accepted into this conversion program and will pursue a Master’s in Social Work in the Singapore University of Social Science (SUSS). I intend to fulfill my call to be a Registered Social Worker in Teen Challenge Singapore, the place where the desire to be a people-helper was conceived.

...Continued from pg 5

The best advice we can offer missionaries and the local leadership is to strive to work jointly together as the body of Christ. The arm cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” We need each other if we’re going to grow the Kingdom of God. You do not need to take credit or recognition as long as God’s Kingdom is being served.

Leaving Singapore after 19 years has been an emotional time for us. We feel very Singaporean. Whenever people ask us where we are from, we would say with pride – Singapore. The best things that we are taking with us from Singapore are the treasured friendships we have formed, especially within the AG and at Teen Challenge. These are our dearest and closest friends. We had an amazing send-off by the EXCO giving us their blessings to

be their ambassadors.

We are heading back to a strange land with strange customs and people. This was how we felt 19 years ago when we came to Singapore. However, it is now time to pursue further medical help in the USA for my longstanding health issues. The Board of Directors of TC graciously encouraged me with Hebrews 6:10, “*God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them*”.

We ask if you would pray with us for the following needs:

- 1) Our transition and readjustment to USA.
- 2) Phil’s complete healing.

- 3) Securing great doctors to address Phil’s medical issues.
- 4) God would lead us to our next place of ministry.

In closing, even though it has been most challenging to leave our beloved Singapore, we remain open to God’s detours, so that we don’t lock ourselves into “our” plan and resist God’s gentle nudge to take us on an unexpected diversion. “*I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken*” Psalm 16:8.

With grateful hearts,
Phil & Lisa
July 2017

An Opening of a New Chapter

By Pastor Phil and Lisa DiMusto

Sharing our amazing, God-led and at times, humorous journey as missionaries on this lovely island of Singapore.

When you give your life over to God and allow Him to lead you, you never know in the beginning where that will take you. Our missionary story started ten years before we moved to Singapore. I was a youth pastor in the United States; Lisa was working as a Speech and Language Pathologist.

I received a call from our church receptionist stating a missionary was here and wanted to meet me. I thought, "This is a mistake, I'm not in charge of the missions funds nor am I involved with missions." But this missionary named Steve Hill, who was later used mightily at the Pensacola Outpouring, came into my office that afternoon. He shared his burden for Argentina and invited me to bring a group of our young people to work with him, as the harvest was ripe.

I talked to our church leadership and the next year, in 1990, Lisa and I took our first missions trip bringing 25 youths to minister with Steve Hill in Argentina. After that experience, we began taking yearly mission trips with our youths. Word began to spread that the Lord moved mightily on these mission trips and other churches began to join us. We led teams of students as large as 90 to other countries, ministering together with Steve Hill, as well as other missionaries.

Shortly after our missions trip to Argentina, at the USA General Council in 1991, the speaker for the missions service asked, "If anyone under the age of 35 is willing to be 'open' to being called into missions, would you please come forward and let us pray for you?"

We responded and four years later, we applied and were accepted to become missionaries with the USA Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM). We both resigned from our positions without knowing where in the world God would lead us. While talking with our mentors and leaders, it appeared that God was guiding us toward Asia.

We discovered there were over one billion youths under the age of 18 living in Asia who had yet to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. After an extended fast, we agreed to serve in the Asia Pacific. We raised support for one year without knowing which country our leadership would place us then.

Finally, they began talking to us about a little nation we knew almost nothing about except that a rebellious American youth, Michael Fay, had received caning for theft and vandalism there. We were told of Singapore's advanced telecommunications, efficient international airport, and how "fine" a city it was so do not bring chewing gum along with you or jaywalk in the streets there.

Then in 1997, the EXCO of the AG of Singapore invited us to discuss whether our youth ministry focus might be a good fit with their vision. After our 24-hour flight, we arrived at Changi Airport at 1.30 am and headed for the taxi queue, when we saw a tall, thin man holding a sign with our name on it. We were shocked to see this and we later learned that Rev Robert Lum was assigned to pick us up because he was the youngest member on the EXCO at that time. As he drove us to the Garden Hotel, we looked out at the shadowy buildings and dimly lit HDBs and heard the Lord whisper to us, "You belong here."

The EXCO had arranged for us to minister at Centre of New Life on Sunday morning, Elim Church on Sunday night and Teen Challenge (TC) Eagle's Wings Service on Tuesday night. The sermons I preached were memorable, especially the one at TC, where we spoke about the man at the pool of Bethesda – How when God stirs the waters, you can be healed and set free from any addiction or infirmity.

At that time, TC had two dormitories, one for teenage boys and one for men. After the service, several youths shared their testimonies with us, and our burden for the youth of Singapore intensified. In our meetings with the EXCO, we heard of the AG's rich heritage and future goals.

After we returned to the United States, we received word from our leadership that the EXCO had invited us to go serve in Singapore as missionaries. In 1998, we sold our house, and moved to Singapore. When we arrived, Fred and Margaret Seaward offered their Woodlands HDB flat to us as they were heading to USA for a month.

We also met missionary Theola Phillips who was in town only for a few days to renew her visa. Before these kind Americans departed Singapore, the Seawards told us that we would see many small lizards in the flat. However we should not kill them as they were their "pets". Also, Theola told us not to eat cockles as we could get hepatitis. Secured with this new interesting knowledge, we began our amazing adventure in Singapore.

We were first appointed as the National Youth Director for the AG. It was a position that had remained dormant for several years. The position was previously held by Rev Jack Theva. We secured a list of all the AG churches of Singapore and began visiting each one on the weekends to meet the pastors and youth leaders. We heard stories of how the AG used to have combined Youth Rallies and Camps.

In that first year, I became a member of TC and began attending their AGMs. At that time, the AG Ministers' Prayer was regionally divided. We were given permission to host the monthly prayer meeting in our home for youth pastors, allowing for a time of prayer, fellowship and brainstorming.



Phil and Lisa

For the first three years, we devoted all our time and energy to facilitating the Singapore AG youth forming youth committees, holding youth rallies, National youth camps and events for AG pastors' teenage children. It was exciting to be part of the process of bringing youth pastors and leaders together that had hardly known each other previously, as well as bringing youth from different youth groups together for a time of fellowship and spiritual growth. We were also honored to serve at all the AG's sponsored events such as the MIR, Fresh Fire Conferences, Indoor Stadium outreaches etc.

As our first term ended, we headed back to the USA during the week of 9/11. After a year of fund raising in the USA, we return to Singapore end of 2002. TC approached me about serving on the board at their Bukit Batok Hostel for troubled youth. A year later I transitioned to their main board. Since 2002, I had the privilege to serve at TC as a board member, president of the board, Interim ED twice, Board Overseer and Deputy Director/Chaplain.

When the Tsunami of 2004 hit, we asked the AG if we could assist with the relief efforts. They appointed us as the coordinators of disaster relief and together with the AG churches, we helped the Indonesia AG in their efforts to rebuild churches, and fulfill other community-based needs. Later, we helped coordinate the AG churches' support to nations affected by severe earthquakes, including Pakistan and Turkey.

By this time, we were spending almost half of our time traveling to other countries in Southeast Asia. God opened the doors for us to teach on Youth Ministry at several Bible Colleges and Youth Pastor Schools, speak at Youth Rallies, Youth Camps, Youth Groups and churches. We coordinated and spoke at Youth Leadership trainings in Singapore such as Globynet, and Synerg!z.

Continued on pg 4...



KINGDOM BUILDERS

A Global Perspective on Royal Rangers Singapore

In late January 2017, Royal Rangers Singapore had the opportunity to host a journalistic duo from the Assemblies of God Worldview Magazine. They were Rev Bryan Webb an AG Missionary based in Vanuatu and Gaylon Wampler, a National Geographic Award winning photographer based in the United States.

They were tasked with observing how God is using Royal Rangers Singapore to raise up young leaders and the unique contextualisation of this global ministry. Rev Bryan would be most comfortable with this assignment as he grew up in Royal Rangers and received his full time calling to be a missionary at the age of 15. Gaylon had never covered the Royal Rangers in action and would give a fresh eye to the assignment.

Through their visit, we shared with them the various ways Royal Rangers functions through the local churches, its impact on young lives, families and communities. It was a unique opportunity to reflect on God's faithfulness to the ministry as we celebrate Royal Rangers Singapore's 40th Anniversary.

This article is adapted with permission from AG Worldview Magazine



The staff of a learning shelter on a neighboring island welcomes village children to have a chance for education. This shelter was built from scratch as a project by a team of Royal Rangers youths and their families.



“Fusion may be the best word to describe Singapore.

Ultramodern and sparkling clean, the streets of Singapore ring with the sounds of English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil.”

“Royal Rangers in Singapore is also a unique fusion.

They exist in churches, community centres, and the basement of a shopping centre, and are evenly split between boys and girls.”

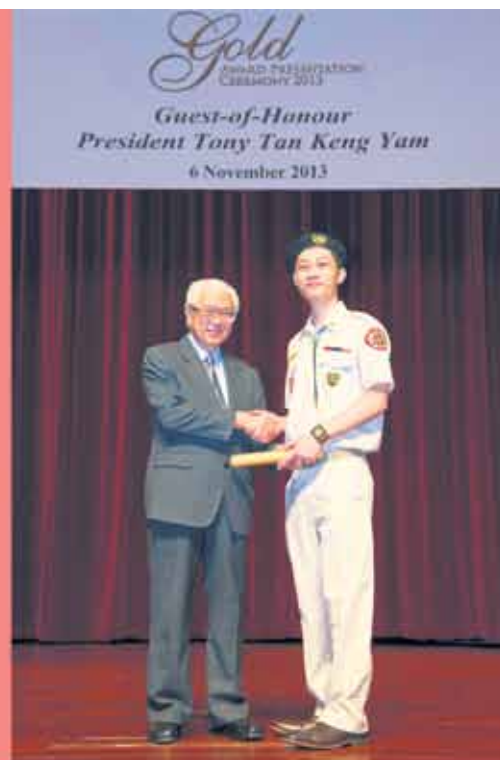


Rev Bryan Webb
AG Worldview Journalist
AG Missionary to Vanuatu



Rev Bryan Webb & Gaylon Wampler visited Outposts in Bethel AG (#01), Harborlight Church (#05), Faith AG (#11) & Bethesda Community Services (#25). Not only did they get an insight of Singapore, they also shared about their own testimony, ministry and inspired curiosity about missions among the children and youths.

Royal Rangers Singapore has partnered with the Singaporean government to develop and recognize outstanding young leaders through the National Youth Achievement Award - an internationally recognized award offered through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award International Association. Royal Rangers Singapore is designated as an operating authority for the NYAA, so participating Rangers can work towards receiving the NYAA even while they qualify for various Rangers awards.



“Several pastors tell me they rely on **Royal Rangers** as their **primary evangelism tool for children and youth** in their communities. Yet regardless of diverse venues and languages, the heart of the program remains unchanged: **to develop young people mentally, physically, socially and spiritually**”



Rev Bryan Webb
AG Worldview Journalist
AG Missionary to Vanuatu

“There is a significant cost in time to raise up new leaders. But if we fail to make the investment, we stunt our future growth. **We must empower our youth by creating opportunities for ministry.** Rangers gives us a unique opportunity: **If you touch a child, you touch a family; and when you touch a family, you touch the community**”



Commander Chia Eng Kiat
National Commander
Royal Rangers Singapore



“Ministry is always a means to an end. **The objective is to usher these youths into the presence of God**”



Ps Wu Tze Chong
Deputy National Commander
Royal Rangers Singapore

Today 1,200 Rangers meet each week in 16 outposts across the city.



Children and youths aged 5 - 18 years old are welcomed to join the weekly Royal Rangers Program.

Visit www.royalrangers.org.sg or email info@royalrangers.org.sg for more information on our programmes and meeting details.



TOGETHERNESS - AG COMMUNITY

June 2017 Update from our Missionaries in ElimParis

By Rev John Lim, ElimParis

We are thankful for God's guidance and blessings over us and the church in the last few months. God's blessings allow us to be a blessing!

This is a year for "Blessing the Community" in Paris, a word which God had spoken to us clearly. We were overjoyed by the visit of Rev Glen Lim from Elim Singapore, our founding home church. He was here last December to minister in ElimParis during Christmas. It was a blessing to have him here with us.

I met with an accident in January this year while back home in Singapore. So I had a quiet vacation meeting up with close friends and relatives. Praise the Lord for a good recovery! I was well enough to preach at Elim Singapore's Chinese service.



Meeting up with friends while my arm was in cast

ElimParis continues to participate in the training of new teams of volunteers for the hospital group of Henri-Mondor, which covers a group of hospitals in Paris. Due to the issue of distance, it is vital for the setting up of satellite teams to enable visits in the various locations. We thank God for raising up new volunteers to serve in the chaplaincy ministry.



Group training of volunteers

We had our church camp in June and Pastor Solomon Ho from Liverpool was our guest speaker. He preached on the theme 'Honoring God in our Lives'. Many who heard his sermons responded to the call to rededicate themselves, their talents and finances for the Lord's use, and to be a shining witness for Jesus in France.



Rev Glen Lim and our congregation



Church camp participants



A part of the refugee camp

In June, the Lord opened new doors for us to share on the French radio waves, Fréquence Protestante, of the compassion ministry work we are doing within the hospitals ministering to the patients.



With Pastor Stuart Ludbrook and Sis Malika in the radio studio

Pastor Rebecca has been invited to a meeting to plan for the ministry of the refugees in Ivry Sur Seine. Our prayer is that God would provide more volunteers and financial means for this fragile population in Paris.

We covet your prayers for our work in Paris:

- For God's strength and help for us as we continue to serve God here among the French-, Mandarin- and English-speaking people.
- For God to raise up more workers for the foreigners ministry, prison ministry and hospital ministry.
- For God's guidance upon our church, the Council and our ministry committee.
- For God's help and provision to be upon our new ministry to the foreigners, our hospital ministry and our prison ministry. Especially His provision to purchase a ministry vehicle – having 300km to cover between church, hospital and prison work per week.
- For God's provision in finances for the work among the refugees as we conduct classes for children and adults. Pray also for more volunteers to be raised to serve in this ministry.

<https://johnlimkc.wordpress.com>

AG Training and Together in Prayer

By Pastor Alvin Lim, Grace Assembly of God

On August 3, the AG ministers gathered for a time of empowering and prayer.

We started the meeting with a powerful time of worship and praying for the nation. We prayed passionately for the Singapore Cabinet ministers by name and reclaimed Singapore prophetically as the Antioch of Asia.

Gary Heyes from Canada was our special speaker and he preached on the topic of "Leading in the Supernatural". This was a much-needed topic to inspire our AG ministers to reclaim what it means to lead in the supernatural as a Pentecostal denomination.



Guest speaker, Gary Heyes

He started by commenting that there is a 'pure' sound of worship in our worship services here in Asia that we need to value. This is somehow 'lost' in many churches in North America as they sought a more 'moderate' contemporary service to cater to the unchurched. We must not be ashamed of the charismatic elements in our services as an attractive presence of God.

We are to be like Daniel who had the supernatural Spirit of God within him with the insight and wisdom of God (Daniel 5:11). We need to be discerning of a lot of counterfeit spiritual excesses out there which may not be a mark of supernatural spirituality. There is a lot of shaking at the altar that is not of God and conversely, God can also work anywhere, even in a coffee shop.

What is truly supernatural is the ability to touch and transform lives. Every Christian has a supernatural gift, not just the pastor. We need to empower our people to express this supernatural gift in our daily lives. Miracles and Word of Knowledge can happen at any time as we are sensitive to the Spirit. The Kingdom of God is not just talk, but of power (1 Corinthians 4:20). Our preaching needs to come with power



Worshipping as one body

(1 Corinthians 2:4). Jesus was endorsed by God through signs and wonders (Acts 2:22). Signs and wonders will follow the men of God (Acts 16:20).



Learning together was such fun

Gary began to share his own experiences, on how he prophesied into situations and people by faith, which then came to pass. His own son was born after five years of praying even though it was medically impossible for him to have a child. What a powerful testimony!

How do we cultivate this supernatural lifestyle? We need more pauses in our lives. We need more 'Selah' moments to reflect and praise God. We need to create space for the Spirit to work. We are creators of spiritual atmosphere where faith can grow. We need to allow people to experiment prophecies in small groups, with space to fail. We need to be like sailors who actively discern the wind direction rather than just react to it. We need to look at those who have gone before us and see what God is doing.

Gary ended the service by prophesying over Singapore and many ministers who responded to the altar call. May the Assemblies of God Singapore denomination arise to lead in the supernatural over Singapore and beyond for revival in the 21st century. Spirit of God, lead us as we pray. Amen!



Praying for one another



Having a meal together

Photo credits: Christopher Soh & Nicholas Wong

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Pastor
appreciation
MONTH

The Power of Honoring Your Pastor



By Rev Dominic Yeo

A pastor never gets to say "It's after office hours, I'm off work." There is no punching out at 5.30pm. More often than not, pastors have to miss countless family outings or have them interrupted to minister to hurting people. They play multiple roles – from mediator to organizer, or cheerleader to teacher, they juggle many roles and responsibilities when caring for the congregation.

A pastor is often seen as strong, never tired, with an endless amount of passion, never discouraged, and ever-ready to pray and minister. Yet, they do have struggles you know not of, and fears that are never publicly displayed – only reserved for pouring out unto the Lord.

The call of a pastor extends beyond the individual; it also involves their families. Many times, a pastor's family is deprived of their father, mother, son or daughter. Weekend family gatherings are almost impossible for pastors. For many pastors, turning up for these gatherings after an exhausting weekend is hardly being present at all. Family holidays are just as difficult to arrange. Church camps take place during the school holidays. Special church events are held on public holidays. Christmas? – you get the idea.

Spouses become part of the waiting ministry as 10-minute conversations extend into hour-long counseling sessions. Children face intense scrutiny as their lives are measured against the yardstick of godliness. The pressure to be perfect is compounded by expectations from the congregation.

The sacrifices made when individuals answer the call to serve the Lord and His people in the ministry are not to get a pat on their backs. It is driven by a call higher than themselves. Their life motto is to serve. Their end goal? To glorify God. Their reward is received in the form of transformed lives, and souls saved for eternity. Giving of themselves to their congregation or their ministry helps equip and grow the church in loving God and doing His will. Their times of prayer in solitude provides spiritual covering for the church. Their deep study of the Word provides spiritual food for a strong church. Their leadership

gives direction so their congregation is not scattered. For the sake of the call, pastors do much for their sheep at great expense of their own lives and their families.

Two decades ago, Focus on the Family started the annual Clergy Appreciation Month, choosing the month of October to be a time for congregations to intentionally appreciate their pastors. Some might wonder if it's necessary. After all, pastors are just doing their job! They knew what they were getting into!

It's important to understand that the concept of honoring our pastors is biblical. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Paul commands us to *"acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you."* Moreover, they are to be held *"in the highest regard"* (5:13) and are worthy of *"double honor"* (1 Timothy 5:17).

Honoring and appreciating our pastors doesn't just benefit them, it is also for those who receive their ministry. In fact, being thankful is powerful!

Firstly, being thankful protects us from taking our pastors for granted.

I will not be the leader I am today if not for my mentors who believed in me and saw past all my shortcomings. When we reflect upon the goodness we have received from our pastors, we learn to appreciate that our growth in the Lord is not in our strength or ability but by the Lord's provision of men and women to teach and disciple us.

Secondly, being thankful prevents a complaining spirit from spreading.

"The new worship pastor is too loud", "The preaching was sort of lackluster today", "The Word is not deep enough", "The church is getting too big" etc. Complainers think grumbling is a form of discernment. It is not – in fact it is toxic that can spread. Ephesians 5:4 (ESV) *"Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."* Give thanks and allow the Lord to change your focus, and renew your mind and heart.

Thirdly, being thankful pleases God and releases His blessings.

When we obey God's command to us to honor our pastors and leaders, divine alignment happens and opens up the door for continued blessings in our lives.

I look forward to see how our hearts of thanksgiving will change the atmosphere in our hearts and in our churches.

Here are just a few ways you can honor and appreciate your pastor.

Pray for them

"I urge you, brothers and sisters...to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me." – Romans 15:30

The greatest form of support you can give your pastor is prayer. Even Paul urged the church to pray for him so that he could continue to be an effective leader.

Here are some areas where you can cover your pastor in prayer.

- Provision for every need
- Strong family relationships
- Quality rest and good health
- Wisdom and discernment in ministry

Write notes of encouragement

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." – 3 John 1:4

Just as a farmer must wait patiently for their crop to bear fruit, pastors wait weeks, months, even years to see their members grow.

Don't make your pastors guess whether their ministry has made a difference. Share how they have impacted your life by writing them an encouraging note! Thank them for times when they have ministered to you after "office hours". Share specific instances where they have helped you become more like Jesus. Affirm that their work matters!

Serve alongside them

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." – 1 Peter 4:10

The task of running a church doesn't fall on the pastors alone. We all have skills, talents and gifts that can be used to build up the body of Christ.

From serving to being a lay leader, partner with your pastors to create vibrancy and unity in services, prayer meetings, and carecells. If you see a problem, don't complain about it – be part of the solution!

Imitate their faith

"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." – Hebrews 13:7

Pastors are very much human and are equally imperfect beings like any of us. Their struggles are real and we can allow their lives to inspire us in following Jesus and living out a life that obeys and honors the Lord's commands.

Learn from their example. Imitate them as they imitate Christ.

Obeys them

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." – Hebrews 13:17

While it's great to be able to agree on everything, that doesn't quite happen in reality. People are

bound to have differing views and opinions. Recognize that leadership is appointed by God. Choose to respond in a manner that honors God and the leadership.

It's important to talk about differences, clarify misunderstandings and hear their heart for you. Ultimately trust that your pastor desires God's best for you and choose to align to God's purpose for the church to remain united.

Speak their love language

"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." – 1 Timothy 5:17

Honor your pastors by showing them how much you care. For example, if you live close to them, offer a ride home after service. Or if their family enjoys watching movies, bless them with tickets.

Discover their love language. Find out their needs. Then, love lavishly.

Give generously

"A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." – Proverbs 11:25

Regardless of their love language, you can bless your pastors with gifts or a meal! Consider simple gifts (vouchers for a local bookstore or restaurant), personal gifts (a new pair of shoes, a new suit or dress), generous gifts (an all-expenses-paid trip to a resort or a staycation for their family) or even practical gifts (an iPad, coffee capsules, sports equipment that he/she might enjoy using).

Love their families

"As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another... Forgive as the Lord forgave you." – Colossians 3:12-13

Honor your pastors by loving the ones closest to them. Every family has its own struggles, including your pastor's family. Don't expect them to be any better than your own. Eliminate unrealistic expectations and regularly extend grace to your pastor's spouse and children.

Speak well of the church

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." – Romans 15:5-6

As a minister, there's nothing more disheartening than hearing members speak ill of the church. Remember that the body of Christ is made up of imperfect people. Extend the type of grace you would want extended to you.

Instead of complaining and criticizing, comparing and critiquing, speak well of the bride of Christ. Lift up her strengths, live out her values, and embrace her God-given vision.

牧师永远不能说：“现在是非办公时间，我下班了。”牧师没有下午5点半打卡下班的做法。牧师甚至可能错过无数家庭聚会或因为要服事哀伤的人而中断了家庭聚会。牧师扮演着多重角色，从协调者到策划者，拉拉队长到教师，他们肩负许多角色和任务关顾着会友。

牧师被看作是坚定、从不疲累、有不住的热忱、从不灰心、总预备好为人祷告和服事人。可是，他们也有人所不知道的挣扎和不公然表露的惧怕——单单向神倾心吐意。

牧师的呼召超越个人，而延伸至家庭。许多时候，这些家庭因为父亲、母亲、儿子或女儿是牧师而缺少了一般家庭享有的好处。周末的家庭聚会对于牧师来说几乎是不可能的。对许多牧师来说，忙碌了一个周末后，出席家庭聚会只是人在心不在。家人一起度假也一样难以安排。学校假期有教会的家庭营，公定假日有特别的教会活动。而圣诞节呢？那就更不再话下。

有时牧师与人预计10分钟的谈话拖到一个小时之久，配偶就需要耐心等待。等待似乎成了配偶事工的一部分。孩子的生命则被人仔细审查，以圣洁的尺度衡量他们。会众的期待促使牧师一家面对压力——他们需要完美的家庭。

当个人回应呼召服事神和祂的子民，他们付出牺牲并不是为了得到赞许，而是因为有比自己更高的呼召推动他们。他们的座右铭是服事。他们的终极目标是荣耀神。他们的报偿是生命的转化以及灵魂的拯救。他们将自己献给教会或事工，以此装备教会和使教会成长，更加爱神和完成祂的旨意。他们的祷告为教会提供了属灵的遮盖。他们钻研神的话语提供了属灵的粮食坚固教会。他们的领导提供了方向，会友不会一盘散沙。为了他们的呼召，牧师为羊群付出了很多，赔上自己的生命和家庭。

20年前，“注重家庭”展开了一个感谢神职人员月，选择了十月作为让会众刻意感谢牧师的月份。有些人会质疑是否有这个必要。毕竟，牧师只是在做他们的工作！他们知道他们的工作必须付出什么！

明白尊荣牧师的概念从圣经而来是重要的。在帖撒罗尼迦前书5:12，保罗劝勉我们“敬重那在你们中间劳苦的人，就是在主里面治理你们、劝诫你们的。”此外，要“格外敬重他们”（5:13），他们配受“加倍的敬奉”（提摩太前书5:17）。

然而，这份劝勉不是为了牧师，而是为了他们所服事的人。其实，感谢有强大的力量！

首先，感谢能保护我们不存有“理所当然”的心态。如果不是我的导师们相信我，不看我的不足，我不会是今天的领袖。当我们反思从牧师所领受的美善，我们就学会感激，因意识到我们在主里的成长不靠自己的力量或能力，而是靠着主供应男男女女教导和门训我们。

第二，感谢阻止抱怨的灵扩散。“带领敬拜的新牧师声音太大”，“今天牧师的证道有气无力”，“神的话语不够深入”，“教会变得太大”抱怨者认为抱怨是一种洞察力。它不是，而且它是会散播的剧毒。以弗所书5:4“淫词、妄语，和戏笑的话都不相宜；总要说感谢的话。”献上感谢，让主改变你的焦点，并更新你的心思意念。

第三，感谢的心使神喜悦并释放祂的祝福。当我们遵守神的命令尊荣牧师和领袖，神圣的对齐就会发生，也打开门继续地祝福我们的生命。

我期盼看到我们感恩的心改变我们内心和教会的氛围。

下面是一些你能尊荣和感谢牧师的方法。

为他们祷告

“弟兄们，我……劝你们与我一同竭力，为我祈求神。”——罗马书15:30

你能给予牧师最大的支持是祷告。连保罗也呼吁教会为他祷告使他能继续做一个有效的领袖。

你能在这几个方面为牧师代祷。

- 供应一切所需
- 稳固的家庭关系
- 优质的休息和良好的健康
- 在事工上有智慧和洞察力

写鼓励的话语

“我听见我的儿女们按真理而行，我的喜乐就没有比这个大的。”——约翰三书1:4

正如农夫必须耐心地等待庄稼结果，牧师必须等待数周、数月、甚至数年以看到会友的成长。

不要让牧师猜测他们的事工是否有果效。你可以写一张鼓励的字条让他们知道他们如何影响你的生命。为着他们在“非办公时间”的服事感谢他们。与他们分享特定的事件，让他们知道他们如何帮助你更像耶稣了。你能肯定他们的努力不是枉然的！

与他们同工

“各人要照所得的恩赐彼此服事，作神百般恩赐的好管家。”——彼得前书4:10

使教会运作的责任不单落在牧师的肩上。我们都有技艺、才能和恩赐，能够建造耶稣的肢体。

不论你刚开始服事，或是个平信徒领袖，你都能与你的牧师在聚会、祷告会和关怀小组携手创造一个活跃的氛围。如果你看到问题，不要抱怨，一起来解决它！

效法他们的信心

“你们要记住从前带领你们、把上帝的道传给你们的人，留心观察他们一生如何行事为人，效法他们的信心。”——希伯来书13:7

牧师也是人，和我们任何人一样并不完美。他们有真实的挣扎，而我们可以让他们的生命激励我们跟随耶稣，活出顺服和执行祂命令的生命。

学习他们的榜样。学习他们如何效法耶稣。

顺服他们

“你们要依从那些引导你们的，且要顺服；因他们为你们的灵魂时刻警醒，好像那将来交账的人。你们要使他们交的时候有快乐，不致忧愁；若忧愁就与你们无益了。”——希伯来书13:17

如果凡事都能有所认同就好了，可是在现实生活中这不常发生。人总会有不同的观点和看法。要知道领袖的职分是神委任的。你能选择以尊荣神和领导的方式做出反应。

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Avoiding Pastors' Burnout

By Dr Wayne Clark, Senior Pastor of First Assembly of God, San Antonio, Texas, USA

"Pastors' Burnout" seems to be the reason many pastors left the ministry. Dr Clark, who has been in the ministry for 49 years, since 1968, shares his insights on how to manage it.

Stress and burnout come from several sources. It's not always just the weight, responsibilities and demands of ministry. Financial stress, family issues, marital tension, etc., can all contribute. The lack of good, healthy boundaries can give rise to unpleasant circumstances that steal time, resources and energy. Unbiblical and unrealistic expectation of those we minister to can also cause our plate to fill to unreasonable proportions. Sometimes we just need the divine wisdom to know when to say no!

My father was an evangelist when I was born. When I turned five, he became a pastor. I have known nothing but the ministry all my life. I watched my parents go through the horrific pain of betrayal and very cruel and contrived false accusation. I saw the weeping and pain.

My wife, Judy, and I and our four children, went through something very similar. I was so grateful for the example of my parents and how they managed through tough times and did not abandon their sacred call, when it was so tempting to do so! We went through a time where our family motto was "we will get better, not bitter". The dagger of betrayal goes deep and the wounds, can be life-threatening to one's ministry.

Wounds can and do heal. There are some in ministry who have become more comfortable keeping their wounds than forgiving and allowing God's provision to heal. Without the wounds, their excuse for their behavior is removed.

But burnout comes more often from overwhelming schedules, carrying way too much responsibility and short nights followed by long days. Not taking time for personal refreshing, physically, mentally, relationally, emotionally, and of course spiritually. Also, as mentioned, sometimes what people expect from us and the tensions that follow when they are not met can feel like a pressure cooker.

Here are a few statistics from "expastors.com" that are gripping and very sobering to say the least! I have not substantiated them, but from everything I have read and heard on the subject, they are very representative of the facts. (All are US statistics, but are valid issues in most cultures for ministers) Here is what they claim:

Most pastors are overworked. 70% feel grossly underpaid. 90% feel they are unprepared. Many pastors struggle with depression and discouragement. 80% of pastors say their families are negatively impacted. 80% of spouses feel the

pastor is overworked and feel left out and under-appreciated by church members. Pastors are lonely! 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend. 40% report serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.

Then this: 50% of the ministers starting out will not last 5 years. 1 out of every 10 ministers will actually retire as a minister in some form. 4,000 new churches begin each year while 7,000 churches close.

I think we should add to the list the pressure to perform! That church is growing, why is yours not growing?

Personally, while experiencing deep pain and wounds, the ministry has brought far more joy and pleasure than suffering, and is, in my opinion, the greatest privilege one could have on this earth!

So, how do we avoid burnout? While not by any means a full and exhaustive list, in 48 years of ministry, here are a few primary things I feel God's Word, coupled with experience, has revealed about avoiding ministry burnout!

1. Nothing can ever replace a consistent devotional life! Let time in God's Word and prayer slip and everything becomes more vulnerable!
2. Keep marriage and family where God has placed it. Nothing is more valuable and precious than your family! Do not let the ministry steal that priority! Yes, submitting to the call into the ministry will take you down a road that will require sacrifice. Just do not fall into the trap that makes your family the sacrifice!
3. Equip God's people! High on our biblical mandates is "making disciples", equipping believers for the work of the ministry. Much of what pastors do should be done by others in the church. Train them, trust them and let them lead and serve! This must be intentional on the part of the pastor. As yes, in some degree, systematic! There must be a process. People in the church need to understand that process. The problem can be not embracing what the Word truly teaches.

Ephesians 4:11-12 – And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," NKJV.

The problem with this version is the three times the word "for" is used in verse 12. The first time "for" is used, the Greek word "pros" is used. However, the second and third times, the Greek word "eis" is used, and it would be more accurate to interpret it as "unto" rather than "for". The verse actually says:

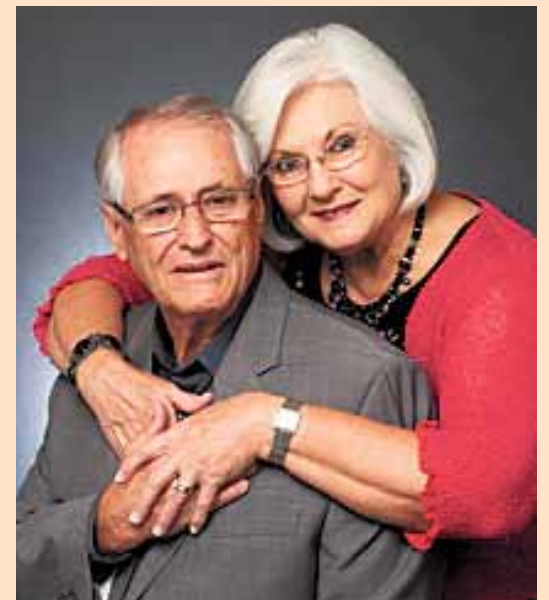
"Jesus gives to the church Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers for the purpose of equipping God's people so they can accomplish doing the work of the ministry which will lead to the building up and maturation of the Body of Christ." (So that the pastor is not overburdened and overworked and does not burn out!)

4. As co-laborers in ministry, we should struggle against competitiveness, be supportive, care for one another and do what the apostle Paul told us to do: "Build each other up!"

My wife and I had arrived in Greenville, a small town in Ohio. Our first church, First Assembly of God (AG), Greenville, had 30 people, when they were all there. We were 25 miles away from any other AG church and felt isolated. Our salary was \$100 per week. The church did grow, but Judy and I were doing everything. We also had two daughters, a newborn and a two-year-old. My hours were 60 to 70 per week!

One Sunday we had a family of four visit. I met them at the door and asked how they came to hear about our church. I will never forget their response.

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Dr R Wayne Clark has served as Senior Pastor of First Assembly of God, San Antonio, Texas for 21 years. He has planted eight new churches from congregations he has pastored. He has traveled to 62 countries for ministry. His ministry is marked by discipleship and missions. He has pastored churches from 30 to 2,000 people. Married to Judy for 46 years, he has four children, 14 grandchildren and one great-grandson! Dr Clark also enjoys golf and fishing!

Challenges in My Journey as a Pastor

By Rev Dr Loh Hung Chey, itinerant minister

Being a pastor is not a bed of roses. Rev Loh shares these challenges in his journey as a minister for over 20 years.

I came to the Lord in December 1981 and never expected that I would end up being a pastor. It was only about 1985 that I started to feel the call into full-time ministry. I resisted the Lord, as I was uncertain about what the future as a pastor would hold. There was fear about finances and time commitment as our two sons were young then. It was not until a few years later, after I had made adequate preparations, that I joined Trinity Christian Centre in June 1989 as a full-time staff.

To bridge the gap between the salary I was drawing in my last secular job and that of a church staff, I taught in the Singapore Institute of Management in the evening hours as well as conducted management courses for various organizations.

The money that I brought in was enough to fulfil the financial needs of the family, but I found that I had to balance my time in being a husband, father, pastor and lecturer. I kept this balance for a few years. As time went on, I felt more alienated from the secular world as I was losing touch with it. I knew that I could not continue to be a management lecturer and trainer. It was then that I felt God telling me to trust Him. I did and He honored His word to look after our needs. We have never felt lack in our finances ever since.

Answering the call into full-time ministry is almost like the journey Abraham took with God. Hebrews 11:8 states: *"By faith, Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going"*.

After I agreed with God that I would leave the secular world to serve him in ministry, I went to see my Senior Pastor, Rev Dr Naomi Dowdy. She asked me, "What do you think God is calling you to?" I had no idea. All I knew was that He had called. I was then asked to serve in administration.

After a few months, it was apparent to both my pastor and myself that God had not called me to this task. I was then asked to serve as a pastor looking after

the members staying in the East side of Singapore. Though the task was interesting, I knew that this was not the final stop for me in my ministerial journey.

In early 1996, I felt God asking me to leave Trinity Christian Centre to plant a new church. I consulted with my pastor and we arranged a plan for my smooth transition to the new place that God had for me. On the final day before I left Pastor Dowdy's office, she asked whether I remembered an incident that took place in church service several years back. She was preaching then. Mid-way through her sermon, she suddenly stopped, turned in my direction and said, "There is a person in secular management work sitting in this direction – God is calling you into full-time ministry and he wants you to answer the call." Did I remember this? It was as crystal clear to me. She said, "I knew, then, that God was calling you. Now, go with my blessings and fulfill what God wants to do through you."

It has been 21 years since. It had been a time of joy as well as pain as I labored in what God was calling me to. This, however, was still not the final stop in the journey. After retiring from both being the Principal of the Assemblies of God Bible College and Senior Pastor of The Harvest Force, I am now visiting colleges and churches in various countries teaching and preaching.

Is this the final stop? I think so, but we can never tell. Years ago, I never thought that I would be a pastor, plant a church, be a principal of a Bible college or be traveling the world ministering. As servants of the Lord we just have to walk the path of faith that Abraham did – go forth to a land that we know not.

The journey as a pastor is one of faith. We will have moments of joy where we will feel wonderful about the call. But there are also moments where we will face the pits and be in the darkness of the valleys.

There may be times where we experience a lack of finance or support from our church members in doing what God has called us to. We have to resolve conflicts between members, as well as handle difficult people and situations. Sometimes we will be criticized for some of our actions or decisions. Often, we will be wrongly interpreted for our good intentions.

I have gone through such moments and what keeps

me going is the knowledge that God can be trusted. Psalm 1:6 says, *"For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction"*. So long as we are true to our calling and seek to do things right, we can have the confidence that God will continue to lead us into the Promised Land.



Rev Dr Loh Hung Chey is the Founding Pastor of The Harvest Force. He stepped down from the post as Senior Pastor of the church at the end of 2015. He was the Principal of the Assemblies of God Bible College until he retired from the post at the end of 2012. He still teaches at the College but has availed himself to colleges throughout the world. He also ministers in churches in various countries on a regular basis and has also taught in colleges in many of these nations.

Passionate about church dynamics especially in realigning the focus of churches to God's purpose for the church, he has successfully helped churches in this aspect. He is also the national partner for Natural Church Development International. Dr Loh has served on the Executive Committee of the Assemblies of God of Singapore and the boards of Asia Pacific Theological Association, Teen Challenge Singapore and the Singapore Centre for Evangelism and Missions.

He is the author of "Transforming into Christlikeness" and "Returning to God's Original Intent". These books are about discipleship and are being used by cell groups in various churches as part of their discipleship systems.

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"Oh, we have been attending Northwest Assembly (a church of about 1,200) and our pastor told us about you and the church and encouraged us to give it a try since it was 30 miles closer to where we live." They became such a support. Mature believers, they started to take some of our heavy responsibilities.

The act of the other pastor encouraged us too. I called him to thank him. He invited me to speak at his men's breakfast. I had a friend and confidant I could discuss our needs and issues with. We could have burned out very quickly.

We began to nurture new believers and disciple

others. Soon people were serving in most of the places we were taking care of ourselves initially. Greenville and the ministry, became a joy!

Oh, there were still problems, but, we had: People serving; Time for family; Supportive friends; Discipleship in place!

Challenges in My Journey as a Pastor

By Pastor Ronald Yow, Grace AG

A pastor faces 'external' and 'internal' challenges. Pastor Yow, who became a pastor 18 years ago, helps us understand the issues a pastor encounters.

I started my journey as a pastor in June 1999. This journey was filled with challenges of different sizes. These challenges can be categorized into two categories - external and internal. External challenges are the obvious. These "tip of the iceberg" challenges may include having to deal with difficult members of the congregation, making difficult decisions, managing non-performing staff and the list goes on. Internal challenges are different. They are hidden from the public eyes and ears. These are inner struggles that are not easily articulated, understood and accepted.

The challenges I'm about to share are my personal struggles. I will attempt to be honest and candid in penning them down in hope that you get a glimpse of the struggles of a pastor's inner world.

Balancing Family and Ministry

Balancing family and ministry is a challenge in pastoral ministry. The demands of ministry take the pastor away from the family.

Before stepping into full-time pastoral ministry, a typical weekend would be spent with family and friends. Public holidays were reserved for family holidays and occasionally church events. Weekday nights were filled with family conversations and bonding activities. This changed when I stepped into pastoral ministry. Now, weekends are spent in church, with church members, on church events and activities and weekday nights (averaging 2 to 3 nights) are occupied with ministry activities. When I manage to find the time to spend with my family, I realized I lack the mental and emotional energy to connect meaningfully with them. The demands of ministry drained me both emotionally and mentally. As a result, I became an absent husband and father.

Being an absent husband and father bred disappointment and guilt. On good days, these were well-managed. On bad days, they weighed me down and ministry became a challenge. My self-esteem was affected for "failing" my role and responsibility in the family. I also felt hypocritical preaching, teaching,

instructing and counseling fathers to fulfill their role in the family while I am struggling to do that myself. It was a real struggle!

I have learnt to manage and balance better through the years. The family has also learnt to adjust and adapt to the demands of the ministry. However, that did not eradicate the sense of guilt and disappointment. I still struggle, but at a better disposition than before. I came to realize that this struggle may not be all bad. For one, it causes me to constantly evaluate my balancing act, ensuring that I have given sufficient time, energy and presence to my family. It keeps me on my toes.

Connecting with a Soul-Enriching Community

Another challenge that I face is finding a soul-enriching community within the church.

Someone said, "The cost of leading meant loneliness and few friends." Do you agree? Although the pastoral ministry revolves around people, pastors can be lonely people. In my journey, I found this to be true. Let me ask you this question, "Who can a church member share his problems and struggles with without being judged, criticized or treated different in church?"

I bet the answer you are thinking right now is "The Pastor." Allow me to ask the same question but this time, change the subject, "Who can a **pastor**, share his problems and struggles with without being judged, criticized or treated differently in church?" I bet the answer did not come so readily.

When I was a regular church member, I was connected to a cell group where I can be vulnerable. Sharing between members was honest and open. After stepping into the pastoral role, this became a challenge. I had to be wise in what I share, the depth of my sharing and to whom I share with in the church. These concerns are not keys to building soul-enriching relationships. So, relationships in church became more superficial than soul-enriching for me.

My soul cries out for a soul-enriching community of mature believers (not necessarily pastors) who enable me to be as I have never been before. In this community, I'm given permission to be real, to be me. I can be vulnerable. People are interested in my personhood and not my position. They want to know me as Ronald and not Pastor Ronald.

I can be vulnerable, sharing my struggles (both personal and ministry) freely. I can bear my soul, without the fear of being judged, criticized or treated differently. While I'm given the permission to speak truthfully, the community is also given permission to speak truthfully (in love) to me. And I become a better person because of this community.

Lacking such a community in my life left me with a growing sense of loneliness. But, we serve a God who cares for us. By His grace, I was recently connected to such a community, comprising of mature believers from different walks of life and church denominations. My soul has been enriched by this community.

I've just shared the top two challenges and struggles I face as a pastor. As I reflected on what I had penned down, I made this conclusion – Challenges will continue to fill my journey as a pastor but God's grace is sufficient for me, for His power is made perfect in my weakness!



Ronald is in-charge of and oversees GII services, GII GRACE Communities and Family Life @Grace ministries. He oversees the planning of Grace Groups (GG) curriculum of the GRACE Communities. He has spoken at multiple camps and conferences in Singapore and South East Asia. Ronald is married to Jean and they have two beautiful daughters, Carissa and Annabel.

Honoring and Respecting Our Pastors

By Andry Lie, Trinity Christian Centre

How can we honor and respect our pastors who are our spiritual leaders? Andry, a lay leader, share his thoughts.

Pastors are men and women who have responded to the call of God to serve the community of believers. The office of a pastor is not easy. They may receive unfair criticism with many unkind words. It is time to look at them as our brothers and sisters who are serving the Lord. It is to our benefit that they do well in their ministry to encourage and guide us. We can view our pastors as fellow travelers on this journey to be closer to the Lord. Then we can begin to honor and respect them as the Lord's servants placed over our lives.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 exhorts us to appreciate and love them.

"And now, friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love." (The Message).

I have heard that pastors have been hard on ministry team members; demanding "results" in ministry. Before we are quick to rebuff them with unkind words, perhaps we should try to see it from their perspective. The pastor's people skills may not be polished but it is their intention to spur us along. The pastor is there to encourage success in our ministry. This should not put us off in ministry but an opportunity to pray for the ministry, the pastor and team members. We should honor and respect the pastor who works hard to encourage us.

The pastor has the responsibility to teach and make sure that the right teaching is delivered so that we remain faithful and obedient to the Lord (2 Peter

3:17). Not many have the privilege to learn the principles and method of interpreting scriptures. We should then appreciate the pastors who would devote their time in preparing sermons that explain the Bible and help us apply the godly principles to our life. There are times that the sermon comes to us as "boring" and we respond with a "snore". This should not be our response. It is an opportunity to pray for the pastor and the congregation to hear from God. Remember that it is only by His grace that we hear Him. Let us then check our posture and humbly submit. It is when we can appreciate our pastor's heart that we can overwhelm them with love.

We can show our appreciation by praying for our pastors and their ministry. The work of a pastor can be very challenging in the face of the prevailing worldviews. We can pray with our pastors for the biblical worldview to permeate our lives. When we live godly lives, our pastors can smile as it is a reflection of their prayers and effort to spur us toward God. The world is filled with temptations and unless we comprehend the biblical worldview, we would see more grey areas in our decision and perspectives. God is good in providing us with men and women who would show us the way to please our God. It is a high calling to be a living example; to live a life that pleases God. We thank God for their response to this call of God.

We can also show our appreciation by submitting to their direction. Hebrews 13:17 tells us to obey our spiritual leaders as they are accountable to God.

"Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit." (NLT)

We respect our pastors because of the God-given authority; regardless of the age, experience and

education. Pastors do not have this authority because they are perfect or have "arrived" but because they have a duty to perform. A young pastor may struggle and hence we read Paul's encouragement to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12. It would be to our benefit to give our pastors some room to develop their gifting and respond fully to their call. Let us then obey our spiritual leaders so that they will minister with joy. We can partner in this journey to encourage the pastors and receive their encouragement as we do the ministry.

In closing, I would like to thank every pastor who has responded to the call to serve the Lord in the local church. As the congregation looks to them as a living example of godly living, I pray for an extra portion of His grace to be upon them that will enable them to fulfill the call and humbly take up the mantle of leadership. Pastors, lead the church with the God-given authority that rests on you.



Andry is 55 this year and works as a foodservice consultant. He has been serving in the church as a lay leader for 30 over years.

...Continued from pg 11

开诚布公地谈论彼此的不同，澄清误会和听听他们对你的心意很重要。最终，要相信你的牧师愿意使你得到在主里最好的，并选择同心合一，与神赐教会的旨意对齐。

使用他们爱的言语

"那善于管理教会的长老，当以为配受加倍的敬奉；那劳苦传道教导的人，更当如此。" — 提摩太前书5:17

你能通过向牧师显示你的关爱来尊荣他们。如果你住在他们附近，你能在聚会后载他们回家。如果他们的家庭喜欢看电影，你能送电影票祝福他们。

了解他们爱的言语。找出他们的需要。然后，奢华地爱。

慷慨祝福

"好施舍的，必得丰裕；滋润人的，必得滋润。" — 箴言11:25

不论他们爱的言语是什么，你都能够请牧师去吃一顿，以礼物祝福他们！你可考虑简单的礼物（书局或餐馆的礼券）、个人化的礼物（一双新鞋、一件新大衣或裙子）、豪华的礼物（全付费的旅行或本地旅游景点门票）或者实际的礼物（平板电脑、咖啡胶囊、他所喜欢的运动器材）。

关爱他们的家庭

"你们既是神的选民，圣洁蒙爱的人，就要存怜悯、恩慈、谦虚、温柔、忍耐的心。……总要彼此包容，彼此饶恕；主怎样饶恕了你们，你们也要怎样饶恕人。" — 歌罗西书 3:12-13

爱屋及乌，你能通过爱牧师最亲的人来尊荣牧师。

每个家庭都有它自己的挣扎，包括牧师的家族。不要期望他们比你自己的家庭完美。消除不切实际的期待并时常恩待牧师的配偶和孩子。

对教会有好的评价

"但愿赐忍耐安慰的神叫你们彼此同心，效法基督耶稣，一心一口荣耀神 — 我们主耶稣基督的父！" — 罗马书 15:5-6

作为神职人员，没有什么比听到会友说教会的坏话更难过。记得基督的肢体是由不完美的人组成的。你希望怎样被人恩待？请你同样向人施予这样的恩待吧！

与其抱怨和指责，比较和批判，对于基督的新妇我们应该说好话。高举她的优点、活出她的价值观，并拥抱神给予她的异象。

TOGETHERNESS - AG CHURCHES

Momentum Camp

By Valerie Ng, Moriah AG

Moriah's biennial Church Camp, held at Pullman Bangsar Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, June 14-18, 2017 was a much-needed spiritual time of bonding with God and the church.

We were blessed to have Dr Wayne Clark, and his wife, Judy, with us this year. What God had to tell us through Dr Wayne had evidently moved and stirred something in our campers.



Our guest speaker, Dr Clark

Besides bonding with God, some of our campers also had the opportunity to prepare and present their gifts to Jesus at the final night's themed dinner.

Back refreshed and re-ignited, some of our campers share their testimonies on why you should jump at the chance to join your Church Camp.

1. God wants you there

"I was uncertain initially as to whether I should go since my parents couldn't make it and I was worried about going overseas on my own. I also had some financial concerns.

Then, my friend Janine told me what Uncle Pang Hung had shared with the church. He talked about how God, our Father was preparing everything in hope that we, His children, would be able to go on a trip with Him. I was still feeling unsure, until Janine brought up rooming together because her mum, Auntie Vivian, had offered to find another roommate. This might have been a small gesture on their part, but to me it was like a miracle! This burden, that only God knew, was lifted. It was quite amazing how God opened a door before I had approached anyone. And before I had even come to a decision, Auntie Vivian had already found a new roommate!

It really felt like God was calling me to spend time with Him. I'd been reading a book about living a life honoring to God but I didn't really know how to kick-start living it. I had a feeling God was going to reveal



One big family gathers for a memorable picture

Himself to me through the camp and that it would be a turning point in my walk with God." – **Abbi Chow**

"It is a miracle for me to be able to attend church camp. Currently serving in the army, it is already tough securing leave due to my packed schedule and the different responsibilities entrusted to me. Notification of an important meeting a week before the camp only made things worse since it was a clash of dates, meaning going may not be possible at all.

Even though I was worried, I knew that if God wanted me at this camp, He would make a way! So I prayed a simple prayer. That same week, I was informed the meeting was postponed. Before church camp had even started, God had already taught me an important lesson. In Mark 10:27 (NLT) - "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God". – **Andre Tan**

2. You need that rest

"The four days of consecutive worship and learning of the Word was simply a great time of nourishment and rejuvenation to our spirit, soul and mind." – **June Ong**



Having a fruitful group discussion

"Camp wasn't too heavy or cramped but stretched to an affordable period for the inner man to find time to rest and build up at the same time." – **Samuel Gan**

3. God knows what you need

"Sermon topics were simple yet powerful reminders on the importance of effective communication channels. Indeed, a breakdown in communication lines results in misunderstandings and strains human relationships. Perseverance, patience and humility are also integral." – **Joanna Poh**

"God has taught me so much from this year's Church Camp and through it, God has moved me in a way, telling me that I can trust Him because He loves me. And now everyday, I'm learning to trust Him more and more because He loves me and I love Him too." – **Jeremiah Ching**

"I didn't expect much out of this camp, was only hoping to make more friends and get to interact with the church members. However, after hearing the sermons, I felt that God was talking to me as the pastor talked about family and love. I was able to relate to his sermons and felt like God was giving me tips and tricks." – **Josiah Kwok**



Worshipping together

“New Heart” (新心) Church Camp

By Pastor Maggie Kuek, Great Shepherd AG

Photo credit: Great Shepherd AG

Great Shepherd AG had a powerful and meaningful church camp in June which saw lives touched by God.

Our church camp is a meaningful time where our members can escape the hustle and bustle of their daily routines and gather for a specific time of spiritual bonding. This year's Church Camp was held from June 10-13, 2017 at The Straits & Suites Hotel in Malacca.

The theme for this year's camp is “New Heart” (新心). We had an overwhelming response from our members who had enthusiastically enrolled themselves for this camp.

Our Senior Pastor, Rev Paul Tan, shared that there is a need for every Christian to rethink their “heart” condition. We had the privilege of having sought-after speaker, Rev John Ng from Kuala Lumpur, to be our camp's guest speaker. Rev John is well-known for his healing ministries in many parts of the world, including the UK, USA, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sabah, Indonesia and Singapore.



Church camp group picture



Rev John Ng and our Senior Pastor, Rev Paul Tan

Rev John shared several truths from the Bible on the importance of preserving our heart to be pure and consecrated to the Lord. His preaching was filled with profound insights of God's Word and “holy humor”.

His sharing brought about a spiritual awakening in all of us and we gained a greater understanding to the importance of receiving a “New Heart” from the Lord.

Several members received healings from stiff necks, crooked spines, backaches, heart issues and other ailments. One sister, who had injured her foot from a serious fall, had to be in a wheelchair. During the service, that sister received an instant healing and could walk normally instead of limping. She testified that many months of pain and discomfort had instantly disappeared! She shared that after the healing session, she could even join her family members for shopping during the camp's afternoon break time.

One of the youths testified that when he saw how the Lord had delivered a teenager from the bondage of listening to heavy metal music, he realized that he had been in bondage of listening to secular music. This habit affected his spiritual cravings for God's Word. As such, he has decided to devote more time to listening to more worship songs and music after the camp.

This spiritual empowerment through the camp enabled us to continue to serve the Lord with deeper commitment and renewed joy and strength. All in all, we had a wonderful time of rededicating our lives to the Lord through this camp. We also thank God for the good weather and journey mercy before and after the trip. To God be the Glory!



Rev John ministering to the people at the camp



Meals fellowship time

TOGETHERNESS - AG CHURCHES

Grace Christian Centre's Church Dedication

By Rev Tay Hey Tong, Grace Christian Centre

The goodness of God and His wonderful provisions brought us together in triumphant celebration.

On June 24, 2017, Rev Simon Ang, our newly elected Assistant General Superintendent, Assemblies of God of Singapore, preached on loving God's house passionately – with a faithful and fervent spirit, as well as a heart of unwavering devotion, service and zeal. Thereafter, he dedicated Grace Christian Centre to the Lord. With every declaration that he made, the congregation responding in unison, acknowledging God's goodness, His greatness and dedicating themselves to Him:

Pastor:

"To the glory of God the Father, who called us by His grace,

To the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us,

To the works of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us for life and ministry."

Congregation:

"We dedicate this place."

Pastor:

"For the deliverance of the oppressed and the afflicted,

For strengthening the weak and encouraging the fearful,
For the healing of the total person, spirit, mind and body."

Congregation:

"We dedicate this place."

Pastor:

"For the strengthening of marriage and family,
For teaching, encouraging and guiding our children,
For maturing and equipping of God's people for works of service."



Dedication service



Our church with our guest speaker, Rev Simon Ang

Congregation:

"We dedicate this place."

Pastor:

"For the fulfillment of the Great Commission, to make disciples of all nations,
For obedience to the Great Commandment to love the Lord our God and to love our neighbor,
For dependence on the Holy Spirit as our Counselor and Guide."

Congregation:

"We dedicate this place."

Everyone:

"As God's elect, strangers in the world, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,
Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and for obedience to Jesus Christ,

We dedicate ourselves, our fortunes, our families to the high and holy calling of God until that final day when the kingdom of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be the honor and glory forever and ever, Amen!"

After a heartfelt and faith-filled dedication, church members Jun Hui and Hao Nan testified that they both took this step of faith to get water baptized as they wanted to obey God by walking righteously. Then, we celebrated the birthdays for six brothers and sisters, who were born in the month of June.

We then proceeded to the 10th floor roof-top terrace for a group photograph, followed by the water baptism ceremony of Jun Hui and Hao Nan in the pool. Guests and members then proceeded to enjoy dinner and fellowship at the pavilions, while the youths had a fun time playing Captain's Ball in the pool.

It was indeed a most memorable and eventful day attended by close to 70 people, members and guests included, praising, thanking and celebrating God's faithful provision of this wonderful place of worship approved by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore.

All glory and praise be unto Jesus, our Lord!



Our candidates baptized by our Senior Pastor



Youths after a game of Captain's Ball

Forge Forward - IGNYTE Games Day

By Brandon Kit, Trinity Christian Centre

Photo credit: Trinity Christian Centre

A time of bonding, learning and hearing the Word of God through Forge Forward Games Day.

In this *Decade of Expansion*, the youth ministry is intent on expanding into new territories! In this spirit, IGNYTE organized its first-ever play day, *Forge Forward*, on June 26, 2017 at Saint Andrew's Junior College.

Forge Forward was a time to go big. Station games were not enough; we were going to have our own obstacle course! With just two months to plan, design, and build, the task at hand was daunting. Though nervous, the event committee was filled with *Audacious Fervor*, praying and believing that all things are possible with God.

On the morning of *Forge Forward*, 335 IGNYTERs, 45 adult leaders and 159 'oikos' (pre-believing loved ones) flooded Saint Andrew's for fun and games. The completed obstacle course was a marvel to behold. Running through the school, it featured four painted high walls, a Jacob's ladder, a suspension bridge, and several station games.



Let's do a group cheer as we battle forward

The competitive side of our IGNYTE leaders and pastors came out in full force as they participated in the relay race. Fueled by our cheers, they dashed head-to-head against the youth towards the finish line.

Games were not the only thing to look forward to at Forge Forward. As the aroma of brownies and hot dogs filled the air, stomachs rumbled and legs bolted



Do a quick toss and swift run



No obstacles is too difficult for us

to the food stations, hungry for some fuel.

No IGNYTE event would be complete without a time of praise and worship. IGNYTE's talents were on display as Brother Boaz and Sister Esther, along with members of the worship team, led everyone in a time of praise and worship. Our IGNYTE Youth Pastor, Pastor Gary Chia ended the event with a powerful message, reminding us to *forge forward* with confidence, courage, and unity.

"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."
– Philippians 3:13-14

Forge Forward was a time for our youth to strengthen bonds within and across carecells. From secondary students to those serving in National Service, it was encouraging to see the different zones working together and motivating one another. Truly, as one big IGNYTE family, we will continue to *forge forward* together, excited to see what God has in store for us as we expand into even more territories!

*"As part of the organizing committee, we were the first at the event and the last to leave. I am so thankful that God provided us with endurance and energy to facilitate each segment. When I got feedback that the games were awesome and saw how our oikos were moved by the event, it encouraged me to see people enjoying themselves. Through *Forge Forward*, God revealed so much about who He is. When we prayed for good weather, God held off the rain until the event was over. It was a reminder that He was also in control of every situation in my life. He's the Almighty God and his faithfulness never fails."* – Sean Lee, 18

*"Forge Forward was meaningful because I got to know the people inside and outside my zone. The games were nostalgic, bringing up Bible truths I learned when I was younger. They taught me about teamwork, determination, and enjoying good things together with others. More importantly, the games reminded me about getting over fears and *forging forward* together as one. I'm thankful for the huge amount of effort that made this event possible and for God's grace that granted us a good weather and an enjoyable day!"* – Evangeline Goh, 14



Crossing over is not an issue when I give my all



Sharing a powerful song to lift up all hearts

TRANSFORMATION

God is My Healer

By Jenny Poh, Trinity Christian Centre

Jenny Poh shares how her carecell walked her through her struggle with cancer and God's miraculous healing.

2015 was a year of challenges to my physical body.

In April, I sprained an ankle while walking down the street.

In May, I slipped on a slippery floor and re-sprained the ankle.

In June, I tore a shoulder tendon while cleaning my room.

In July, an x-ray showed that I had dislocated my neck in the L5/L6 region.

In October, I went for operations to repair a torn tendon and remove a bone spur in my shoulder.

What a year it was!

A few weeks after the surgery, I experienced very bad stomach pain. After consulting a general practitioner, I was immediately told to go to the hospital. A gynecologist found a tumor in my ovary 25 centimeters long – I had Stage 3B ovarian cancer. Surgery was needed to prevent the tumor from rupturing and spreading throughout my body. My husband, sons, and I were devastated. I had not even recovered from the last surgery. Now, we had to battle cancer.

When the doctor started asking about my family history, it brought back memories of a childhood without a mother. She died of heart failure when I was 10. I didn't want my sons (16 and 18 then) to suffer the same fate.

Though the urgency and bleakness of the situation shook our family, I still felt peace – a sense that my God was with me. My pastor and carecell members visited and prayed with me daily. With their encouragement, my focus shifted from anxiety about the upcoming surgery to the promise that God was my healer. I was assured that He was with me.

After more than five hours in the operating theatre, the doctors informed my waiting family that the surgery had been a success. Though the tumor was completely removed, I had to undergo weekly chemotherapy sessions and booster jabs for the next six months. The chemotherapy sessions made me nauseous. I was in so much pain and discomfort. My veins had become so narrow that nurses had trouble administering the booster jabs.

My carecell really supported and encouraged me during this season, setting up a roster so that



Jenny (centre) with her carecell

someone was always there to take me to the hospital and fellowship over lunch. For 21 days, they also fasted and prayed, entreating the Lord about my condition. Prayers and impressions were constantly sent over the group chat, encouraging me through this ordeal.

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." – Isaiah 41:10

I held on Isaiah 41:10 during this season. Despite the nausea and discomfort, I rejected the anti-nausea medication, depending on God to sustain me. When negativity plagued me during the night, I declared Jesus' name over my life and rejected those thoughts.

I used the chemotherapy sessions as opportunities to share the Gospel, building relationships with other patients and praying for them. One man who had been undergoing chemotherapy for ten years was greatly encouraged when I shared about our God who heals.

When I finally completed chemotherapy six months later, in May 2016, I was hopeful that the cancer was gone. Instead, the CT PET scan found another tumor in my right thyroid gland.

"God, what is happening?" I cried out to Him, "Could things get any worse for me?"

My carecell reacted differently, immediately fasted and prayed for another seven days. The group chat filled with prayers and verses to encourage me. During my quiet time, God told me to have faith in Him – He was going to use me as testimony of His power.

A biopsy in October 2016 confirmed that the tumor in my right thyroid gland was benign. Other tests

showed no traces of cancer. In January 2017, additional scans confirmed that the cancer was gone. I have been healed by Him!

Through this ordeal, I saw my sons grow stronger in the Lord, their faith maturing with every prayer they declared over me. Their IGNYTE leaders played a big part in their growth, walking with them and speaking words of encouragement during that difficult time.

Cancer has also shown me the importance of being part of a spiritual family. I am so thankful for their *Incredible Unity*, standing strong in the Lord with me. Their acts of service and words of encouragement helped me place my hope in Christ. I constantly encourage people to join a carecell so they, too, can experience God's love in action.

Today, I grasp every opportunity to share my journey of healing. I am privileged to be a testimony of His grace and power.

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