



WITNESS



...but God

Finding comfort and assurance in God



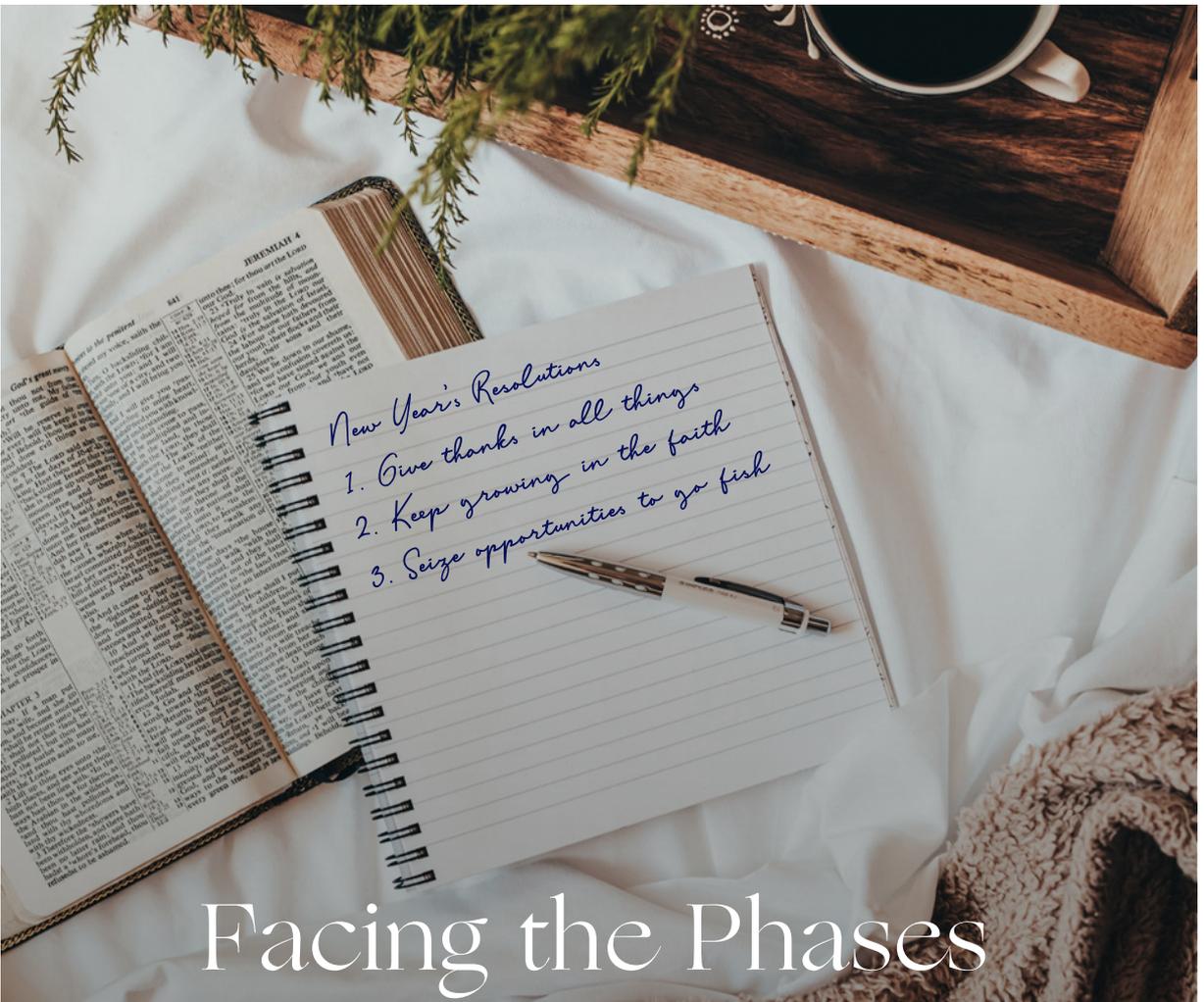
Mental Health – It's Not All in the Mind

Break the stigma and support each other



From Ignorance to Knowing

The journey of a new believer



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A word



Press the PAUSE button on church life? No way!

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned our world upside down. Everything has changed and our lives are not the same anymore. Where is God in all this?

from your Pastor

BY REV BARNABAS CHONG

Some believe that God sent the pandemic and they say all plagues in the Bible were sent by God. The most notable plagues were the ten plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7 – 11) and the seven bowls of God's wrath (Revelation 16). I have not done a full study on this, but many would agree that most plagues in the Bible were indeed sent by God to teach people a lesson (God's own people or other nations), usually because of man's sinfulness.

Others believe that God did not send the pandemic but He allowed it to happen. If He did allow it, why would a good God allow bad things to happen?

Whether God sent or allowed it, He is certainly not unaware. So is there a lesson we can learn from this? Is there something we, as a society or we, as a church need to repent of?

Can good come out of it? I think so. That is why church life cannot be put on PAUSE. Despite all the bad we see, hear about and feel, there are opportunities for good—opportunities that would not have emerged if not for the pandemic.

For instance, many have unconditionally and sacrificially given themselves to serving the poor and needy because they are suffering the most during the pandemic. We also see healthcare workers rising to the occasion, braving the danger to treat the infected even to the point of death.

On the church front, the pandemic has forced us to suspend in-person church services at various times. We all miss something very dear to us, but it has created new opportunities.

If we believe church life is to continue, then we must now meet in small groups—in legally permitted numbers. This allows us to deepen our relationship with one another through more intimate sharing of lives. Since we do not get to meet fellow church members on weekends in church anymore, the only way to find out how they are doing

is to contact them by phone. Again, an opportunity to build relationship.

With regards to blessing non-Christian friends and colleagues, since we no longer meet them regularly in social gatherings or workplaces, we will have to contact them individually to find out how they are doing. We can continue to love, care and share Christ with them.

On the personal spiritual growth front, we are confronted with a sobering question:

Is my spiritual life and growth dependent on large corporate worship gatherings? Can I still grow strong in the Lord when left on my own or with just one or two fellow believers?

How did the persecuted church all over the world grow amidst an environment where Christian gathering resulted in imprisonment, punishment and death? First, they grew in faith individually. They prayed and worshipped on their own daily, read the Bible fervently, memorised verses and passages. In some cases, each believer only had one page of the Bible and they would memorise every word on that page! Second, they maximised their learning whenever they could meet. Third, they continued to share their faith one-on-one—without depending on a corporate outreach programme.

Can we not do the same today—grow in faith through daily personal prayer, worship, study and memorisation of God's Word, maximise learning every time we meet and share our faith with those around us one-on-one? I think we can, and we should if we were to come out of this pandemic shining like stars.

This Christmas, we are once again reminded of how one man, Jesus, completely surrendered to God, could be used by the Lord to impact the entire world. God can use us powerfully to change the world too if we surrender ourselves completely to Him.



Come Together: Overcoming the Obstacles of Technology

BY AGLOW CG

Ever since the pandemic hit, online meetings have been the go-to option for the sake of safety. Both formal and informal meetings automatically have shifted to platforms such as Zoom, and many have had to learn to adapt to this new normal.

But what about groups who are unfamiliar with these online tools and find technology daunting?

Coping Alone

In CMC, one CG that was heavily impacted by COVID-19 was Aglow CG. While other CGs were able to continue meeting online, Aglow could not meet for an extended period of time. This was due to certain circumstances that had affected the CG, as well as the fact that the group mostly includes seniors who are not as familiar with the latest technology.

Aglow was formed more than 20 years ago, ever since the Care Group initiative began in CMC. The group went through many changes and challenges over the years, but COVID-19 posed a different set of obstacles that they had not met before. From meeting twice a month to not at all, the members felt the impact of not being able to come

together. “It was quite bad as we could not support or affirm each other spiritually and had to figure things out on our own” shared Aglow member, Lau Mui Joo.

There was a glimmer of good news early this year when the restrictions eased and allowed eight visitors per household – the perfect size for Aglow to meet in one home! However, Phase 2 (Heightened Alert) was announced, and they were back to square one. “We had already planned a date in May and the venue, but the measures were announced suddenly so we ended up not meeting,” said Mui Joo.

Facing the Technological Hurdle

Earlier this year, current Aglow CG leaders Erica Fong and Quah Soon Hong joined the group with the aim of helping bring the group back together. When the plan to meet in person failed, they suggested going on Zoom. Although it was daunting and most were unfamiliar, they agreed to give it a try.

Many members had friends or family to help them get on the first Zoom call. One such member was 86-year-old Joyce Tye, the oldest member of the group who has been in the CG since the beginning. Joyce was

all for meeting on Zoom although it was a challenge for her. “I’m hopeless! At my age I don’t understand digital things, but I have a very good helper who is quite savvy and could help me,” she said.

To Joyce, Zoom has its pros and cons. However, she is glad that the group has this option to continue meeting. “God has permitted Zoom, so let’s accept it!” she says. “This is the best way so that we don’t stop meeting and studying the Word of God.”

Adapting to Online

The group has now reverted to meeting twice a month on Zoom and have adapted their in-person CG format to Zoom. The session would begin with worship—each member would refer to the hymnal and select two songs to sing. After worship would be the lesson led by Erica, followed by a time of discussion. The session would conclude with a time of prayer.

Peggy Tan, who has been with the CG since 2006, shared how the CG has helped her to understand the Bible better, especially



after not being able to have Bible study for many months. “Sometimes the Bible is not easy to understand, but each time we meet, we learn something new and our questions are answered,” she shared. When asked about meeting on Zoom, Peggy shared that it is much better than not meeting at all. “At least we are able to see each other. It’s convenient and we are able to chat with each other before the session starts too!”

It’s encouraging to see how Aglow overcame this challenge that the pandemic posed with God’s help. It’s also a testimony of how God used this obstacle to revitalise the group, as going on Zoom has allowed newcomers to join in as well. All glory to God!

Here’s what the members of Aglow feel about this experience.

“Zoom provided a good opportunity for us to carry on with our Bible study under the capable leadership of Erica and Soon Hong. It was a good safe alternative as we could see each other, discuss our problems and have the CG leaders lead us in the Bible study. Many of the Aglow members have been together for many years and it was great to be able to socialise, learn and laugh together online.”

Jenny Loke



“I began using Zoom only a couple of months ago when Erica and Soon Hong joined our group as leaders. I was glad for the opportunity to meet as a group after a long time, although the time to meet and greet each other with smiles and hugs cannot come too soon.”

Mok Wai Meng



“It was a great encouragement to see each member of Aglow CG overcome the hiccups that happen in a Zoom environment. The “can do” attitude makes each Zoom meeting possible, together with help from family members, neighbours and helpers. We at Aglow certainly hope that each CMCer not give up meeting as we remember the exhortation in:

Hebrews 10:25 “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another,”

Erica Fong

“In times like this when people across the globe are not allowed to meet and interact, Zoom made it possible. Thus, we are not deprived of the continuation of the study of the Bible. We cannot cope in the study of the Bible alone, so we look forward to the study sessions when we can share our understanding of the Word.”

Cecilia and Michael Wee



“We are new to the CG and have been on Zoom since we joined. We believe Zoom is as effective in term of sharing God’s messages, only lacking the personal touch. However, it saves time in term of travelling and we can do it from the comfort of our home.”

Kenneth & Ee Choo



“It is always exciting to try new apps and learn as we go along. Of course, initially it can be intimidating and frustrating, but once we overcome that, moving along and learning together can be pretty fun and rewarding. It’s also very encouraging and invigorating to see older folks embrace new technology. However, socially, the ability to physically interact with each other is still the best! Nothing beats meeting up and fellowship face to face.”

Quah Soon Hong

...But God

BY CARYN FONG

Who would have known? Who would have known that our coming back to Singapore in January 2020 would later result in our family of five being separated across two countries for its second year and counting? Who would have known that the foreign ministry team in East Asia I love so dearly, having served together for the past 20 years would, for a variety of pressures both within and without, eventually leave the place we so fondly call home? Who would have known, during this time apart from my in-laws, my dear father-in-law would be diagnosed with lung cancer and start his chemotherapy sessions? Who would have known, our foster and youngest son, diagnosed with Beta Thalassemia major at birth, would need hospitalisation and blood transfusions? Who would have known, that being unable to return back to school

in East Asia, meant that our two older boys, aged 10 and 11, would embark on an extended period of home-based learning spanning over two years?

Who would have known?

I, and I imagine many of us, felt completely unprepared for this pandemic and its deep and far-reaching impact. And so, we prayed. I know I did. Driven by so many uncertainties, I cried out to the Way Maker to make a way for us. The dark clouds of hopelessness and helplessness seemed at times so heavy and dark. There was this aching sense of guilt for not being there for my father in-law in his time of need. This man has not only loved me as his own, but has also been generous with his love for our foster son; I could not have asked for a more giving father-in-law. Then the feelings of utter helplessness watching, via video call, my youngest son go through his two bags of blood transfusion, almost broke me. Especially when he cried...for me. At the end of each day, bringing all the fractured pieces of myself to God in prayer, I felt

restless and spent.

And yet, I found myself digging deeper into His Word, searching for assurance, any assurance, that God was indeed still sovereign over all. And perhaps more personally, that He still remembers me.

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...” (Genesis 50:20)

“And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand” (1 Samuel 23:14)

“For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn - fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us...” (2 Corinthians 7:5,6)

“...but God.”

There it was. So simple, yet so deeply profound. These two words stopped me in my tracks and steadied my gaze once again on God, on Him Who is faithful and true.

“But God” takes my eyes off my weakness and onto His strength. “But God” takes my anxieties off the unpredictability of my circumstances and sets me on His firm foundation. Joseph was rejected and betrayed by his brothers, yet God redeemed the situation for his good. David was relentlessly pursued by King Saul, yet God delivered him out of it. And in the New Testament, again we see that God allowed His faithful servants to be afflicted at every turn, yet brought comfort to them in the midst of it all.

Indeed, my heart was greatly encouraged by the evidence of God’s power to save. What a mighty God we serve!

And, yet.

My family is still separated across two different countries. My father-in-law is still undergoing chemotherapy. My son still has a severe medical condition, and the adoption process is crazy complicated, to put it mildly. Where is my “but God” moment? I dig deeper still.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-7; emphasis mine)

There. My deepest assurance yet, is found in Christ and Christ alone. My assurance of His faithful love to me is neither dependent upon, nor limited to, His answer to my prayers however earnest. But in Christ, we can find our rest in God’s love for us.

In the perfect work of Christ, we can trust in our covenant-keeping God to fulfil His divine promises to us, to give us all that we need for life and godliness. Surely this hope does not disappoint. Surely this joy will be my strength.

Who would have known, but God?



CARYN'S home and heart is in East Asia, where she has lived for the past 20 years. Her own messy journey back to the Father's heart has impassioned her to invite others to taste and see, that the LORD is indeed good.



Join Jesus at Your Local Coffee Shop

BY FATHERS' PRAYER GROUP

In John 4, we read of a Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus at Jacob's well in Samaria. She listens to what he has to say to her, then realises that He is the Messiah and becomes a believer. She informs her village to come and see. They do so and many believe. Jesus used this occasion to tell the disciples,

"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."

– John 4:34-38 (NKJV)

From early 2019, a small group of fathers have been gathering to worship and pray together on Saturdays. The session is followed by fellowship over breakfast at a coffee shop in Siglap. We share our daily lives and experiences with Jesus between mouthfuls of mee pok tar, wantan mee and sips of kopi-O or teh-si. One of the brothers shared a vision that Jesus was actively doing the Father's work of salvation in coffee shops. This seemed good, and we began to take notice of the stallholders and auntie-uncle staff.

Through casual conversations, we discovered that the stallholders come in early in the mornings to prepare for the day and usually only eat what they themselves sell for breakfast. An initiative to bring a different breakfast for the stallholders and staff was started.

On Saturday mornings, one of the brothers would buy chui kueh, chai tow kway or other local favourites. More conversations followed as the stallholders and staff ate. They began to open up about their lives. Over time, we gradually got to know of their real needs and struggles, and started to pray for them.

During the Circuit Breaker period and subsequent control measures, the stallholders struggled as earnings fell due to dining-in restrictions, and the part-time staff did not have enough income. We gathered funds and contributed small sums to help out with their expenses in the form of angpows, and assisted the less tech-savvy to get listed on foodie interest platforms to boost orders. These acts were perceived as genuine, and we became their personal friends over 2020.

Our friendships deepened in 2021. It came to our attention in late July that one of the economy rice stall cooks had collapsed and went into a coma due to rare late-stage cancer. Ah Wen (not his real name) was warded under Intensive Care at Changi General Hospital for over a month. When Ah Wen was discharged, we took turns to bring meals, some cooked by the coffee shop stallholders, to his rental room in the apartment block next to CMC. By this time, CMC pastors had been informed and funding was released to help Ah Wen with his room rental and daily necessities.

Given the severity of Ah Wen's condition, the brothers prayed for his salvation. Through a series of small miracles of grace, the Lord opened Ah Wen's heart and before his first chemotherapy session in hospital, Ah Wen received Jesus as His Lord and

Saviour. He was baptised by Rev James Seow on 16 September 2021 and has since joined the Mandarin Ministry.

We believe that Ah Wen's salvation is the first of several. Ah Hock, an elderly cleaner whom we helped with domestic issues, received Jesus as Lord and Saviour on 10 October 2021. A husband-and-wife stallholder asked us, "Why are you doing this?". We replied it was because, "Christ's love compels us". We hope and pray that the Lord will open their hearts.

For anyone keen, here's what we have learned so far:

- 1. The Lord wants us to engage in His work in coffee shops.** These are our modern-day Jacob's wells to share the Living Water!
- 2. It is a long-term commitment to build relationships.** Don't start unless you intend to continue. Think: this is my family too!
- 3. People need to know you truly care.** Being as selfless as possible and going out of your way helps. Avoid any tendency to seek attention in the process.
- 4. Pray and act. Act and pray.** The Lord is the one who opens closed doors and the way forward. Be prepared to move where He leads in this mission field.
5. Be patient and try not to run ahead of the Lord. **Listen more than you speak.**
- 6. There is a connection between your bank account, your heart and your time.** It will be examined.
- 7. Opposition by the enemy is to be expected and very real.** Therefore be watchful, be gracious and pray.
- 8. How to know someone is in your heart:** when you pray for them in the middle of the night. You might cry or hurt a little too.



Disciple-making 101: The finish line is not salvation. Salvation is the start of disciple-making.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Amen. - Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV)

Finally, it will take a dedicated small group and even the wider church community to share the load and keep at this work. Burnout is real. Take time off to recharge regularly. We have continued to learn and grow as disciples in the process.

We are a small group of fathers in CMC who gather at 7am on alternate Saturday mornings to pray and worship under the mandate of Malachi 4:5,6 "...to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers." To find out more, email your request to geoffckj@gmail.com

“All God really wants is for us to love him. The way we can show our love for Him is to serve others.”

Mother Teresa



Walking the Talk

BY DISCIPLE 2 (AM) CLASS 2021

The Journey Continues

Our DISCIPLE 2 (D2) class met via Zoom in February for an orientation session where our facilitators, Alice and Kim, briefed us on what to expect and what's expected of us. Having been through D1, we were all familiar with the structure of the class and eager to continue to feed this insatiable thirst for more about what it means and what it takes to be a true disciple.

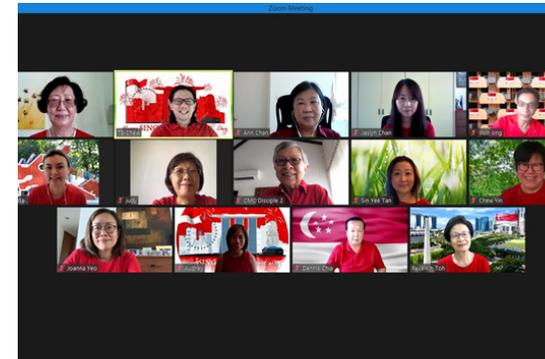
As the theme for D2 is “Into the Word and Into the World”, our facilitators stressed that the emphasis of this leg of our discipleship journey was transformation.

Anchoring our faith in the truth of God's word, we must profess our love for Him in every aspect of our lives – in our thoughts and speech, in the

way we behave, and how we treat and regard people, especially those who are in need.

In a subsequent session, our classmate, Peck Yin, shared with us Brother Lawrence's approach to 'practise the presence of God' in our lives. Brother Lawrence believed that the only way to maintain a deep presence of God in our lives is to repent, open our hearts humbly to Him and do everything for the love of Him.

At about the same time, during the INDI (Intentional Discipleship) 2021 conference, we learned from Pastor Benny Ho that to be 'distinctly different' disciples, we must be rooted in a living relationship with our Saviour, be ever ready to obey and be accountable.



Last year as a D1 class, we embarked on the inward journey of transforming our hearts through an outreach assignment to minister to the last, the least and the lost. We got a taste of what it meant to be focused on 'other-centredness', reaching beyond the boundaries of 'the church' and working united as one body. Since then, there has been no turning back.

Transformation in Progress

This year, as we made progress 'Into the Word and Into the World' as a D2 class, there was no denying that prompting within us –

How do we quench this thirst to show how much God loves each and every one of us? What can we, as a class, do to share the blessings that we have received?

In July, one of our classmates who is a regular befriender at Marine Terrace spoke during class about the Community Fridge. The aim of this initiative is to provide better access to fresh and nutritional food for beneficiary residents in Marine Parade. Currently, CMC provides trays of eggs weekly for the residents.

Our classmate shared that there was an opportunity for us as a class to help distribute food items and at the same time, befriend the beneficiaries. We responded to his call to volunteer for a few allocated Saturdays each month from August to December, at the Community Fridge in Marine Terrace.

Very quickly, led by the Spirit, we appointed someone to collect voluntary cash donations and another person to manage the allocation of these funds towards the purchase of supplies. By the grace of God, our pool of funds grew beyond our imagination, and is still growing, enabling us to source and purchase more necessities and goodies for the beneficiaries at Marine Terrace. Our chat group went into overdrive as our shopping warriors reported on items that we could buy with our funds.

Everyone had a part to play in this outreach. Besides shoppers, volunteers were allocated as 'frontliners', behind-the-scenes coordinators, cash donors, and prayer warriors. It was heartening to see yet another example of the body of Christ at work, pitching in and 'walking worthy' of the Lord.

Witness to the Light

Jesus said, "I am the Light."

As we humble ourselves and put our love for God into action, we remember that it is God's work, not ours; and that by His grace, we are able to 'be His love, be His compassion' (Mother Theresa). It is indeed an honour and a privilege to be thus blessed.

May we, by the grace of God, continue to obey and serve; so that in us and through us, the people that we serve with and whom we serve, will feel God's presence, love and compassion...and continue to love, because He first loved us.



What participants *felt* about the Community Fridge

“God has blessed me with so much and I want to share my blessings. Even though I can’t be there with the group physically, I contributed with my support in prayer and donation... ‘Love thy neighbour’.”

Calista



“...love in action is service.” Reflecting on this, I wondered if, in my daily walk with Him, I was loving as Jesus would love, or if I was getting too comfortable in my spiritual armchair. ‘Passionate for God; Loving the Community’ – am I walking the talk? So, I prayed. Then, the call came for volunteers to man the Community Fridge at Marine Terrace!”

CY



“I felt so closely connected to our good Lord with true joy and blessedness. As I loved, blessed and served others in this outreach, I could feel God smiling at me as I did His will”

Alice

“A question from the study manual impacted me. What could we do to break our complacent rhythm of insulated self-protection? So, I participated in this outreach, spurred on by the spontaneity and enthusiasm of my group members.”

Kim



“This outreach highlighted to me that God looks only at the heart of the believer who obeys His commands.”

Ann



“Through this outreach we are able to share God’s love and mission with the least, the lost and the last whom God loves. ‘For Christ’s love compels us...’(2 Cor 5:14)”

Judy

“When I signed up for the Community Fridge outreach, I was not sure what to expect. After one session, I realised that all it takes to love our neighbour is a friendly face, a bright smile and a gentle touch to bring God’s love to the residents of Marine Terrace.”

Jaslyn



“Our lesson for the week just before our first volunteering session was ‘The Way’ and taught about a lifestyle of service - to give ourselves towards serving the needs of others, our community. It was unplanned but God’s timing is always perfect. It is our daily acts of love, doing our best as witnesses of God’s love and be that living testimony of humility and repentance in Jesus’ name. This to me, is most practical in sharing the wonderful love of God with others. It means living the Gospel truth daily—‘Whoever is the least among you is the greatest’ (Luke 9:48b)”

Tibby



“The Community Fridge outreach has inspired and encouraged me much, to go and look beyond what I have and blessed with, and think about others ...Indeed, as God’s people, we give thanks to God for blessing us to be a blessing to others so that we can show God’s loving kindness and be His witness through this outreach.”

Irvin



“As Christians, we are frequently reminded to be a good neighbour and to help the last, the least and the lost. I know I have to do a lot more if I want to be a good disciple of Christ. I appreciate that we have proactive leaders to galvanise the group into action and I’m glad to be a part of the Community Fridge outreach.”

Audrey



“I no longer have to ‘think about it’. Serving the Lord is part and parcel of discipleship. You see one (opportunity), you get on to it right away. I just let the Spirit of God decide.”

Dennis



About the Community Fridge

The Community Fridge (CF) at Marine Terrace Breeze aims to provide better access to fresh and nutritional food for beneficiary residents in Marine Parade. The project is managed by the RC, led by Ms Shirley Yong, who is a CMC member. Involvement in the CF gives us the opportunity as a church to serve our community and love our neighbours.



Seed projects are small scale, holistic outreach initiatives where churches demonstrate God’s love in practical ways to those

in their community. Rather than adhoc church-wide outreach programmes, Seed projects are carried out by church members themselves on an ongoing basis and within a certain time frame. If you would like to embark on your own seed project, do reach out to us so we can journey with you - contact **Hoi Kok Fu** at kokfu.hoi@cmc.org.sg or **6345 3934**.



Mental Health – It's Not All in the Mind

BY MONICA LIM

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the awareness and importance of mental health. Still, the stigma of mental illness persists, which means people tend to keep the condition to themselves for fear of being labelled crazy or a failure.

Amos Yap, CMC's Senior Ministry Executive, Family Life & Counselling, believes that we need to address the issue of mental health so that we can better help those who suffer from it. One of the reasons why mental health has not been adequately dealt with in the past is that there are many misconceptions. These misconceptions often create social stigma and discrimination which make it more difficult for mentally ill persons to recover:

Just as we don't believe a person with cancer or physical disability is being punished by God, mental illness is not a sign of spiritual deficiency, and can affect anyone.

Misconception #1: You're either mentally ill or mentally well

Mental health is not an all-or-nothing concept. Mental health encompasses a wide spectrum, ranging from having difficulty coping with stress to diagnosed disorders, such as depression and schizophrenia. Everyone experiences some form of mental health difficulty at some point in their lives, and this can change from season to season, or even week to week.

According to Amos, understanding this is important because then we're less likely to dish out platitudes such as, "Just go for more exercise!" or "A good night's sleep will fix you right up!". There is no one-size-fits-all solution and some people might require professional help.

Misconception #2:
Mental illness is a sign of sin, weakness or lack of faith
Unfortunately, the stigma of mental illness

can be real among Christian communities because there are some who mistakenly believe that mental illness is tied to spiritual immaturity. Just as we don't believe a person with cancer or physical disability is being punished by God, mental illness is not a sign of spiritual deficiency, and can affect anyone.

"When we are anxious or fearful, we might think that we are not spiritual enough or lack faith," explains Amos. "As humans, we get anxious and fearful sometimes, even faith giants in the Bible like Elijah in 1 Kings 19:4 and Job (Job 3: 1, 23-26) did. These are not signs of weakness, personality flaws nor personal failures, and certainly not punishments from God."

Misconception #3: You can just "get over" mental illness

"It's all in your mind" or "pray and all will be well" are common refrains from well-meaning friends and family members that can cause a lot of damage to mental

illness sufferers. "The reality is that mental illness can stem from childhood trauma, environmental triggers or biological factors," says Amos. "Of course, prayer is important but on top of that, we need a holistic approach in dealing with severe mental conditions. In more critical cases, they do require clinical treatment."

How do we spot the signs?

Each person is unique in mental health and there are no symptoms that apply across the board for the full spectrum of mental conditions. However, in general, when the symptoms are overwhelming and interfere with a person's daily life for a prolonged period of three to six months, such as not sleeping or eating well, not being his or her usual self, and losing interest in life, these are signs that he or she might require clinical help. Remember, early treatment is important for recovery.

What can we do as a church?

We can create a healing space for mental health conversations and support those who are in distress.

"It's important to adopt a non-judgmental attitude and value them as created in the image of God,"

says Amos. "Usually, people with mental illness struggle with feelings of stigmatisation, guilt and shame, so don't assign blame or be dismissive of the condition." Often, the best thing we can do is to be a listening ear and be there for them. These efforts might seem unappreciated because the person might not show interest in your care. However, Amos explains that this is a common response of wanting to avoid social contact and disconnect. "Don't take it personally. It's not a rebuff. Support them, give them space if necessary, and pray for them."

The church plays a critical role in providing a healing and supportive community. Studies have shown that mentally unwell persons have a higher chance of recovery if they have access to caring and supportive family and friends.

"In Galatians 6:2, we are told to 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ'" quotes Amos.

"I have seen many people with mental illness go on to lead meaningful lives, with the right support and treatment. It's not a death sentence, recovery is possible."

GET HELP



If you or someone you know needs help with mental health, you may reach out to **Amos** at amos@cmc.org.sg

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- Christian Mental Health Conference 2021, 15/16 July 2021, by Dr Daniel Fung, Chief Executive Officer
- "Going to Church May Improve Mental Health", WebMD, Charlene Laino, Medically Reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD on May 26, 2005.



MONICA is a published author, blogger and runs her own copywriting agency. Through divine leading, COVID-19 has introduced her to art, for which she has miraculously won awards. She sells her artwork for charity, and sees art as a channel for conversations about God.

From Ignorance to Knowing

BY YVONNE SOOMUNMEI FORD

My dad passed away in Malaysia on 13 October 2019. It was only 1.5 months before I was going to move back to Malaysia after being away from parents for 15 years.

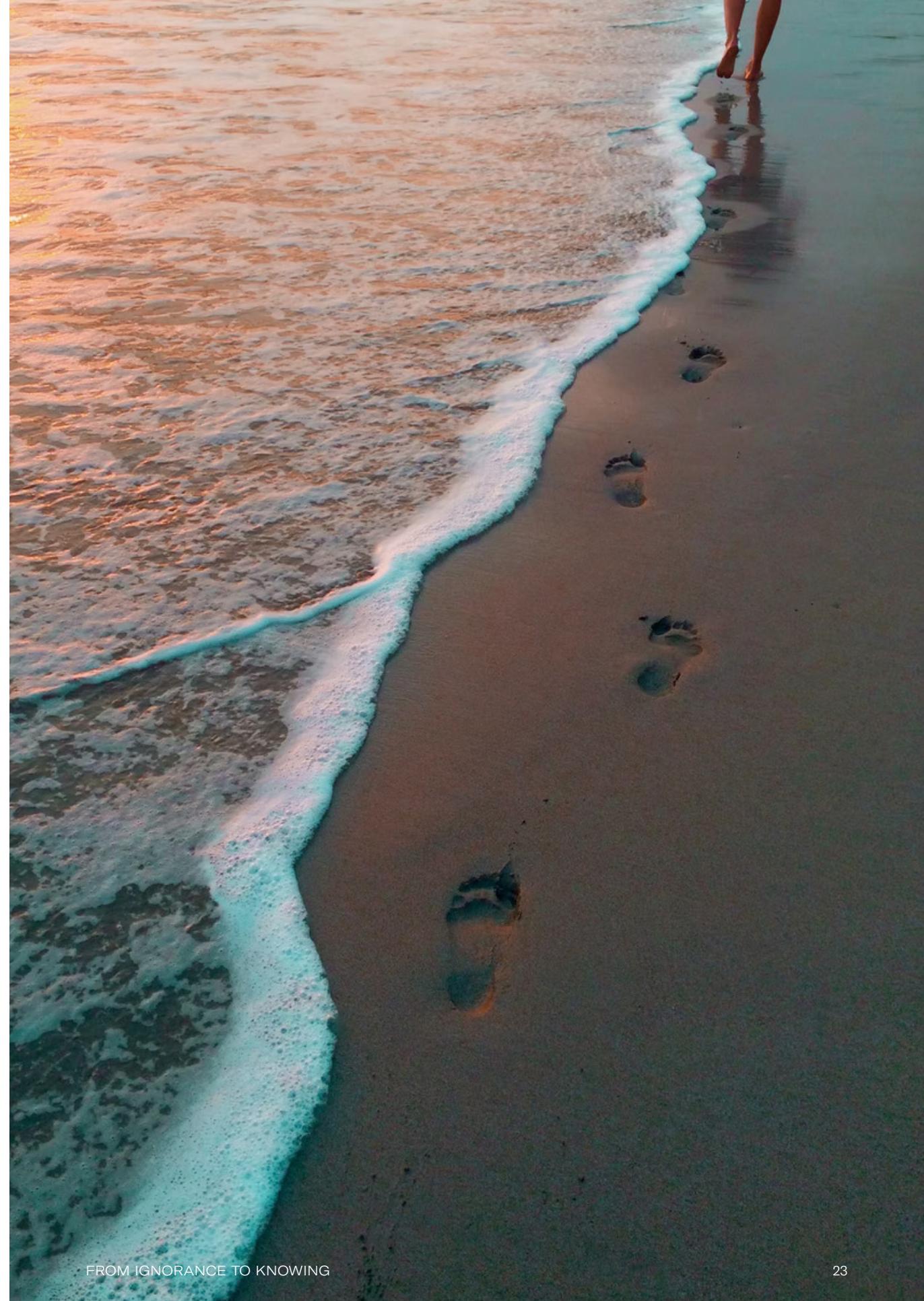
The wake was conducted in a combination of Taoist and Christian traditions. I was agnostic then and it didn't matter to me that both were observed. My heart prayed that dad would find his way to heaven, even though I had no idea where one would go after death. I was filled with regret that I had never properly shown him my love.

Soon after, the world was shaken by COVID-19. Fast forward to September 2020, my eldest sister, who is a member of CMC, invited my sisters and me who were living

in Malaysia, to attend the online Alpha course where she was helping out. Being in lockdown at home for half a year took away disruptions and made it possible to attend the 10-week course. Looking back, this was the time I opened the door when God knocked.

“Says who that Jesus died for us, and for our sins?”

This was the very first question I asked the Alpha facilitators. Clearly, I knew nothing about Christianity back then! I had many doubts and questions: “Religion is a tool used by politicians for power, I don't need one in my life.” “I have been brought up with Confucius teachings, and able to discern what is right from wrong and know what



value to uphold all my life thus far.” “Why do we want eternal life? Who knows for sure where we go after we die?” “Bible said greed is a sin, isn’t wanting to live eternally itself a greedy thought?” “Holy Spirit? Speaking in tongues? It sounds so eerie.”

I didn’t accept Christ when the course ended, but it was very clear in my heart that I wanted to know more about Christianity for three reasons.

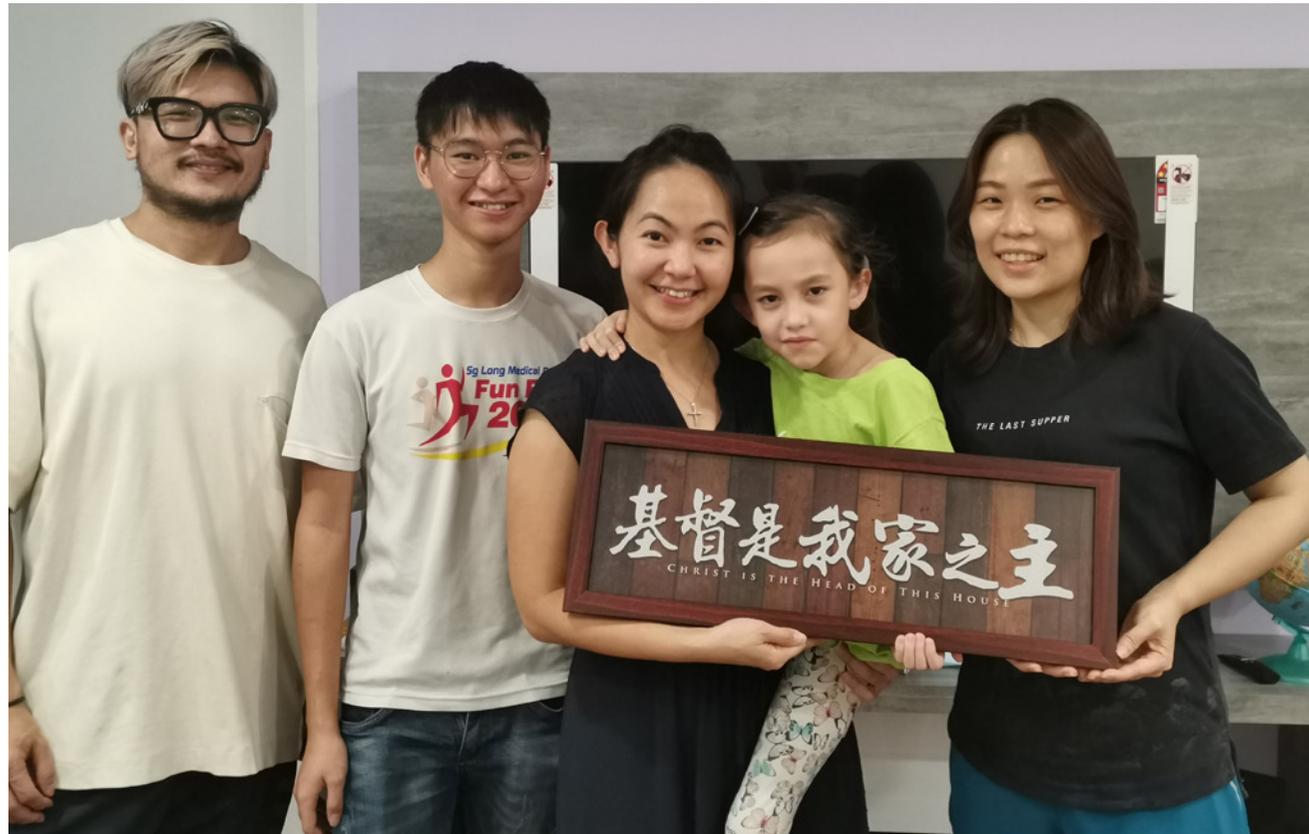
Firstly, I was looking for a moral compass for my children, a strong foundation on the fundamental values one should uphold when making choices in life. It seems to suggest that the Bible is one.

Secondly, “God is the God of Love.” At that time, this was a strange concept to me, and I was intrigued. There wasn’t a subject throughout my entire school life that taught us about love or how to love, and now I am told that this religion is all about love?

Thirdly, Christianity lives a God-centered rather than a self-centered life. I would like to think that I am a considerate person, so I wouldn’t describe myself as being self-centered all my life. But when it comes to making decisions, I have myself as guidance, I am my own authority and I hold myself accountable, I decide my own happiness and my way forward. Self-centeredness doesn’t sound very alien in the world I am living in, but the idea of a God-centered life does. What does it even mean?

How do we and why should we live a God-centered life?

To find answers, I diligently attended online follow-up Bible overview sessions and continued exploring Christianity with other non-believers. Strangely enough, this wouldn’t have been possible if there was no COVID-19. Because of the pandemic, online



platforms flourished. I attended Alpha, church services, small group discussions, courses, and Bible study – all online. Without this pandemic, I might have spent the same amount of time pursuing other interests instead of this spiritual journey.

I still did not know much about Christianity when I accepted Christ on 20 December 2020. It was an inner urge to repent (wholeheartedly), to surrender (I never thought I could surrender to anyone), and a desire to experience love from God. I felt content when I opened my heart to receive grace from God and submitted control of my life to God. That was a very personal moment between me and God. I did find it weird that people around me were so happy for me, but I guess it was because I saw it as a “self-centered” decision.

I continued my journey. I attended Alpha sessions for the second time this year and “rediscovered” Christianity. Some details and messages in the Alpha videos that I didn’t

pay attention to the last time, resonated with me this time. There were questions I had during the last Alpha course that I managed to answer myself.

Continuous study has strengthened my faith that Jesus died for our sins. He is our saviour.

Learning the God-centered life is a journey. I am blessed that God has guided me and sent me mentors to edify me. It is the PURPOSE of our life. Through Christ, we are reborn—reborn to a new way of life, a life of striving to be like Christ. The standard of God’s Kingdom is so high that we ought to spend our entire life living up to it.

I used to have this funny subconscious thinking that it’s alright if I don’t get such things in my present life because the next life might be better. Now, knowing the truth

that we only have one life, gives me a clear perspective on how I want to live this one and only life.

I used to hold grudges from pitiful arguments and let envy, unfairness and ego fill me up. I would chase after careers that fulfil my material desires, luxury leisures and pleasures in life. In between, I probably committed a number of sins.

Regrets? I have had a few. But after being given a new life, I do not want to live my life like that again. God’s grace and mercy have given me purpose in life and a God-centered life is what I strive to live. It would be a joy to witness to others as I discover this new life.



YVONNE A new believer. Blessed with two children, a loving husband, kind parents and in-laws, generous siblings, truthful friends, and thoughtful boss. Spent almost a third of life in Dubai working in banking industry. Now back in Malaysia working with one of the Big 4 firms.



Bishop Dr Gordon Wong



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PASTOR-IN-CHARGE
Mr Henry Tan
TRAC LAY LEADER
Bishop Dr Gordon Wong



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Celebrating 91 Years

Some highlights from our 91st Anniversary Celebrations on 29 August 2021.

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*Rev David Ho has been appointed to Covenant Community Methodist Church w.e.f. 1 January 2022

**Rev Tay Li Ping has been appointed to Christalite Methodist Chapel w.e.f. 1 January 2022

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Get Deeper into the Word and be Transformed!

D1

Tue or Thu (7.30 pm)

D2

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D3

Tue (9.30 am) or Tue (7.30 pm) or Thu (7.30 pm)

D4

Thu (7.30 pm)

Weekly classes commence on

15 Feb 2022 (Tue) and 17 Feb 2022 (Thu)

D1: 34 weeks; D2, D3 and D4: 32 weeks

D2, D3 and D4 are open to D1 graduates only

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