

# METHODISM

AND THE HISTORY OF  
CHRIST METHODIST CHURCH

## FOREWORD

The hymn “We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations” came to mind when we started working on this project to put into pictures the origins of Methodism in England, the Methodist movement in Singapore, as well as the humble beginnings of Christ Methodist Church (CMC).

Our purpose is threefold: To remember our history; to honour God’s amazing love and faithfulness throughout the generations; and to spur those who have chosen to be part of CMC to be “Passionate for God, Loving the Community”. Beginning with the story of John Wesley till the establishment of CMC 91 years ago, the graphic novel that you hold in your hand weaves together a tapestry of faith journeys across generations. Each stitch of the tapestry was made with resilience, faithfulness and obedience. It reminds us that God’s people have never shied away from tough times because we know that He journeys with us and He is always present for us.

The birth of Christ Jesus is the reason for our existence. Christmas is more than a holiday or a festive season; it is a holy day celebrated in gratitude of God’s love for the world. God has given us a message of hope and offered us grace and salvation through His son, Jesus, who came as the Light of the world to seek the least, the last and the lost.

As a congregation, let us remember our First Love and our calling as the Church of Christ Jesus. Let us hear what the Spirit of God is saying to us today.

To God be all glory.

**Rev Dr Edwin Wong**  
Pastor-in-Charge  
Christ Methodist Church







Do you **know** the tale of the starfish?

You **must** have heard of it.



Of how one day a little boy **walked** along a beach.

And saw **thousands** of starfish washed up on the sand with **no way** of returning to the sea.



The little boy **began** to pick up a starfish.

And threw it **back** into the sea.



The boy was told that there were **hundreds** of starfish that ran the entire length of the beach.

It was an **impossible** task to save all of them.







But we all misunderstood the boy



For the boy's purpose was  
not to save the starfish...



But to save those who told him  
the task was impossible.











Fire is often a symbol of wrath and rage, destroying everything in its path



Was it bigotry? Anger or jealousy?  
**Nobody** really knew who did it or why the house was set on fire.



I COMMEND  
TO THEE LORD  
MY SON, JOHN.  
LET HIS SOUL  
FIND COMFORT  
IN THY SIGHT...





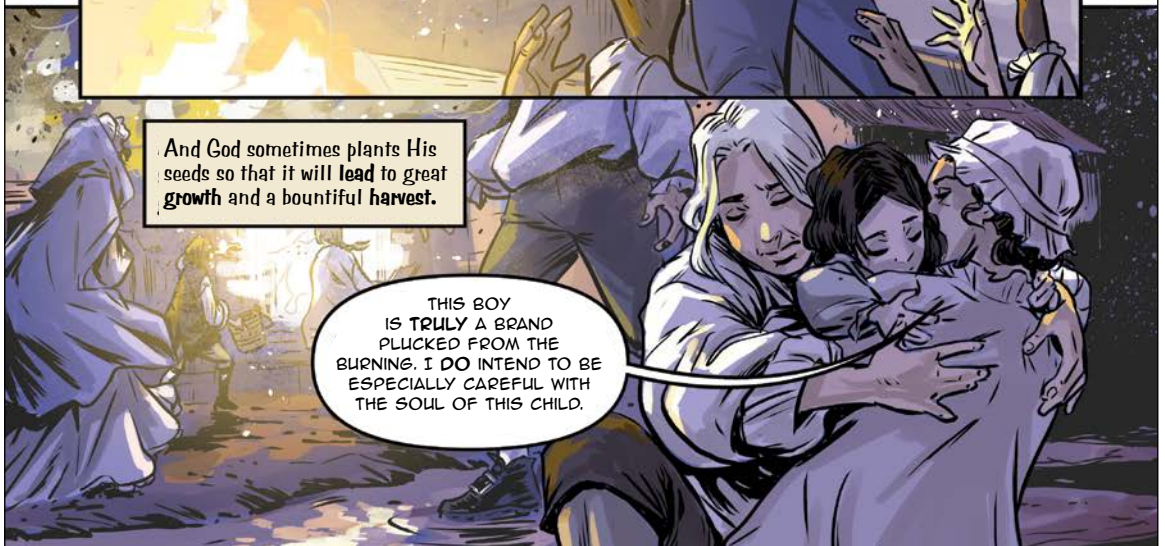
Yet, just as the chaff is burned up in this unquenchable fire, so **hope** remains.



For the burning soil remains the most fertile.

And God sometimes plants His seeds so that it will lead to great **growth** and a bountiful harvest.

THIS BOY IS TRULY A BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE BURNING. I DO INTEND TO BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL WITH THE SOUL OF THIS CHILD.





Year 1729

Oxford University.

John Wesley was on his way to a club meeting with his associates for prayer, Bible study, and pious discipline.

JOHN,  
DO YOU FANCY  
GOING FOR A HUNT?  
WEATHER'S BEEN CLEAR  
THE LAST FEW  
DAYS...

SORRY  
ROBERT, I  
HAVE A  
MEETING AT  
THE CLUB

WHAT? THE  
"HOLY CLUB" AGAIN?  
WHICH RULE IS IT THIS  
TIME THAT FORBIDS  
SOCIALISING IN THE  
AFTERNOON?

YOU DO  
MISUNDERSTAND...

YOU ARE A BUNCH OF BIBLE-MOTHS,  
ONLY LIVING BY "YOUR METHOD",  
YOU "METHODISTS"! GET A LIFE JOHN...  
PEOPLE ARE ALREADY TALKING...

JOHN, YOU MUST COME  
WITH ME TO THE JAIL. I WAS  
THERE ONLY LAST WEEK, AND  
ONE OF THEM TOLD ME THAT  
THERE IS A GREAT NEED  
FOR SALVATION AMONGST  
THOSE KEPT THERE.

ISN'T THAT A BIT  
UNORTHODOX? WHAT  
WOULD THE PEOPLE SAY?  
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT  
THIS WILLIAM?  
THIS ISN'T THE  
FIRST TIME...

I AM  
SURE OF THIS JOHN.  
IT WOULD DO THEM MUCH  
GOOD -- THEY JUST NEED A  
LISTENING EAR. AND THEY  
DESERVE TO HEAR ABOUT  
JESUS AS MUCH AS  
ANYONE ELSE.

Thus, was born the Prison Ministry.



Oxford Castle & Prison

In the dark of the night



IT'S YOU AGAIN,  
MISTER MORGAN...AND  
BROUGHT WITH YOU  
FRIENDS THIS TIME,  
I SEE...



MISTER MORGAN, YOU  
CAME...I THOUGHT I  
WOULD NEVER SEE  
YOU AGAIN.



I PROMISED TO VISIT  
AND I KEPT MY WORD...THESE  
TWO ARE MY COLLEAGUES AND  
FRIENDS, MISTER JOHN  
AND CHARLES WESLEY...

THEY KNOW YOU  
ARE TO BE EXECUTED  
TOMORROW AT DAWN  
AND SO THEY CAME  
IMMEDIATELY...



MISTER WESLEY,  
I KILLED MY WIFE, I AM  
CONDEMNED, THERE  
IS NO HOPE  
FOR ME...

DEAR SIR,  
THERE IS ALWAYS  
HOPE IN JESUS. DO  
YOU BELIEVE  
IN JESUS?

MISTER, WHO  
IS JESUS?

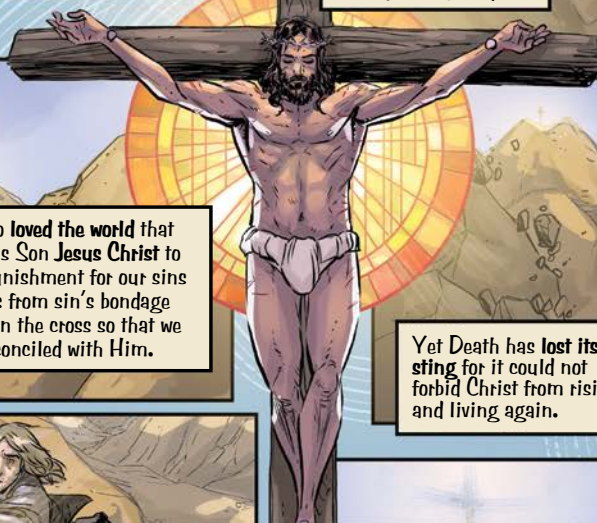




Mankind was originally created in the **image** and **likeness** of **God**, but chose to rebel against Him. Sin thus entered mankind and the world.

And so, like a **mirror** that is cracked, we now reflect back a distorted and ugly image.

We cannot break free from this sinfulness on our own accord.



But God so loved the world that He sent His Son **Jesus Christ** to bear the punishment for our sins and free us from sin's bondage by dying on the cross so that we may be reconciled with Him.

Yet Death has **lost its sting** for it could not forbid Christ from rising and living again.



This is the **Jesus** who now stands at the right hand of God, with open arms to receive **your** soul.

Cry to the Lord for mercy, and you will surely find it



HOW IS IT BETWEEN GOD AND YOUR SOUL?

BLESSED BE GOD, I AM READY...



Year 1735

On board the ship the **Simmonds** to **Georgia, America**. John Wesley was on a mission trip, with the singular aim to share the **good news** with the native Indians.

Despite all that he had learned and done, **Wesley** could not escape the feeling that something was wrong with him.

**CRASH**

He could not escape the dark clouds in his life.





**Wesley** expected to find a group of people scared and in panic.

Instead the sight that greeted him was one of calm and peace.

WERE YOU NOT AFRAID?

NO, WE ARE NOT AFRAID TO DIE.

BUT WERE THE CHILDREN FRIGHTENED?

NO, OUR CHILDREN ARE NOT AFRAID TO DIE EITHER. WE REMEMBERED HOW JESUS STILLED THE TEMPEST ON THE LAKE OF GALILEE, AND WE HEAR HIS VOICE SAYING TO US: 'PEACE, BE STILL.'

THERE IS NO NEED FOR ME TO COMFORT THEM AT ALL! ON THE CONTRARY, HOW CAN IT BE THAT I FEAR FOR MY LIFE? IS GOD NOT WITH ME?



Year 1738, May 24.

The last few years have not been easy for John Wesley.

There was something that was bothering him but he seemed to know neither cause nor cure.



For far too long, Wesley was preoccupied with service for the Lord, thinking that his salvation lay in the good works he did.

That doing was enough.



Wesley was a depressed and broken man; he knew his faith was incomplete



WHERE ARE YOU?  
WHY DO I FEEL THAT YOU  
ARE SO FAR AWAY?





Moravian meeting room, Aldersgate Street



TONIGHT I QUOTE  
FROM LUTHER'S  
PREFACE TO  
THE EPISTLE TO  
THE ROMANS...



THIS LETTER IS TRULY  
THE MOST IMPORTANT  
PIECE IN THE  
NEW TESTAMENT... IT IS  
PUREST GOSPEL...

WHY IS MY HEART  
STRANGELY WARM?

IS THAT YOU, LORD?

THANK YOU, LORD... THANK YOU,  
JESUS, THANK YOU FOR TAKING  
AWAY MY SIN, EVEN MINE...





Wesley was unrelenting in sharing the **good news**; he was determined to bring **God's word** to the people, believing that everyone deserved to hear the good news, even if it was outside of the church environment. But his unorthodox ways made him a target of scorn.



WHO IS THIS PREACHER PREACHING IN THE OPEN?"

HEARD THAT HE IS JOHN WESLEY... HE SEEMS TO BE DIFFERENT.

AFTERALL WHO WOULD EVEN THINK ABOUT PREACHING OUTSIDE THE CHURCH? I HEARD LOTS OF PEOPLE DISLIKE THAT.

IS HE MAKING FUN OF THE CHURCH?

The price **Wesley** paid was very high. His own brother **opposed** him while his sister joined in the chorus of shame. Yet even though he became increasingly **ostracised**, Wesley continued to do **God's work**.



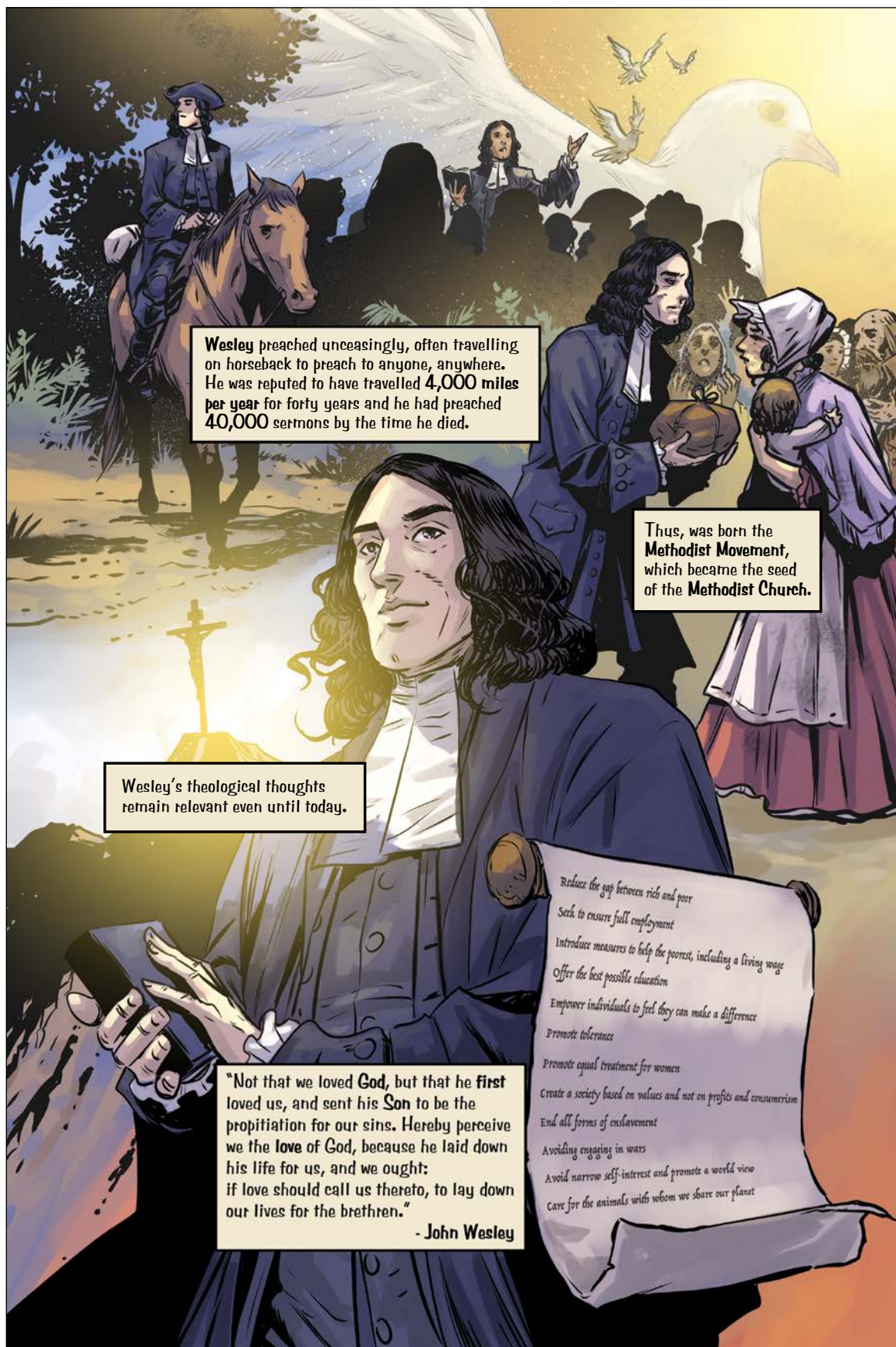
WE ARE SORRY REVEREND WESLEY, BUT YOU ARE NOT WELCOME TO PREACH IN THIS CHURCH



HOW DID HE SURVIVE THAT? WHAT MEASURE OF A MAN MUST HE BE?"

I THINK HE MUST BE A MAN OF GOD; GOD IS SURELY BY HIS SIDE IF SO MANY CANNOT STOP ONE MAN.





Wesley preached unceasingly, often travelling on horseback to preach to anyone, anywhere. He was reputed to have travelled **4,000 miles per year** for forty years and he had preached **40,000** sermons by the time he died.

Thus, was born the **Methodist Movement**, which became the seed of the **Methodist Church**.

Wesley's theological thoughts remain relevant even until today.

"Not that we loved **God**, but that he **first** loved us, and sent his **Son** to be the propitiation for our sins. Hereby perceive we the **love** of **God**, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought: if love should call us thereto, to lay down our lives for the brethren."

- John Wesley

Reduce the gap between rich and poor  
Seek to ensure full employment  
Introduce measures to help the poorest, including a living wage  
Offer the best possible education  
Empower individuals to feel they can make a difference  
Promote tolerance  
Promote equal treatment for women  
Create a society based on values and not on profits and consumerism  
End all forms of enslavement  
Avoiding engaging in wars  
Avoid narrow self-interest and promote a world view  
Care for the animals with whom we share our planet



Year 1883

With the coming of the **British** in 1819, it opened the door for the introduction of **Christianity** into this region.

The establishment of **Singapore** as a free port enabled the flow of people and ideas, and missionaries joined in the movement, coming to Singapore from India. It marked the beginnings of the Christian faith here.

**Charles Phillips** played a key role.

A member of the **British Army** who was sent to Singapore.

Phillips burned with a **Wesleyan** desire to spread the **gospel** as widely as possible.

Full of optimism about the **promise** and **potential** of Christian outreach on this tiny island...

... it was **Phillips** who wrote to **Bishop James Thoburn** about the possibility of sharing the **Good News** with the people.







Year 1885

It took time for Phillips's wish to be granted.

It was only two years later that Bishop Thoburn, together with Mrs Anne Thoburn, Miss Julia Battie and Bishop William Oldham, arrived in Singapore.

BISHOP THOBURN?  
WELCOME TO SINGAPORE! I  
AM CHARLES PHILLIPS...

WHO MAY YOU BE?  
HOW DO YOU HAPPEN TO  
BE HERE, AND HOW DO  
YOU KNOW US?

WE TOLD NO ONE  
OF OUR PLANS, AS WE  
WEREN'T EVEN SURE IF WE  
COULD MAKE IT TODAY...

IT WAS GOD. I SAW  
YOU LAST NIGHT IN MY SLEEP.  
I SAW THIS STEAMER COMING  
INTO DOCK, AND ON IT WERE  
YOU AND YOUR PARTY.


HENCE, I AM HERE. NOW  
COME ALONG, YOU ARE ALL  
TO STAY WITH ME.

**Ironie** that it took one of  
the **Men of War** to usher  
in the **Prince of Peace**...

The start of the journey was rocky.

The missionaries were eager  
to start the very next day,  
but before that, a **vote** had to  
be taken at the **Municipal  
Council** to decide if they  
were to be given permission  
to start preaching at the  
**Town Hall**.

There was a deadlock which was only  
broken when a non-Christian Chinese  
voted to allow for the services to proceed.




Thus, the first Methodist Service was held at the Town Hall in Feb 1885 and there were more than 150 people in attendance.

...SAYING, 'NOT BY MIGHT NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT,' SAITH THE LORD...

It was no coincidence the very first scripture text quoted was from Zechariah 4:6.






The **Christian Institute** was the base of operations for the Methodists and the venue for get-togethers.

This arguably was the birthplace of The **Methodist Church** in Singapore.


The key for the institute was **Social Outreach**, to do good for the community.




**Bishop William Fitzjames Oldham**  
ACS




**Ms Sophia Blackmore and Mrs Mary Nind**  
Fairfield Methodist/MGS




**Reverend William G. Shellabear**  
MPH



This included the building of schools such as the **Anglo-Chinese School** in 1886, the **Methodist Girls School** in 1887 as well as setting up of the **Nind Home**, a boarding school for abandoned girls, runaways and orphans.



There was also the **Methodist Publishing House (MPH)** in 1887 which was actively involved in Bible translation, evangelistic outreach, and established the Mission Press.



Due to the good work that the Methodists did in reaching out to the marginalised and poor, in early 1907, **Sir John Anderson**, the governor of Singapore, granted a piece of land at **Fort Canning** for a church to be erected.

This became the **Wesley Methodist Church** we know today.



The next major milestone in the history of The Methodist Church in Singapore happened with the arrival of the man nicknamed the "Wesley of China".

Year 1936

In the small railway town of Kluang

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS PREACHER DR JOHN SUNG FROM CHINA?

HE IS A GREAT MAN, A MAN OF GOD WHO IS NOW SAVING LIVES FOR THE LORD!

HE IS COMING TO SINGAPORE NEXT MONTH! YOU MUST ALL COME AND LISTEN TO HIM!

WHO IS THIS DR SUNG? SHOULD WE GO SEE WHAT HE'S LIKE?

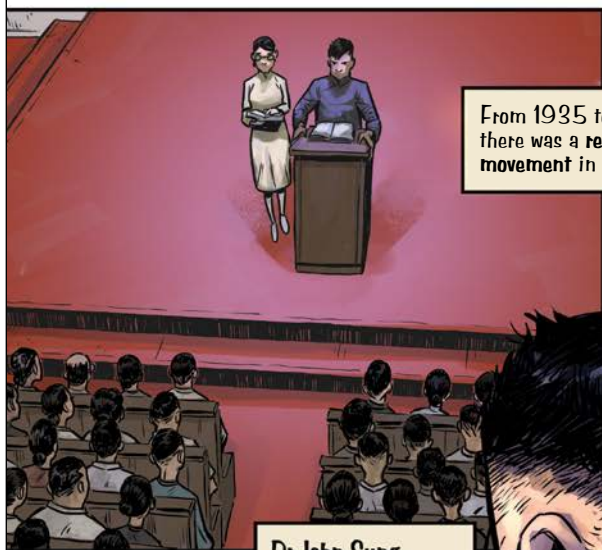
I DON'T KNOW HIM...

"BUT I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR WHAT HE HAS TO SAY..."









From 1935 to 1939,  
there was a **revival**  
movement in Singapore.

Dr John Sung  
was the pivotal figure  
leading the revival.



His powerful sermons  
answered the deep  
yearnings of the  
Chinese community  
at that time.



Hundreds of men and women were  
impacted to become pastors and  
church leaders throughout the region.

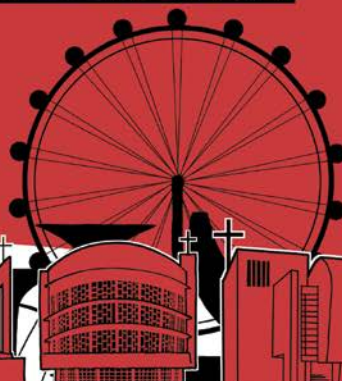




Propelled by the **revival**, the Christian community in Singapore **grew** over the years and the unabated growth of the Methodist movement went along with it in parallel.



Over the years, more and more churches were **built**. Today, with 46 places of worship island-wide, The Methodist Church in Singapore is the **largest** Protestant denomination in the nation.

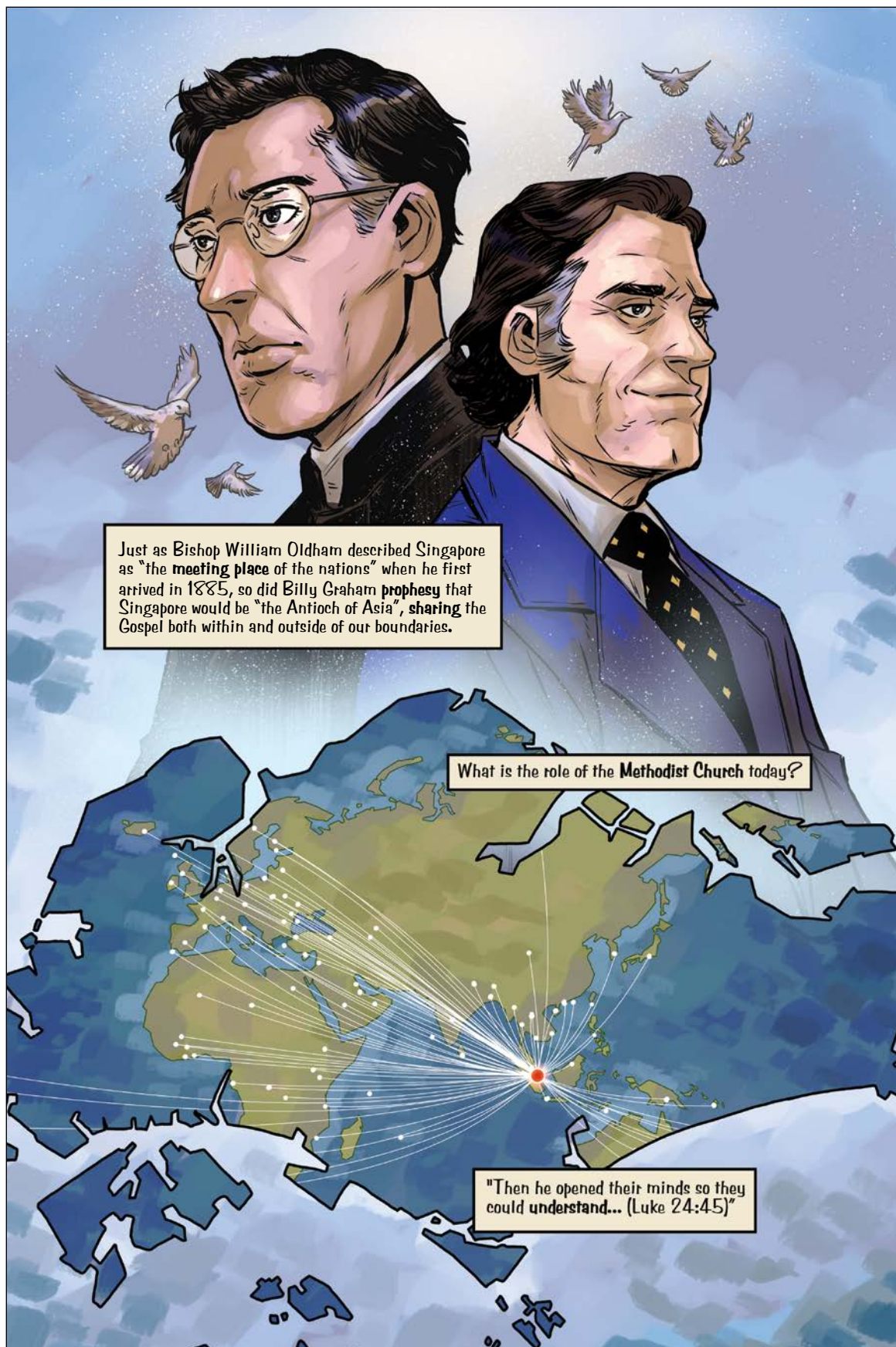


In 1978, Evangelist **Dr Billy Graham** came to Singapore and delivered the nation's next vision.



More than 337,000 people gathered across four days to hear him speak at the **National Stadium** in December that year.





Just as Bishop William Oldham described Singapore as "the **meeting place** of the nations" when he first arrived in 1885, so did Billy Graham **prophesy** that Singapore would be "the Antioch of Asia", **sharing** the Gospel both within and outside of our boundaries.

What is the role of the **Methodist Church** today?

"Then he opened their minds so they could understand... (Luke 24:45)"



The origin story of Christ Methodist Church

Geylang Chinese Methodist Church was initially established as a Gospel House in 1905.

Despite having only 18 worshippers, the church managed to acquire land and move into its new Sanctuary and Parsonage at the junction of Aljunied and Geylang Road in 1914.

At the time, children from impoverished families in Geylang lacked access to education.

As such, the church ran ad-hoc classes for them, utilising the Parsonage as a school on weekdays, when it was not used for service.

The school grew to become Geylang Methodist Girls' School in 1924.

By 1932, the influx of school girls and young adults into the Methodist Youth Fellowship Meetings...

...birthed a local English-speaking conference known as Geylang English Methodist Church.

Bible Verses:  
Lew 13:31-32  
mk 4:30-32  
Lke

Like the Parable of the Mustard Seed, the school and the church produced more mustard plants...

...contributing back to society.





During that period of time, women played an **important social role** in educating and passing on the right values to the young and assisting to **serve** the less fortunate.

Helping them to **grow** in knowledge and experience was **Reverend E. S. Lau** who was the **first pastor** of Geylang English Methodist Church.



But this idyllic period was to be punctured by the **Japanese Occupation** of Singapore in **1942**.



While the Japanese did not single out Christians for **harsh treatment**, the congregation was chased out of the church. It was used as an **ammunition depot** by the Japanese.



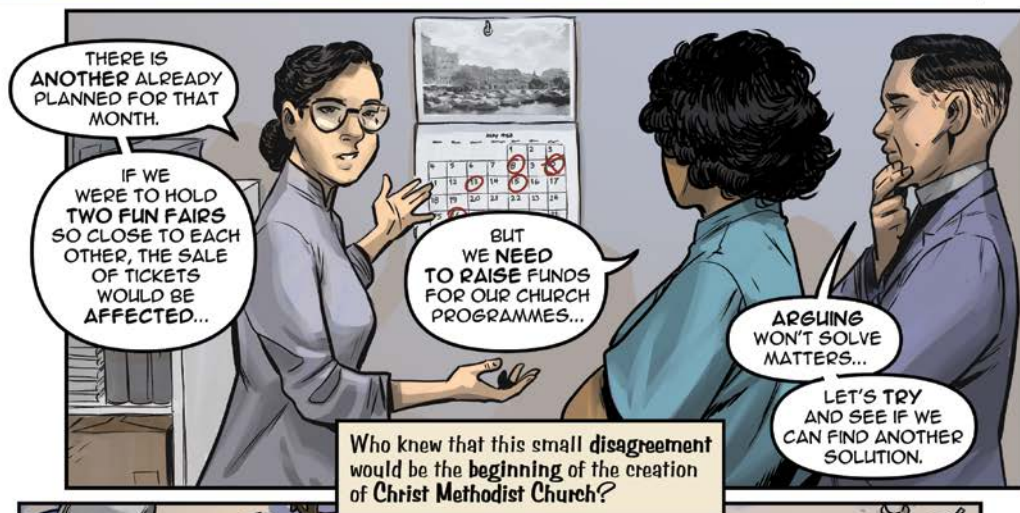
During this difficult time, it was **faith** that kept the people going as the clergy sought to keep the flock together.

While they no longer had a place of their own, a small congregation **gathered** at St Andrew's Cathedral to continue looking to the Lord.

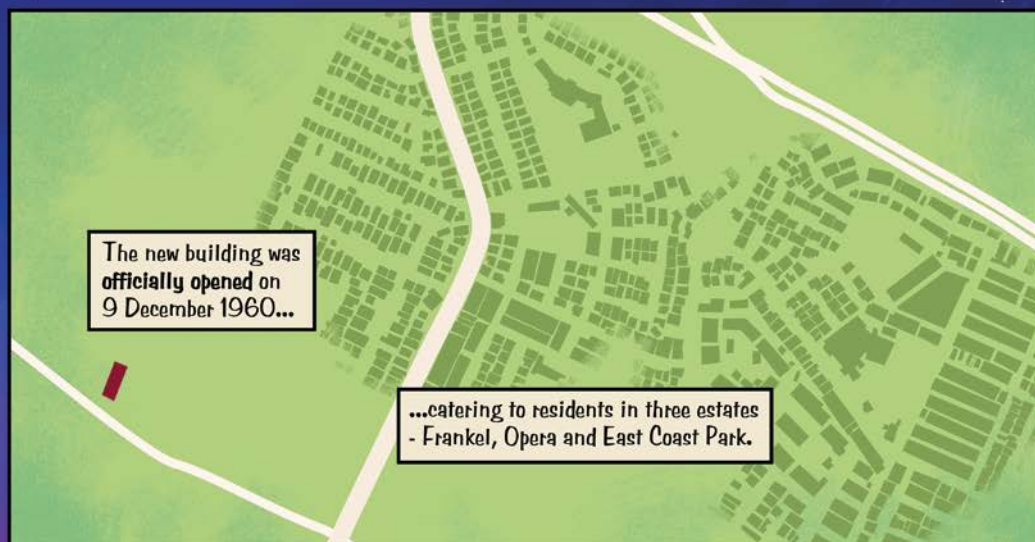






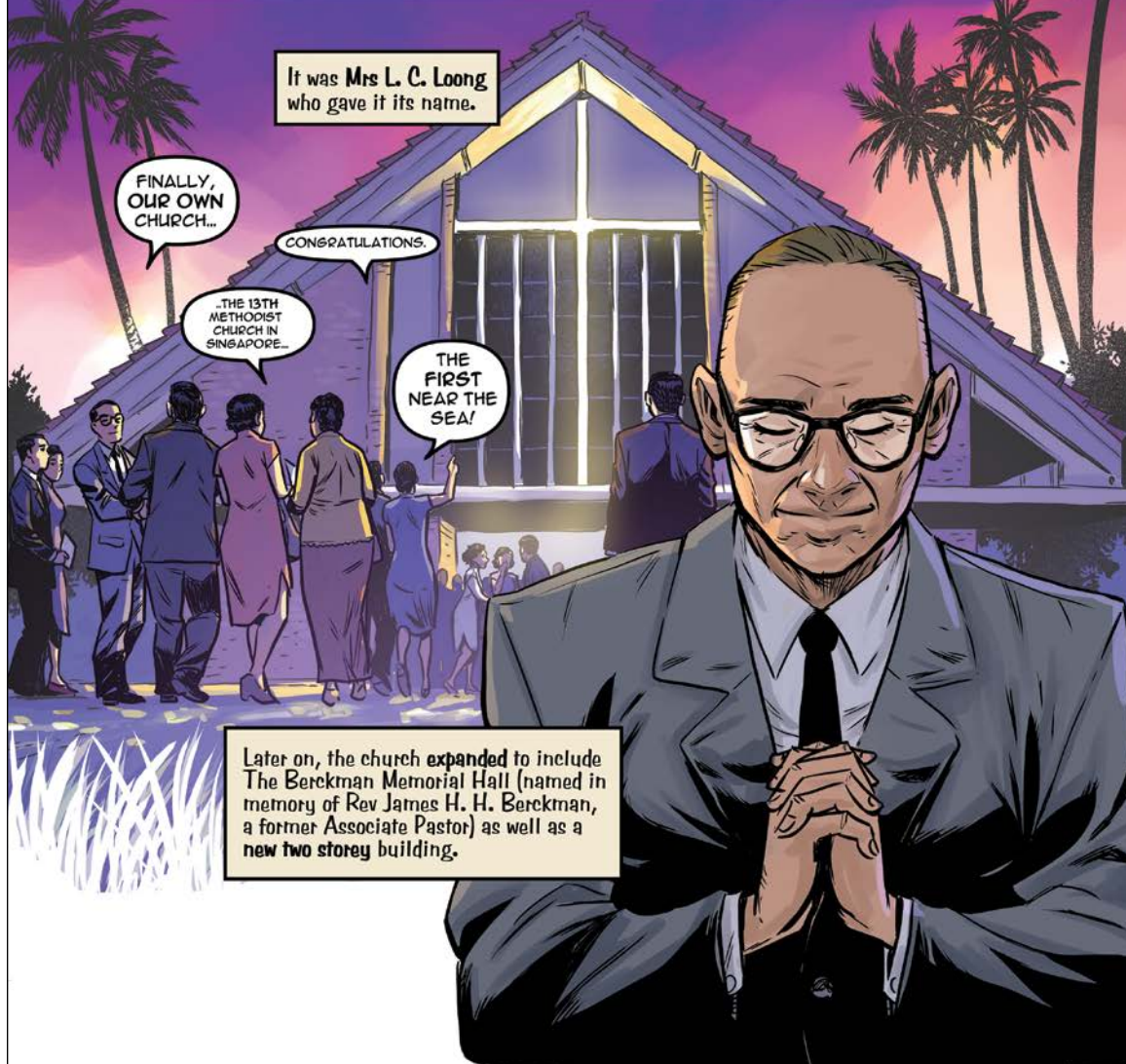






The new building was  
officially opened on  
9 December 1960...

...catering to residents in three estates  
- Frankel, Opera and East Coast Park.



It was **Mrs L. C. Loong**  
who gave it its name.

FINALLY,  
OUR OWN  
CHURCH...

CONGRATULATIONS.

THE 13TH  
METHODIST  
CHURCH IN  
SINGAPORE...

THE  
FIRST  
NEAR THE  
SEA!

Later on, the church expanded to include  
The Berckman Memorial Hall (named in  
memory of Rev James H. H. Berckman,  
a former Associate Pastor) as well as a  
new two storey building.



Year 1969

WE'VE BEEN  
HERE FOR A WHILE  
BUT MANY PEOPLE STILL  
DON'T KNOW WHERE WE  
ARE LOCATED!

JUST THE  
OTHER DAY, MY  
FRIEND WHO WANTED TO  
VISIT TOLD ME THEY  
COULD NOT FIND  
OUR BUILDING...

WE SHOULD  
HAVE SOMETHING  
EYE-CATCHING THAT WILL  
CAPTURE PEOPLE'S  
ATTENTION.

HOW  
ABOUT A TALL  
PILLAR WITH A  
NEON CROSS ON TOP  
THAT CAN SHINE  
BRIGHTLY EVEN  
AT NIGHT?

THAT'S A GREAT IDEA, MRS TAN  
[BENG LEONG]! AS WSCS\*, WE CAN  
HELP TO RAISE THE FUNDS!

\*Women's Society of Christian Service

The women banded together  
and started selling food on  
Sundays to raise the funds  
they needed.

Their success saw the installation of a  
neon cross in front of the church that  
served as a beacon to all who walked past.

This tradition of fund raising  
has persisted until today.



Over time, Christ Methodist Church settled securely within the area. However, the **ever-changing landscape** brought new challenges and opportunities.



The East Coast Reclamation project, launched in April 1966, added about 1km of shoreline and brought about a boom in housing and an exponential increase of households in the area.

In 1976, the Christ Methodist Church Kindergarten was set up to provide **pre-school education** for the young children in the area.

More than just a school, it was a "kinder-garden" where the seeds of salvation were **planted...**

DON'T CRY...TEACHER IS HERE WITH YOU ... THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF...

MUMMY WILL SEE YOU SOON...

Many who passed through the doors came to know the Lord and the kindergarten ran for **34 years** until its closure in Nov 2010.

I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS JUST LIKE HER... I LOVED THE TIME I SPENT HERE...

NOT ONLY DID I LEARN HOW TO READ AND WRITE, THIS WAS THE PLACE WHERE I FIRST GOT TO KNOW JESUS

AND NOW, I HOPE TO PASS THE FAITH DOWN TO THE NEW GENERATION...



As the nation progressed and became more prosperous, the East became the housing destination of choice for the affluent.

Private housing and condominiums sprouted up around the area.

AH BOY, STOP! WE DON'T HAVE TIME. WE HAVE TO GO PICK UP YOUR SISTER...

Yet, within this rosy picture hid pockets of the disadvantaged and the destitute.

These people needed the church more than ever.

In the Nineties, CMC went back to her roots and fulfilled her pledge of service to the community starting with the introduction of Hokkien Services from 1993...

牽我的手  
khan gua eh chhiu

"KAN KWHA A CHIEW" - HOLD MY HAND..

請你  
chhiu mai li khua gua

這  
jit

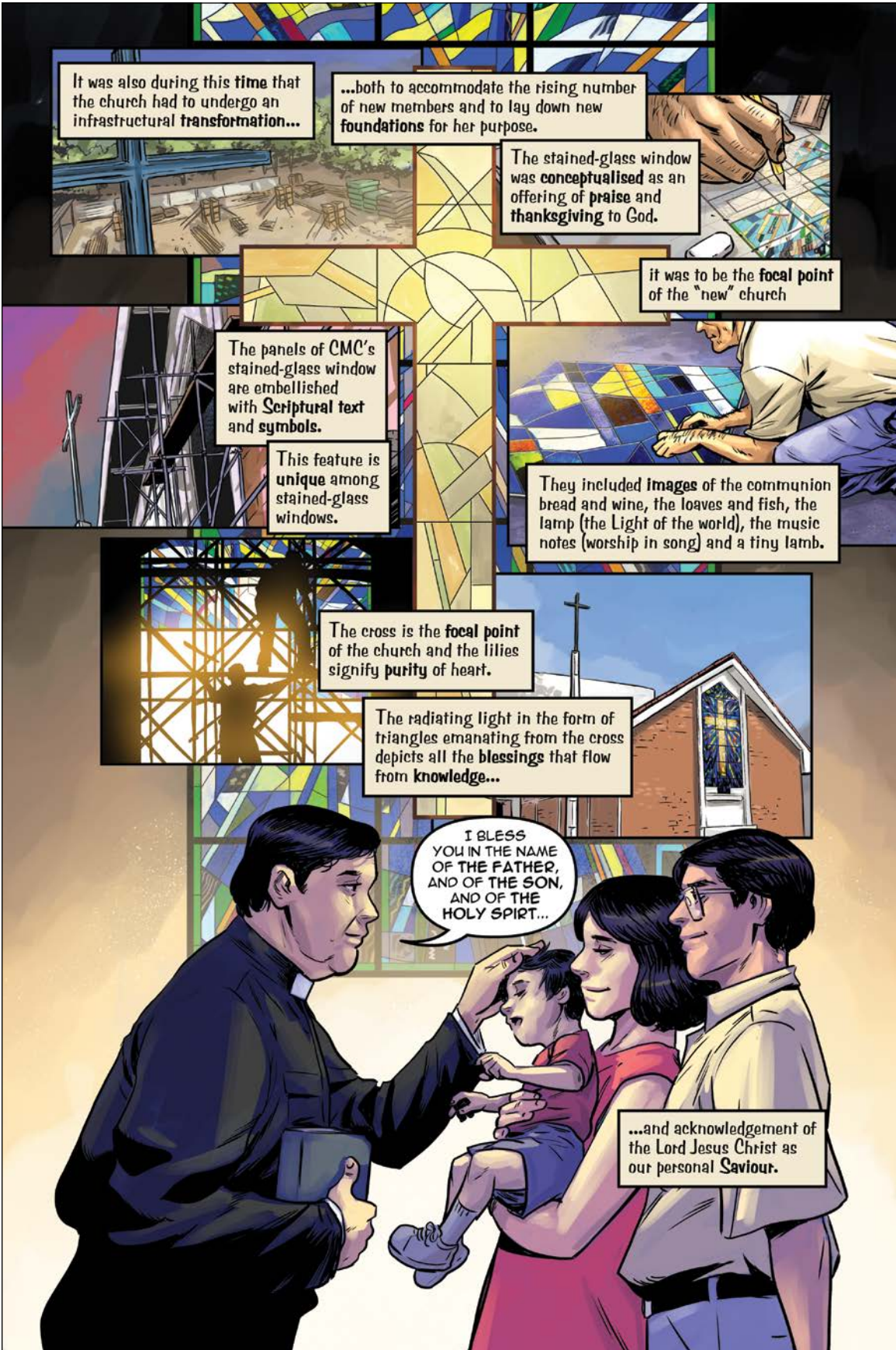
我  
or guo koh ai kia

...establishing The Preaching Point in Geylang Methodist Primary and Secondary in 1996 [later renamed as Christalite Methodist Chapel]...

HOW ARE YOU TODAY, AUNTIE?

...and the formation of Christalite Methodist Home together with MWS in 1997.





It was also during this time that the church had to undergo an infrastructural transformation...

...both to accommodate the rising number of new members and to lay down new foundations for her purpose.

The stained-glass window was conceptualised as an offering of praise and thanksgiving to God.

it was to be the focal point of the "new" church

The panels of CMC's stained-glass window are embellished with Scriptural text and symbols.

This feature is unique among stained-glass windows.

They included images of the communion bread and wine, the loaves and fish, the lamp (the Light of the world), the music notes (worship in song) and a tiny lamb.

The cross is the focal point of the church and the lilies signify purity of heart.

The radiating light in the form of triangles emanating from the cross depicts all the blessings that flow from knowledge...

I BLESS YOU IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...

...and acknowledgement of the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour.



The new millennium brought about a new vibrancy and a new challenge for the church.

SERVING GOD BRINGS INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCES...

...AND UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S INTENTION TO TRANSFORM ALL OF SOCIETY...

A spirit of Revival was spreading throughout the congregation as members felt a greater sense and presence of God in their lives.

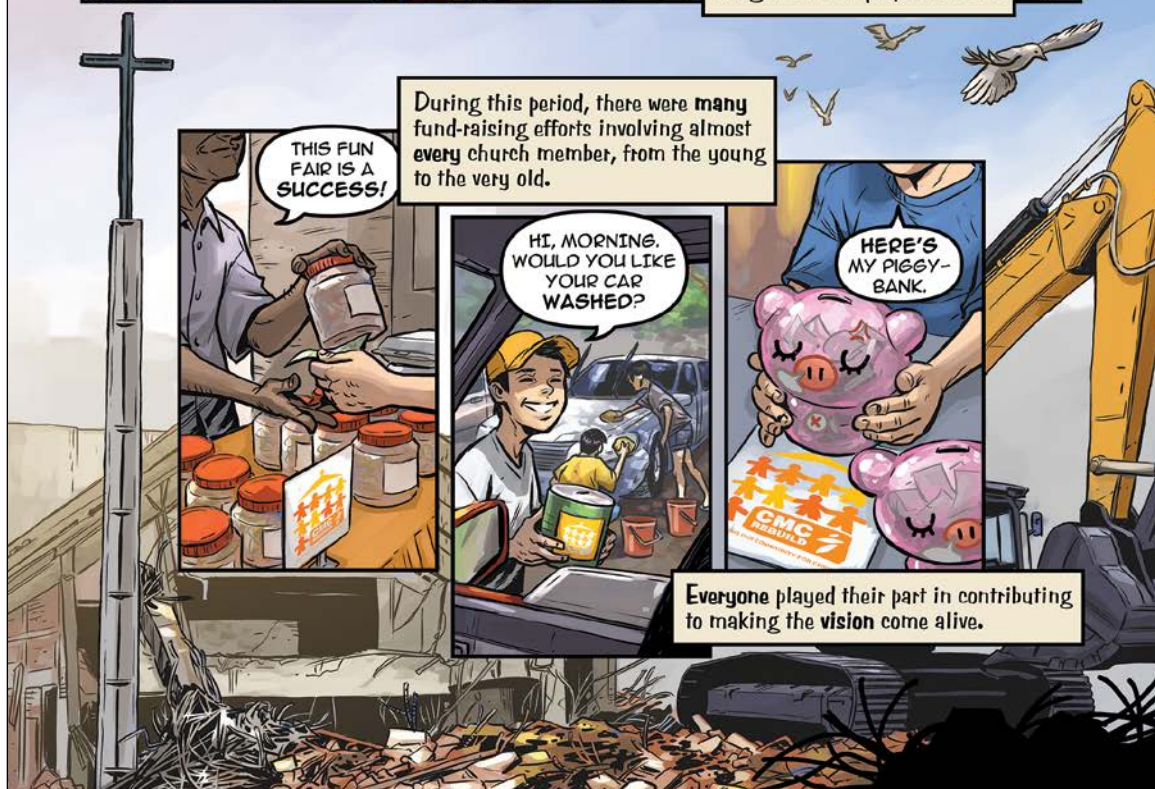
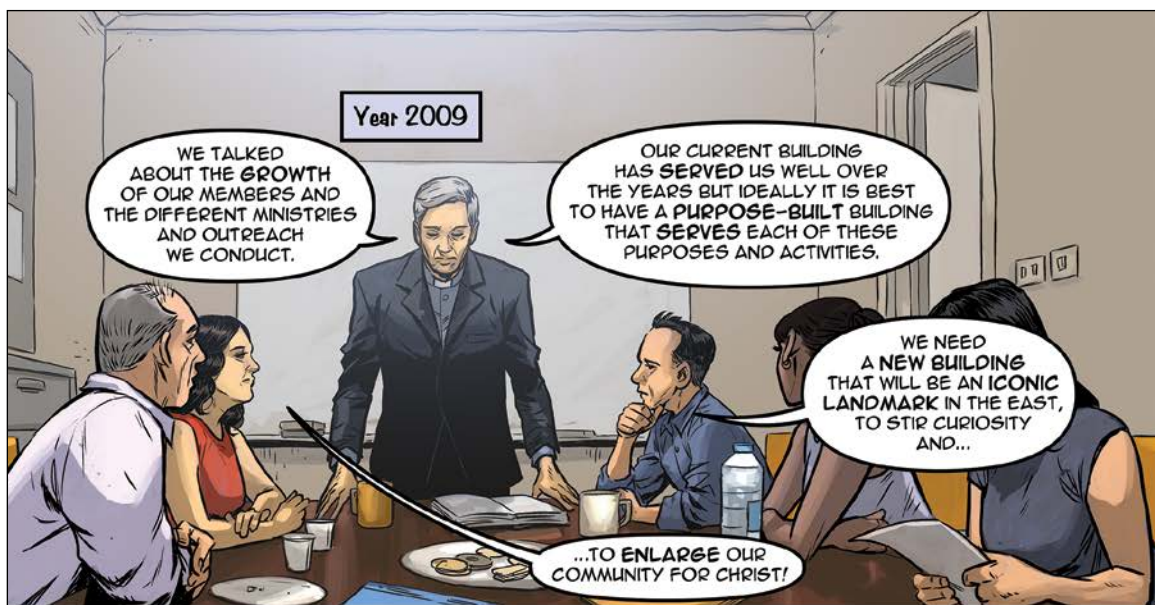
This started in 2004 when CMC proclaimed its mission of Intentional Discipleship, to commit to being intentional disciples of Christ...

who love Christ, share His love and make disciples of all the nations by the power of the Holy Spirit...

so that we will be a people who are Passionate for God, Loving the Community.

The colours and the logo that you find so familiar today were also adopted during this time.





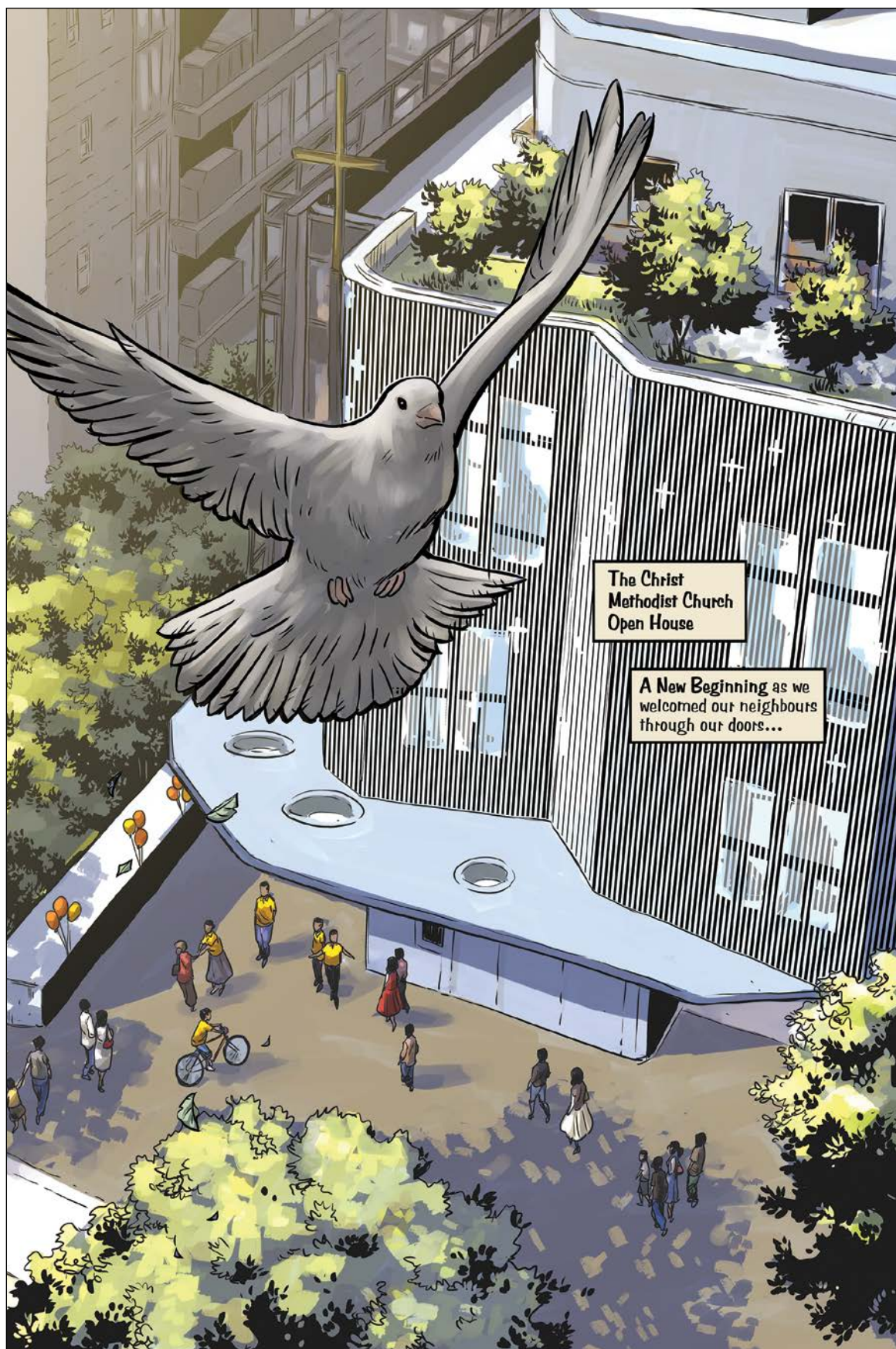




Morning, 30 August 2014, 9.30am







The Christ  
Methodist Church  
Open House

A New Beginning as we  
welcomed our neighbours  
through our doors...





With this new foundation, CMC was able to spread her sphere of engagement overseas...



...sending mission trips to places like East Asia, India, Nepal, Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia.



Yet being the Antioch of Asia also meant extending care and a helping hand to foreign guests amongst our midst, showing them the love of Christ...



This includes giving frontline medical staff at the hospitals cups of ice-cream during the Covid-19 pandemic just to bring some joy and encouragement to them as part of the new Church in Christian Action Initiative...



Social action and good works are not optional side projects for the Church...

It is core to its heart and mission.



It is the **hope** and **prayer** that all who come into contact with the church will personally experience the **saving grace** of Christ and accept Him as their personal **Saviour**.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Dedicated to all the people who devoted their time and effort to make this graphic novel a reality; from fact checking, to narrative development from logistics to publicity, you gave of your involvement and advice freely, proving that it really takes a village to raise a child.*

*Dedicated to **Andie Tong**, artist extraordinaire.*

*An accomplished comics illustrator, he has extensive experience from having worked with major comics companies such as Marvel (Spiderman, Thor), DC Entertainment (Batman, Green Lantern) as well as animation companies such as Disney and Lucasarts (Star Wars).*





**CHRIST**  
METHODIST CHURCH

[WWW.CMC.ORG.SG](http://WWW.CMC.ORG.SG)