

August 2014

MICA (P) 013/11/2010

WITNESS



CHRIST
METHODIST CHURCH

You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. Acts 22:15



Family Blessings

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Witness is a quarterly newsletter of Christ Methodist Church. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of Christ Methodist Church or The Methodist Church in Singapore.

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PASSIONATE FOR GOD, LOVING THE COMMUNITY



A Word from the Editor

"Family" – few other words come so pre-loaded with emotions of such a wide range, from deep anxiety and grieving, to soaring pride, respect, wonder, and amusement, to envy and even rage.

Home is often where we are put through the fires of testing, as we journey closely with others who are more different from ourselves than we'd like. If we stay humble and try to keep a positive outlook through all circumstances, it the place where we can learn and also truly experience unconditional love.

I believe there are blessings to be found in all aspects of home life, including the ones that look negative. Disagreements? At least you've heard a perspective other than your own, which could prove useful someday. Hurt feelings? At least you now know what words, actions or neglect could hurt someone else, and you will be more careful with others. Your hopes and plans steamrolled by someone with more authority than you? A humbling reminder that perhaps you were given life in order to fulfill someone else's hopes and plans, at least for now.

Every challenge in the household is an opportunity for self-improvement, a richer prayer life and better-managed relationships with others. I am saddened to hear that so many have become calloused and cynical because of negative relational patterns in the home. My feeling is that much of this is related to unforgiveness. We are wronged, perhaps constantly, by someone who is supposed to love us, and we choose to resent that person for it, all our lives long.

I once read an intriguing book that spent most of its chapters exploring the question: "What if the institution of marriage (and family) wasn't designed primarily to make us happy, but to make us holy?" After some years of consideration, I have come to adopt this view as my own. It seems consistent with the level of difficulty family life brings, and the amount of vulnerability and self-denial needed to achieve a loving home.

Quite a few stories in this issue of WITNESS give some insight into family relationships. Look out for tips and wisdom that might be able to help you in your own unique circumstances, or ways in which our church can assist you in your family life.

Many of us also consider CMC to be our second home; here in our small groups, ministries and makan gangs, we share lives, help carry burdens, and often rush to the rescue if anyone is in trouble. So if you're living here in Singapore without family, or you're lonely and looking for somewhere to belong, I invite you to come spend time with us. You will be more than welcome. (But please forgive us our imperfections – we have them too.)

Elena Gudgeon
Managing Editor, WITNESS



Put Down your Phone

by Pastor Shaun Chong

I was on the train on the way to work. As usual, the train was very crowded. It was so packed that everyone was invading each other's personal space.

I could feel the breath of the person standing behind me. At each turn the train made, we were practically leaning on the persons on our sides. The person in front of me was so close that I didn't have any space to whip out my iPhone to while away time as I carried on with the balancing act. Without personal entertainment, I began looking around the train car. I was greeted with a sight of absurdity. Pretty much every passenger had their heads to a 45-degree downward tilt and staring at their phones.

We are addicted to our screens. (I wouldn't be surprised if any of us reaches out to check our phone even before we get to the end of this article.)

It's a common sight these days to see a family out for dinner, around the table; no one's engaging in conversation. Each member of the family is instead glued to their phones or tablets. The lively interactions around the dinner table, traditionally the heart of many Asian families, are now a foregone reality.

With the advancement in technology and the dawn of social media, people are more connected than ever before. Yet, we can have 1000 friends on Facebook or 172 "likes" on a recent Instagram post, but still feel lonely. The problem with friendship via social media is that we begin to choose who we want to be connected to. We get selective with who we want to be close to. In the past, we used to be close to people who were physically around us. Our network and relationships were determined by geographical locale. Today, we can be extremely connected to a friend living in Melbourne but totally unaware of what goes on in the life of someone living under the same roof.

Very often we see parents trying to pacify their fidgety child by handing them a Tablet or Smartphone. Sure, I recognize that it's

really handy and effective in keeping an infant occupied and happy. However, I think we're missing the point. I was out for lunch with Ps David Gwee one afternoon where we observed an infant whining and squirming in his seat. The mother periodically glanced away from her phone to ask him to be quiet. After some time, the mother was visibly frustrated that her child wouldn't keep still. As onlookers, we remarked to each other that it was obvious that the boy only wanted one thing: His mother's attention! He wanted the affection of his mother.

Am I suggesting that social media and Smartphones are evil? Certainly not! I love technology. I love the convenience that it brings. I frequently get to interact and be part of the growing years of Kaley, my niece residing in New Zealand. Thank God for FaceTime! In fact, the reach of the Gospel has been greatly increased because of social media. With a few strokes of the keyboard, I can share scripture with my 1493 friends on Facebook.

But we must not miss the point. Just as a knife can be incredibly useful in the hands of a Masterchef, it can be extremely dangerous in the hands of a toddler. We need to embrace technology and use it for our benefit. At the same time we need to exercise restraint and caution. Otherwise, my fear is that we would have lost more than we have gained.

Nothing beats face-to-face communication with others. We were made for relationship. God made us that way. While social media brings us all closer to one another, it lacks the depth that face-to-face communication has. Human communication comprises of more than just text. The non-verbal is equally significant. Social networking cannot be a substitute for quality time with our loved ones.

Friends, as we focus on the family in this issue of Witness, let's make it a conscious effort to be mindful of the way we use our mobile devices. Let us not be so glued to our screens that we miss out on intimate moments with our loved ones.

There, I've said it. Now... let me Instagram this.



 *A Snapshot of*
Sunday Life
in our new church building

1. The main sanctuary during our 10.30am contemporary worship service

2. Our Grace Fellowship (domestic helpers) gathering at the 5th Floor Chapel

3. The Audio Visual crew hard at work behind-the-scenes



1. Our baby grand piano for choral accompanists, home-grown and guest musicians to flex their musical giftings
2. Our Chancel Choir resplendent in their new togs
3. Our Welcome Team chatting with an elderly worshiper
4. Mr Tang hamming it up for the camera at the Fellowship Deck
5. Children's Church (Christkidz) at Auditorium 2, Level 4
6. Old friends catching up on one of our refurbished pews
7. Kids seem to love the new lush landscaping!

WHAT'S GOING ON AT CMC?

SEP | OCT | NOV 2014

Our church isn't only open and active on Sundays.

There's something happening nearly every day of the week.

You don't have to be a church member to participate in any of these, just come on down!

CHINESE TEA APPRECIATION WORKSHOP

Two sessions of tea sampling. For those interested in the history, health benefits and brewing techniques of various Chinese teas.

8pm on 2 Fridays
(Choose either 12 & 26 Sept, 10 & 24 Oct, or 7 & 21 Nov)

At the Tiferet Tea Room, #02-17, Katong V

Contact Iris Lew at 92766288 for enquiries

COFFEE GARDEN

An informal get together for those with a green thumb, to share basic gardening and landscaping knowledge and tips. Beginners welcome.

10am – 12 noon, one Tuesday a month
Beginning 16 Sept 2014
At CMC

Contact Kenneth Tan at 96987487 for more information.

THE MARRIAGE COURSE

Come for a weekly date with your spouse in a relaxed atmosphere to learn practical and helpful tips for your marriage.

7:30pm on eight Fridays starting 5 Sept 2014

Level 4, At CMC

Email IGS.CMC@gmail.com for more information



ZUMBA FITNESS WORKOUTS

This is a popular dance exercise regime to great Latin music! For ladies of any age or fitness level. (Healthy fruit snacks afterwards)

9.30 – 10.30am on Tuesdays, for 8 weeks starting 16 Sept 2014

Level 4, Auditorium 2
At CMC

Contact Dadina Wong at 98537204 or email dadinawong@gmail.com for more information.

LADIES GYM

Learn basic strengthening and conditioning exercises to keep yourself fit.

10am on alternate Thursdays of the month
At CMC

Email Lai Yee at ylaiyee@yahoo.com.sg for more information

LINE DANCE COURSE

For beginners & Intermediate level dancers, both men and women.

3 – 4.30pm on all Thursdays

Level 5, Creative Loft
At CMC

For more details, please enquire at our ground floor Information Counter on Sunday mornings.

GLOWING YEARS MINISTRY (GYM) FELLOWSHIP DAY

An afternoon of fun and fellowship for retirees and seniors, with sing-alongs, line dancing, ukulele / guitar jamming, and games like table soccer, table tennis, board games.

2.30 – 5pm every 2nd Friday of the month

Level 4, Auditorium 2
At CMC

SONGS OF YESTERYEARS

Themed monthly session of fun and fellowship for retirees and seniors, with sing-along songs, stand up comedy, skits, optional dancing, and food afterwards.

2.30 – 5.30pm, every last Friday of the month (Except in Dec, when it is a week earlier)

Level 3, Auditorium 1
At CMC



SOCCER FOR ALL AGES

Selected weekends at St. Patrick Secondary School's soccer field starting in September 2014.

Email IGS.CMC@gmail.com for more information

THE PARENTING TEENAGERS COURSE

For those who care for youths aged 11 – 18 years.

7:30pm on five Fridays starting 5 Sept 2014

Level 4, At CMC

Email IGS.CMC@gmail.com for more information

THE PARENTING CHILDREN COURSE

For those who care for children aged 0-10 years and prospective parents.

7:30pm on five Fridays starting 5 Sept 2014

Level 4, At CMC

Email IGS.CMC@gmail.com for more information

COOKING AND BAKING CLASSES

Learn to make delicious meals for yourself or your loved ones!

One Tuesday morning each month, starting in September 2014.

Ground Floor, CMC

Email IGS.CMC@gmail.com for more information

MANDARIN YOUTH OUTING

大自然有个约

青年团契户外活动

参与群体：青少年
(欢迎海外留学生)

时间：十月



DADDY DISCLOSURE

Loving unconditionally and finding purpose in one's work are what makes life meaningful for Dr Sunil Sethi. He shares about how he tries to build his children up with these relational and life skills.

A life of meaning

Dr Sunil Sethi, 54, father to 2 children, heads a Department at the National University of Singapore (NUH), where he does research in chemical pathology and internal medicine.

Looking at the Sethi family, one is struck by how the children, daughter Shevaun, 21, and son Ervin, 20,

seem to follow in the footsteps of their father, in taking up medicine as their study and calling, as both are current medical students in NUS as well.

Dr Sethi believes that he has an indirect influence on his children's study and career choice. However, he reflects that it is due more to his personal belief that it is important to look for meaning in what one does more than anything else that has made a bearing on their choice. In fact, he and his wife, Linda, who is a Chinese and a homemaker, espouse supporting their children rather than influencing and judging their decisions, so that they will not fear making their own choices in life.

Learning to love

Though Shevaun and Ervin are only 18 months apart, and both are studying medicine, they could not be more different to their parents. While Shevaun

is strong-willed and socially inclined, being involved in regular community development trips abroad, Ervin is more obliging and easy-going, with a keen interest in working with athletes and taking up sports medicine.

Indeed, differences in the family make for a good reason to practise unconditional love for the building of firm relationships. Dr Sethi and his wife believe in the utmost importance of supporting and loving their children unconditionally, so that they will not learn to be calculative or selfish, doing things for their own benefit or purpose. Dr Sethi stresses that unconditional love is first and foremost seen in the bonding between husband and the wife, before children, who are sharp in spotting hypocrisy, learn to show and exhibit likewise to family members and others in their lives.

Learning to reconcile is just as important as learning to love unconditionally, which is another value that Dr Sethi and his wife make a point to impart to their children. Whenever his children quarrel, the parents would make use of the opportunity to teach them the 'art of reconciliation' with the spirit of grace and humility, rather than react with passive aggression. He explains that far from being 'bad', arguments, when handled well, teach people to be honest with themselves and others, and to be magnanimous.

Being peacemakers with the aim of imparting such values to their children, Dr Sunil adds on that consistency is another golden rule of parenting. Leading by example, rather than merely teaching through words, is what children need to see practised by their parents. He and his wife therefore make the effort not to show favouritism to either child, speaking with both independently and with consistency, especially when it comes to negotiating disagreements. Little moments

For Dr Sunil, the sum of the most memorable moments with his family come from the little things: daily family dinners at home and time spent in the car with the children as they commute to school and work together. He also immensely enjoys the simple holidays that

they take together as a family each year. He is grateful for the simple life and closeness that the family shares, and is proud that his children have learnt to be independent and pick up after themselves, in part due to he and his wife's joint decision not to have full-time help in the house. This also gives them the chance to do some household chores together as a family. Shared dreams

Dr Sunil, who is an avid volunteer himself, participates in overseas medical mission trips 2-3 times a year, and is also involved in outreach in hospitals to help the local communities in Singapore. He reflects that though he and his children volunteer in different areas, their joint interest in serving the community has also probably brought them closer together. In fact, he would used to bring his children along with him on his overseas medical mission trips when they were younger, and he has a fond memory of 8 year old Ervin dishing out medicines for him as his self-appointed pharmacist when they made their rounds together in a village with a small mobile clinic.

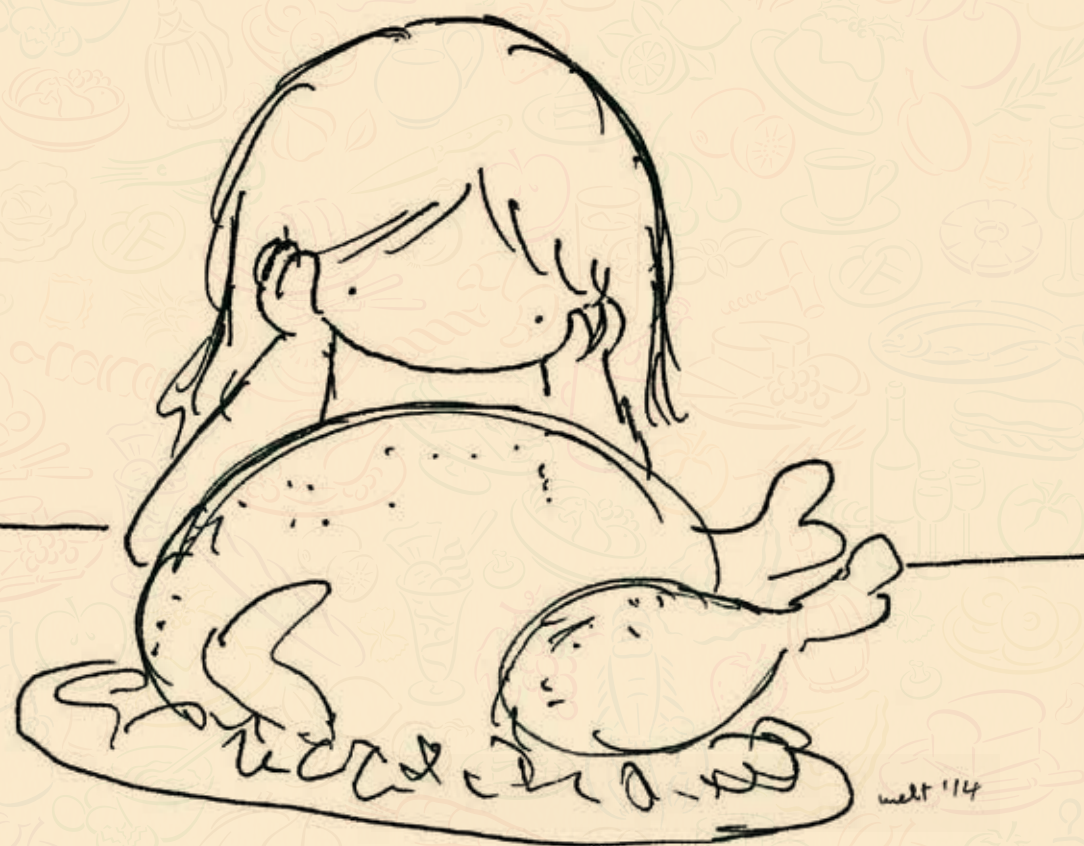
Dr Sunil indeed wishes that his children would share the same dreams as him, which is to believe in what they choose to do, and to enjoy it to the utmost. 'I hope for them to have genuine fulfilment in what they do', he shares, 'so that they find something for themselves other than mere material things'.

Dr Sethi and his family worship at Christ Methodist Church.

Article republished with permission from Dads for Life <http://dadsforlifescg.wordpress.com/>



The Dads for Life Resource Team comprises local content writers and experts, including psychologists, counsellors, educators and social service professionals, dedicated to developing useful resources for dads.



I'm writing to share about a season in my life that was very hard, in the hope that it will encourage someone who might be struggling with the same thing now. The year 2008 marked the beginning of my studies in junior college, and also the start of my struggle with eating disorders.

Starvation

I discovered that I could not cope with the high academic demands very well, and frequently felt that I was not measuring up to other girls on campus, both academically and physically. So I resorted to restricting my food intake to only one piece of bread for lunch as that was what I observed another schoolmate doing. This self-imposed food restriction became a lifestyle and by the end of 2008, I was refusing to eat anything but a piece of bread for lunch and vegetables for dinner.

God created our bodies to be fueled by a certain amount of nutrients daily, partly because eating was designed to be a pleasurable experience. At the time I hadn't realized that severely restricting my dietary intake would also trigger a voracious and insatiable appetite which pretty much countered the dieting 'plan' I had come up with. My immaturity, lack of foresight, and an underlying fear of the future had caused me to embark on an unsustainable diet.

Binge Eating

During the Chinese New Year season in 2009, I could no longer live with the constant gnawing hunger and so I started binge-eating. I also began to use binge-eating to cope with the stress that I faced with the rigorous workload in junior college. Binge-eating is a term that you may have used lightly to refer to increased snacking during the festive season, but for me it was more like an addiction – a secret and clandestine activity that wielded



power over me and made me feel horrible about myself.

As I privately read up about addictions and how those types of repetitive behaviours can damage the brain's function for rational decision-making in the frontal cortex, a part of me started to truly believe that I was internally powerless to deal with my binge-eating habits. By then I was frequently consuming thousands of calories within a few hours – much more than a person normally eats – and so increasingly I felt that I needed to go through a certain diet, procedure or regime to help me get out of it.

I don't attribute any of this to the neglect of my parents, because my general disposition is to keep to myself and not tell anyone if I have a problem, believing that I can tackle it on my own. So each successive binge-eating episode was followed by attempts to lose weight through various means, and I was never successful in finding a balanced lifestyle in which I felt normal and healthy, because I was constantly 'punishing' myself with

When *food* becomes the **ENEMY**

by Janice Mok



the kinds and amounts of food that I ate. This disorder became a part of me without me even realizing it, and adversely affected me not just physically but emotionally and spiritually as well. After each binge, my feelings of guilt would be reinforced, and I often collapsed in crying spells and sleeping spells. I would angrily ask God why I wasn't able to control my eating, and then I would become really sleepy because of all the food in my stomach. Physically I felt bloated and uncomfortable.

Food worship

Towards the end of 2009 I watched a video that convinced me my binge-eating habit could be broken if I just ate normally, whatever and however much I wanted. So I did that, and it felt somewhat 'normal' but because of my genes resulted in natural weight gain. At the time I didn't mind because it was such a relief to get out of the prison of restricting my diet. Mentally, I swung to the opposite extreme and began to believe that my happiness and healing depending on having food all the time, so that I wouldn't ever feel starved again. I saw food as having the power to spiritually and emotionally nourish me, in addition to physically building me. How warped my view of food had become! I even don't know where I put God in that picture. My binge-eating stopped temporarily then because I didn't set any restrictions for myself, but unconsciously I had moved into a lifestyle of habitual and recreational eating. Whenever I experienced strong emotions such as discomfort, disappointment, or

sadness, I resorted to eating to make myself feel better. Food became my companion and friend. I would get angry and hostile if my mother didn't allow me to eat because I felt that she was depriving me of my source of true happiness. Food became my God. Every time I ate in secret I felt empowered – the way that someone might feel when he does something he knows he ought not to be doing.

Weight gain

But once I realized just how much weight I had gained because of this, I began to hate and despise myself for who I was and what I looked like. These feelings of inadequacy worsened as I finished junior college and started applying to study at university, because it seemed that everyone was watching the decisions that I made for myself during this time. I felt sick and disillusioned with everything in life, and decided to just not care about anything anymore. I believed that I had earned the right to this attitude after slaving so hard for my 'A' levels. So I chain-watched Korean dramas as an escape. I would watch an entire drama series of twenty episodes nonstop if I could, and I often did it overnight so that my parents would not notice.



Janice with her mum and brother

Though I got into the university and course of my choice, I felt dispirited, aimless and tired. I saw myself as a fat person and believed that people didn't like me because I was overweight. Because of this preoccupation with self-image, I performed badly in my first two years at university. This just compounded my bad mood and I behaved rebelliously towards my parents at home. The more my mother tried to help me control my eating, the more 'thorny' I got in my attitude towards her.

So I distanced myself from my family believing none of them could understand what I was going through. Bad confrontations with my parents often left me feeling suicidal – I remember one particular day I stormed out of the house with nothing but my clothes and shoes on and later found myself sitting in a precarious position in some building contemplating suicide. Thankfully God

didn't let me do it. But I was very angry at Him for the way my life was going and I kept my distance from Him although I was still serving in church during that season. I suppose that's why it felt like I never managed any of my ministry responsibilities well.

This all went on for several years because I did not believe that I had any ability to heal from my eating disorders or to become a better person. I lived in constant fear that something bad was going to happen and it took me a really long time to see that my worth is not measured in terms of what kind or how much food I ate. I could not see that I was never eating in a 'normal' way. Those rules regarding food had become a reference point from which to view my life and which all aspects of my life revolved around.

The cycle starts again

At the end of 2013, I'd had enough of feeling fat. Once again, I started restricting my food intake. I became so convinced that I needed to drastically reduce what I was eating in order to feel in control of my life once again. I began exercising excessively, without considering the damaging consequences of doing so. At this point I also started hearing 'voices' talking about me and commenting on my life, and I no longer felt that I could be myself at home because I felt that people were watching me. The binge-eating started again, this time in even larger amounts than before, and the accompanying crying spells got worse. You're probably thinking – is there no end to this? Can't she just eat normally? But back then, to 'eat normally' seemed an unattainable dream for me. I couldn't do it.



But somehow I did start letting my mother back into my life, and as I complained to her each day about my struggle, she urged me to turn back to God because I had deviated so far from Him. She pointed out that I used to be so passionate about God and could be again if I stilled myself before Him and gave Him my focus and attention. She helped me to see that I should not be angry with God because He loves me so much. At that point I was so emotionally low that in almost every conversation I had with her I would end up crying. It was draining for both of us, but slowly I did start taking her advice and going back to God. I started by simply listening to Christian songs, because music had always been a special part of my

relationship with God. Then slowly I began to sing along with them, and I could feel a burden being lifted off me.

Assurance of healing

I was still wrestling with my food issues but I could sense that God was present and helping me, because I was now open to his leading. The first real breakthrough in my restoration was when I felt prompted to attend the Kingdom Invasion Conference in March at Cornerstone Community Church, and I went for several of the night rallies. People were being miraculously healed at this conference and I too received the affirming word of God one night, assuring me that He is now healing me from my years of emotional hurts and eating disorders, and that I ought to believe it with all my heart. Oddly enough, all the time I had struggled with this, I had never really felt I needed to be healed by God because I had always thought I needed to fix myself first in order to be worthy before God. But as I watched hundreds of people get healed and realized that I am a part of something much bigger than just me and my personal struggle, my focus shifted from self to God.

I won't say that God instantly healed me that night. Rather, He made me aware of the possibility of wholeness and the reality of recovery. As I began to prioritize God by spending time with Him first thing in the morning, rather than exercising, He began directing me towards the important things in life, and away from obsessing about food and weight. But there was a constant battle between what my flesh was used to doing and what my spirit wanted to do. Though I was now more open to God's leading, I still struggled with anxious thoughts and paranoia about calories whenever I sat down to a meal, and I still lapsed into cycles of binge eating and dieting.



Accepting help

The breakthrough came when my parents brought me to a dietician, who showed me the proper amounts and times that I should eat. Before letting God back into my life, I would not have even been open to receiving help from a professional because I wouldn't have believed that I could get better. But because I had been assured at the conference that He was healing me, I accepted her help. Through her, God revealed to me how distorted my view of food and eating had become – all my normal body processes had become warped in my mind. And I hadn't even realized that because our brains feed on the glucose that comes from carbohydrates alone, restricting carbohydrate intake in the long run could cause your brain to decrease in mass. This really woke me up!

Today I am much happier and more balanced because the internal void that I used to fill with food is now completely filled with the love of God. I now know Jesus not just as a spiritual savior who has redeemed me from my sins and purchased for me eternal life, but also as a physical and emotional savior who has freed me from the shackles of eating disorders in this life. When circumstances get me stressed or upset, I am certain that I can trust in a God who is my deliverer and my refuge in times of trouble.

It was something Randy Clarke said on the first night of the Kingdom Invasion Conference that prompted me to write all of this down to

share with you. He said not giving testimony to God's healing in your life is like stealing glory from God. So I have written this article to thank and praise God for delivering me from years of believing the lie that I needed to fix myself in order to be worthy of His love and others' acceptance. Because we live in a fallen world, we are all broken and sick in different ways. Sometimes it is because of bad decisions we have made. Sometimes it's not even our fault – someone else hurt or broke us. But we can ALL be delivered and made whole again by believing in Jesus.

I witnessed many healing miracles take place that night at the conference, but I also distinctly remember the pastor wanting to pray for persons who wanted to become Christ followers, saying that, "it is not healing that is the greatest good but salvation that is the greatest good". My desire is that this story will inspire you to seek the healer and not just the healing.



Illustrations by Melissa Tan
www.paintinks-by-melt.com



Janice has completed an arts degree in Literature and is currently applying with NIE to become a teacher. She grew up in CMC and has one brother, Jarred.



Reading Recommendation

Smart Parenting for Smart Kids is co-authored by Eileen Kennedy-Moore, PhD, and Mark S. Lowenthal, PsyD.

Kennedy-Moore is an author, psychologist, and speaker, who specializes in parenting and children's social and emotional development. Lowenthal is a clinical psychologist with more than 22 years of clinical experience and a long-time advocate of children's mental health issues, who has helped to shape health policy in the United States.

In *Smart Parenting for Smart Kids*, Kennedy-Moore and Lowenthal draw attention to a common issue expressed by parents: "My kid is smart, but..." The authors emphasize that parents must look beyond school smarts to cultivate a fulfilling and meaningful life for their children. They reveal that many bright children face special challenges: some are driven by perfectionism; some are afraid of effort because they are used to instant success; some routinely butt heads with authority figures; some struggle to get along with their peers; some are outwardly successful but just do not feel good about themselves.

Particularly relevant in Singapore's high-stakes culture and education system, *Smart Parenting for Smart Kids* sheds light on why parents need to counter the mind-set that kids must be pushed ever harder to succeed. The authors note the widespread fixation on developing children's 'potential', arguing that the current view of potential does children a disservice. They explain that this "narrow view of potential suggests that there is some lofty gold ring of success, and our children will either jump high enough to reach it or else fall short" (pg 3).

Instead, the authors urge parents to expand their definition of potential and recognize that life comprises many choices, chances and paths. In their view, potential must not be regarded as an end point but a continual capacity to grow, learn and evolve. *Smart Parenting for Smart Kids* strives to help parents nurture their children as whole people with feelings, ideas, and

instill in children the ability to cope with disappointment and setbacks.

Delivered with wisdom, warmth and compassion, this book uses jargon-free language to outline approaches for parents to guide children toward developing inner resilience and outward empathy. Drawing from child psychology research as well as the authors' clinical experience, this book provides concrete strategies for helping children learn to cope with feelings, build relationships, and embrace learning. Each chapter of the book narrows in on the essential skills children need to maximize their abilities and find personal satisfaction.

Chapter one, Tempering Perfectionism, drives home an important point that parents must not let children fall into the trap of believing that "they must do everything flawlessly" and that "their self-worth depends on it" (pg 11). The authors make the crucial distinction



between perfectionism and healthy striving. In order to help children develop the latter, parents should encourage children to exercise self-compassion and help them identify what went right rather than just replaying and magnifying mistakes.

Another standout chapter, *Managing Sensitivity*, teaches children a critical skill of how to handle the criticism, conflict and disappointment that they will inevitably encounter throughout life. The authors describe how many bright children struggle with emotional sensitivity. These children seem to display very strong emotional reactions and often feel "deeply wounded by events that other children shrug off" (pg 81). For these hyper sensitive children, "emotions seem like a tidal wave – a crushing onslaught over which they have no control" (pg 81). The authors' focus in this chapter is on helping parents to engage in emotion coaching. Emotion coaching entails parents' displaying empathy to children's emotion, plus actively teaching children how to process and cope with negative feelings.

Chapter seven, *Finding Joy*, has a simple but profound message that will resonate with many parents, almost all of which have said or thought this: "I just want my kid to be happy" (pg 238). As the authors express, "no matter how bright or accomplished our children might be, this is our most basic wish for them" (pg 238). This chapter compels parents to reflect on the bigger picture – that every little thing that parents do for kids is ultimately aimed at their present or future happiness. The authors offer parents strategies to support a children's ability to find pleasure and meaning from life and see the glass as half full. These include expressing gratitude for little joys in life, relieving happy memories, getting sufficient sleep and rest, and reading inspiring stories together.

This book's concluding chapter, *The Pressure to Perform Versus the Power to Grow*, reminds parents that while winning can be fun and satisfying, it should not be



the focal point of life. The authors warn parents that those who overemphasize achievement "risk placing [their] children on a treadmill of constantly having to prove their worth" (pg 272). They encourage parents to take a different approach, to speak to their children using "the language of becoming", which is "a way of speaking to children that enables them to see themselves as continually evolving and changing" (pg 274). This helps parents and children change how they think about the child's personality on a very fundamental level and develop a growth mind-set in children.

Smart Parenting for Smart Kids is a must-read for Singaporean parents who live in a society where children's academic performance is put at the forefront, often at the expense of cultivating other valuable qualities such as kindness, humour, curiosity, determination and compassion. This book will empower parents to take a more holistic approach to parenting and help their children reach their full potential – socially, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually.

Get hold of a copy of *Smart Parenting for Smart Kids* from Singapore's public libraries

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Preparing for the big “I do”



by Kwan Hui Xian

help couples to work towards starting life together on a firm foundation. But I distinctly remember that one of the first Bible verses we were encouraged to consider was 1 Corinthians 7:28 “...But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.”

This very frank approach to marriage is one thing that I grew to appreciate about the course. I was initially apprehensive about having to share details about my personal life with our mentors and other participants, but as the course went on, I realized that this was never really a problem. Each couple that signs up for the MPC is mentored by an experienced married couple, and we found all the marriage mentors to be very open about their experiences, challenges and solutions. This helped to make the environment a non-threatening one for us. Our mentors contributed an objective perspective on our relationship, and helped Jilun and I to see that we are generally on the right track and that getting married to each other is not a huge mistake.

The MPC also brought to my attention certain issues about married life that I wasn't previously aware of. Together as a class, we watched a video series called “Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts”, and one unexpected learning point was how everyone has unique unspoken rules that

When I first started attending Christ Methodist Church at the end of 2012, one of the things that caught my eye was the Marriage Preparation Course (MPC).

It was timely, as my then-boyfriend and I were looking for a permanent church to settle down as a couple. Coming from different churches and denominations, Jilun and I felt it was important to find a church we both were comfortable in before moving our relationship forward.

When we did start our first MPC session on 15 February 2014, it didn't begin in a manner I was expecting. We knew that the course is based on biblical principles for marriage, to



MPC participants Patricia Yong and Albert Wee

we may not consciously be aware of. These rules are often influenced by how our parents brought us up. For instance, in my family, everyone's birthday is celebrated with a meal and presents. But in Jilun's family, birthdays are not celebrated at all. So a potential issue could be that I don't feel appreciated if he doesn't celebrate my birthday, while to him, there is no problem at all.

The course also covered practical areas like how to manage finances and deal with in-laws. As our wedding draws nearer and in-laws (and friends and extended family) want to have a bigger say in what it should be like, it is beginning to feel like a whole new ball game. So the tips we picked up on how to have a good relationship with our in-laws were really helpful.

Having dated Jilun for over five years, I didn't really think there was much left to discover about him. But as we did the course together, I actually gained a better understanding of what makes him tick and how we can complement each other better as a couple. Definitely no regrets about signing up and I'm sure it will be a blessing to future couples who attend.

CMC's marriage preparation course runs twice a year. Email Pastor David Gwee at david.gwee@cmc.org.sg for details about the next one, or if you have questions.



Hui Xian met Jilun when they were both studying in NTU. There wasn't any striking first impression but it was impressive how he could seemingly read her mind and know when she needed a kind word. She now works at World Vision and Jilun works with the National Parks Board. They are to be married next year.

Here are some thoughts from others who attended the course in the past, both mentees and mentors.

“Before actually attending the course, we thought it was going to be a ‘dry’ 6 weeks of bible reading and extracting all the references God has for married couples. But it turned out to be very interactive and eye opening, with each week revealing the experiences that others around the world (via the video teachings), and our mentors have gone through. The mentors shared their experiences of the days after their marriage and after their children were born. With their advice in mind, we were mentally prepared for the challenges that lay ahead and we've so far navigated the first 7 months of Caleb's life without getting into major bumps.”

Patsy & Luke Teo

Married for 2 years, with a 7-month old son

“We like the videos shown at each session. Life is too short so it's very helpful to learn from the mistakes of others. By hearing others' points of view, we had a better idea of what to expect in married life and learned how to handle problems. For example, in the first few months of marriage, Sheryl struggled with doing the housework, but was always reminded of the ‘habit of happiness’ that we learned during the course.”

Sheryl & Chin Siang Ong

Married for 8 months

“We signed up as mentors because we wanted to serve as a couple and share with young couples the challenges as well as the joys of married life. Every time we go through the sessions, we learn something new and gain new perspectives. We are also reminded that our marriage needs continuing attention and effort and we cannot take each other for granted.”

Samantha & Noel Ong

Married for 18 years, with two sons, aged 15 and 17



Parenting IOI

by Vanessa Lee

When you become a parent, you are pretty much thrown into the deep end and you just somehow need to learn to stay afloat. You have to. For me, a lot of my style of parenting came from the dos and don'ts from watching my parents, some common sense and lots of prayer. From time to time, checking in with my sister-in-law was helpful too.

We are never formally taught how to parent and yet we have to be responsible for the lives placed in our charge. That's a heavy responsibility and the last thing you want is to mess up a life that God entrusted to you to bring up and love. So when I heard about a parenting course being run in CMC, I was a little excited. Could this be the answer? Hearing that it was going to be an 18-week long commitment made me apprehensive, but somehow, partly by chance and partly by coercion, I ended up attending the course with my husband.

About the Parenting Course: “GROWING KIDS GOD’S WAY” offered by CMC

With support from our Family Life Ministry, Chua Wee Kiat and Shirley Yong anchored the 18-week course early this year in an effort to help couples to raise children with moral fortitude. GKGW is not new to CMC – several couples have benefited from it in their CGs almost 10 years ago. The course teaches parents child-training skills guided by biblical scriptures. It can help you apply the bible verses you may already be familiar with to raising your children. The weekly review questions and practice exercises during the week help to reinforce the lessons and can help you see tangible and positive changes in your children's behaviour. Shirley and Wee Kiat have been through four GKGW courses previously, and are known to be gentle and encouraging. Every class usually ends with a scrumptious tea time makan and fellowship.

We are all required to get training and a license to drive or dive. Many of us prepare for marriage with a preparatory course. Doesn't it makes good sense to get some training in parenting too?

The next GKGW course is scheduled for early 2015. Watch out for details on www.cmc.org.sg or contact Wee Kiat at cactuskit@gmail.com

“Before we attended this course, we were doing our best to put our two boys on the right path to good character at each stage of their childhood, but we were not consistent. My wife and I had conflicting views on parenting because of our very different upbringings. We needed guidance on how to raise our kids with a common understanding based on the faith we both share.”

~ David Tse, course participant

I pretty much dragged my feet to the first session, and though it went well I still had my doubts about whether we could make the full commitment. What would happen to the kids every Saturday afternoon? But I remember the first time I met our facilitators' (Shirley and Wee Kiat) children, I thought to myself: “How polite and well-behaved they are!” If a parenting course was the answer, then I wanted to know more.

We were fortunate to have both sets of grandparents step in on Saturdays to help us with babysitting as we continued the course. With each lesson, we learned something valuable, and the time of discussion and sharing between participants got more intimate. I dare say that as a group, we grew much closer over the months, and become somewhat like a second church care group. We shared our successes and failures as parents, our joys and heartbreaks. I started to really look forward to each session.

One of the lessons that stood out for me was that if you train your children right, they will still make good choices even when you are not physically there with them. As parents we tend to always feel better when we are able to prevent them from doing dangerous or silly things right there and then. But when we are not there, who will stop them? Will they remember what you have taught them? Will they still make good choices? These worries were addressed in the course.

Yes, my children are a work-in-progress, and I am still a work-in-progress mum, but with some “tutoring” from courses like this, I believe we can raise a generation who will have the right moral standards in their hearts, and who will become a beacon of light to the world.



Vanessa is blessed with 2 lovable children and a tolerable husband whom she has learned to love. She cannot wait for the kids to be asleep so that she can rainbow loom to her heart's content. Her aim this year to go micro-scooting in as many parks in Singapore as possible.



OUR CARE GROUPS

At CMC, groups of us who are roughly going through the same life stage meet regularly to makan together, discuss faith issues, celebrate life's joys and support one another through difficult times. Most meet in each other's homes.

Even if you're not Christian or do not worship at our church, you're more than welcome to check out one of our group meetings to see if you enjoy spending time with us. No pressure to join, don't worry!

Contact our ministry staff Daniel Gan at daniel.gan@cmc.org.sg if you're interested in visiting any of the groups listed here.

| | GROUP NAME & DESCRIPTION | WHEN THEY MEET | LOCATION |
|---------------------|--|---|---|
| Youths | "madInChrist" Age 13 "Wacko" Age 14 "Basic Salt" Age 15 "Toast & Butter" Age 16 "DaMessiah" Age 17 | 9-10am Sunday mornings 9-10am Sunday mornings 9-10am Sunday mornings 9-10am Sunday mornings 1st and 3rd Saturdays | CMC Level 4 CMC Level 4 CMC Level 4 CMC Level 4 Tanah Merah, Kembangan or East Coast |
| | "Liberation Broadcast" Age 18 | Saturday evenings | Siglap, Kembangan, Aljunied or Tampines |
| | "B2S1" Age 19 "MANI4C" Age 20 | 1st and 3rd Saturday evenings 2nd, 3rd and 4th Saturday evenings | Siglap or Katong Bedok |
| Young Adults (20's) | "Agents of Change" "BUGGS" "HOLY ROCK" "MAD" "5 Loaves, 2 Fishes" "Y2K" "POLICE" "Sharath" | 1st, 2nd and 3rd Friday nights 1st and 3rd Friday nights Alternate Fridays Friday or Saturday nights 1st and 3rd Saturday evenings 1st and 3rd Saturday nights Saturday nights 1st and 3rd Fridays | East Coast Bedok Terrace East Coast Central Simei or Bishan Katong East Coast East Coast (near CMC) Bedok |
| | "SOAK" | Saturday nights (Fortnightly) | Bedok |
| Families | "ABC" Age range: 20-50 "Alpha 1" Age range: 35-60 "B2B" Age range: 30-40 "Belayers" Age range: 30-60 "Clayworks" Age range: 20-30 "COL316" Age range: 20-40 with kids | 2nd and 4th Friday nights 1st Thursday, and 3rd & 5th Friday nights 2nd and 4th Friday nights 1st and 3rd Friday nights 1st and 3rd Friday nights Friday nights | East Coast Road Tanjong Katong or Kembangan Upper East Coast Rd Tanah Merah or Siglap Siglap or Simei Marine Terrace |

| | GROUP NAME & DESCRIPTION | WHEN THEY MEET | LOCATION | |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| | "Emmanuel" Age range: 30-70 "Faith" Age range: 30-40 "GIG (God is Good)" Age range: 40-50 "Go West" Age range: 30-40 | Friday nights Friday nights 1st and 3rd Friday nights 1st and 3rd Friday evenings | Simei Ang Mo Kio Tanah Merah Dover or Bukit Timah | |
| | "Life with Christ" Age range: 30-40 "Mustard Seed" Age range: 30-40, with kids "Nahar" Age range: 30-50 "New Wine" Age range: 40-70 "OAKS" Age range: 30-40 "On The Mark" Age range: 30-40 "Pilgrims" Age range: 30-60 "TGIF" Age range: 30-45 "The Branches" Age range: 20-40 "The Grateful Forgiveness" Age range: 30-40 "The Lord's Den" Age range: 30-40 "WOW" Age range: 20-40 "X2" Age range: 20-50 | 2nd and 4th Thursday nights Alternating Friday and Saturday nights Friday nights (Fortnightly) 1st and 3rd Friday nights Alternate Friday nights 2nd or 3rd Friday nights Alternate Fridays Friday nights 1st and 3rd Friday nights Alternate Saturday nights 1st & 3rd Friday nights Sat 5pm Friday nights | Mountbatten East Coast Telok Kurau East Coast East Coast Siglap East Coast Siglap Siglap Various locations Joo Chiat Kembangan East Coast Road | |
| | Seniors & Mixed Ages | "4 Pillars" Age range: 60 "Aglow" Age range: 50+ "E-Life" Age range: 35+ "Full Flame" Age range: 35-70 "Hope" Age range: 30-60 "Koinonia" Age range: 30-60 "Living Stones" Age range: 30-60 "Melody" Age range: 30-60 "Roseburn" Age range: 60-80 "Sea of Galilee" Age range: 40-50 "Shalom" Age range: 40+ "Siglap" Age range: 40-80 "Sunshine" Age range: 50-70 | 4th Monday nights 1st and 3rd Thursday mornings 1st and 3rd Saturday evenings 1st and 3rd Thursday nights 2nd and 4th Tuesday mornings Monday nights 1st and 3rd Friday nights 1st and 3rd Friday nights Friday mornings (Bi-Monthly) 1st and 3rd Friday nights 2nd and 4th Sunday mornings 2nd and 4th Friday nights 2nd Friday nights | East Coast Eunos Serangoon Siglap CMC, Level 4 East Coast Siglap Joo Chiat East Coast CMC CMC Siglap CMC |
| | Special Interest Groups | "Cantonese CG" Age range: 45-80 "GYM" Active Seniors 60+ "Grace Fellowship" Filipinos aged 20+ "Group 12" Age range: 25-70 "JSACT" Women only, aged 40+ "M2 PM" Mainly women, aged 30-50 "MSG" Men only aged 50+ "ROOP PM" Mainly women, aged 20-60 | 1st and 3rd Saturday afternoons 2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sunday mornings Monday nights (Fortnightly) Monday nights 2nd and 4th Saturday nights 2nd and 4th Tuesday nights Thursday nights | East Coast Bedok Methodist Church CMC CMC Upper Thomson East Coast Tanjong Katong East Coast |

As Jesus' disciples asked their resurrected master if He was now going to restore the kingdom to Israel, He gave them foreknowledge that would impact His followers for generations to come.

Acts 1 records Him saying: *"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Earlier this year, we set out His name, not to the ends of the Earth, but to far-flung Old Chua Chu Kang Road, to bring knowledge of Jesus to the residents of Teen Challenge Singapore, a Christian halfway house for recovering drug addicts. For 14 weeks, we ran the Alpha Course and ministered to the marginalized, the broken and the downtrodden.

These men had been trying to fill their inner emptiness and temporarily escape life's burdens through substance abuse. That life had robbed them of their physical well-being, and as a result many have become angry, unforgiving, defensive, and try to portray a stoic and masculine outward image when inwardly they are longing for change and a new beginning.

So during those 14 weeks we co-labored with the Holy Spirit, sowing seeds of faith and truth, and interceded in prayer for breakthroughs in their spiritual journey. Through the weekly meal fellowship and group discussions we endeavoured to remind them that in this season of brokenness, God is especially for them.

God is faithful and pursues the lost relentlessly; He sees their every need and will never forsake them. It is written in Ezekiel that He will search for the lost and bring back the strays. He will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. He will

shepherd the flock with justice. Increasingly, as I assisted in facilitating the weekly group time, I could sense the Holy Spirit writing on their hearts.

We facilitators were blessed too, as aspects of our God became evident the more time we spent at this residence. We witnessed God being "Jehovah-Jireh" (The Lord Who Provides), because He had brought them out of their destructive lifestyles to a place of refuge and rest – a safe shelter away from the wolves of the world, with a warm bed, hot meals and stillness; a place for a people set aside.

We experienced Him as Jehovah-Rapha (The Lord Who Heals). At this place He heals physical ailments, restores the residents' spiritually and breathes new life into the perishing. Through His grace and mercy, many of them have learned how to love again, forgive those who have wronged them, and to praise and worship Him unreservedly. As they learn to seek God daily rather than turn to substances to numb their inner hurt, the yoke of addiction is broken.

Personally, I became more aware of Him as Jehovah-Nissi (The Lord Our Banner), as we rallied every week under His name to intercede in prayer on our knees for the residents before they arrived, and to acknowledge our own weaknesses and need of God's grace. Many of us also shared personal testimonies of how His love and grace changed our own lives and restored our families. It was out of our own brokenness that we poured out compassion to them.

The harvest is plenty but the labourers are few. So I encourage you to love the broken person in front of you; stop to bless that one, seemingly insignificant person, for God made each individual unique and allowed us to experience life differently from each other, just like how children in the same family are different. God loves us for who we are and also who we will become. Remember that He is more than able to grow beautiful things in the rich soil of a person's greatest season of weakness.

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"
~Mathew 25:37-40

If you would like to help facilitate a group the next time we run The Alpha Course at Teen Challenge, please email Mark Chan at markgunners@yahoo.com.sg. We really need you!



Knowing what it is to be broken and to be restored by the Lord's grace, Wilfred deeply desires to be part of the continuing cycle of pouring out from brokenness to claim the prodigals back.

Jesus, Refuge and Fortress

by Wilfred Wong

About Teen Challenge

Teen Challenge (Singapore) is a registered social service that grew out of the compassionate heart of a Church pastor Rev Dr Naomi Dowdy in 1976. Their quest to meet the needs of youths in Singapore originated from operating a humble rented flat at MacPherson Road to house several heroin addicts. Since then many key leaders and staff have been influential in touching lives and helping many teens, youth and adult offenders reintegrate into society.

www.teenchallenge.org.sg

About The Alpha Course

The Alpha Course is a series of 12 video sermons and accompanying group discussion material developed in the UK as a means of presenting the basic principles of Christianity to new Christians and faith seekers in a relaxed and informal setting. There are now over 60,500 courses worldwide in 169 countries and it is supported by all the major denominations.

www.alpha.org.sg



Developing Leaders at SHAMROCK COVE

Although many of us have been in there for meetings and practices, few CMC members have had the chance to visit Shamrock Cove at St Patrick's Secondary School during its hours of operation as an after school drop-in center, managed by our colourful staff member Errol Champion since late 2011.

Between the hours of 1.30 and 5.30pm during term time, Errol is there to befriend the guys who come to play games and relax at the lounge, and also to give opportunities for student leadership development. Here's a quick look at the promising boys who were invited by Errol to form the Shamrock Cove Committee in recent years.

SHAMROCK COVE COMMITTEE

Lukas Lie (Sec 3)
Chairperson
Joined committee in Sec 1

Errol says: "He was showing a lot of the characteristics of a leader and embodied the values and qualities Shamrock Cove stood for, so we voted him as chairperson late last year to take over the reins from Arpitt."

Abiel Job Khoo (Sec 3)
Vice chairperson
Joined the committee in Sec 1

Abiel says: "One day Errol said, with a very serious face, that he wanted to talk with me together with the whole Shamrock Cove committee. I thought I'd done something wrong! They were talking about responsibilities. Everybody looked so serious. Then they asked me if I wanted to join the committee. I was so relieved! I said yes...I wanted to be a part of them."

Ghinesh Kishor Kumar Gobindram Sharma Bahmwani (Sec 3)
Events I/C
Joined the committee in Sec 2

Ghinesh says: "Errol noticed that I was a regular visitor so he invited me to just help out with logistics at first. I had to be accountable for all the games equipment and electronics inside Shamrock Cove, and report if anything was missing. Later he asked me to take charge of organizing events."

William Seah (Sec 2)
Secretary
Joined the committee this year

William says "My role is to take notes during our meetings. I like the atmosphere at Shamrock Cove and I feel at home here. This place relieves the stress I face in school."

Amos Ho (Sec 1)
Assistant Secretary
Joined the committee this year

Amos says: "I am the servant of William! I will probably serve him all my life! I also like hanging out with my friends here, and Big Boss Botak."

John Peter De Souza (Sec 3)
Logistics Supervisor
Joined the committee in Sec 1

Errol says: "John likes to dream big and his truly passionate about his area of responsibility at Shamrock Cove. I think he's secretly eyeing the Chairman's role though, hahaha!"

Nicholas Tay (Sec 2)
Assistant Logistics Supervisor
Joined the committee this year

Nicholas says: "I help with setting up the place before we open every day and tidying up at the end of the day when Shamrock Cove is closed. Usually this is when Errol can spend more time bonding with the committee."

Abner Khoo (Sec 1)
Social Concerns
Joined the committee this year

Errol says: "Abner is a very bright guy who is consistently responsible with the tasks I ask him to carry out. I noticed he has a lot of potential and that he cares a lot about people."

Arpitt Das (Sec 4)
Honourary Chairperson
Joined the committee in Sec 1

Arpitt says: "A teacher introduced me to Errol even before Shamrock Cove opened officially as a joint project with CMC. I helped him clean this place up before it opened in Jan 2012 and after that we just continued talking to each other. He had this idea of starting a committee to plan events and games tournaments here. So we started looking for other guys."

Horioka Yujin Eugene (Sec 5)
Honourary Vice Chairman
Joined the committee in Sec 2

Eugene says: "I was spending time here even before Errol came because we used to use this area for student camps and the teachers had asked me to help. So I just continued helping out, and partnered with Arpitt to lead committee meetings or take over if Arpitt wasn't around."

What the students say about Errol:

"He's funny! Joker la, that guy."

"He makes a super serious face during committee meetings. But actually we think he often wants to crack a lame joke during the meeting, so he looks like he's trying very hard to keep a straight face."

"He's very forgiving. Even when we make mistakes."

"I see the person of Christ in him. He really lives out what he believes."



In addition to the core committee, there is also a host of volunteers who help out and regularly participate in Shamrock Cove activities. Errol keeps them in view, waiting for an opportunity to further develop their leadership skills and natural talents.

If you would like to volunteer your time to teach these boys about leadership or useful life skills, do contact Errol at errol.champion@cmc.org.sg to explore the possibilities. Games and gaming hardware donations are also welcome, but please contact Errol first to check if the donation is appropriate.

CRISIS RELIEF VOLUNTEERING

by Elena May Gudgeon



These two faces may be familiar to some of you because in addition to being members of our church, they've also appeared in the newspapers and several online articles earlier this year.



Ong Chin Siang and Sheryl Ang, both professional doctors, volunteered with Red Cross Singapore on a disaster-relief mission to the island of Samar in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan hit the area in January. Because the needs were great, they were deployed to separate medical centers on the island, about 65 kilometers apart, which couldn't have been easy for the couple who were wed just a week before in December 2013. They had wanted to do something meaningful together after the wedding, in line with their shared life goal of making a difference and being a blessing in others' lives. "As God has blessed us, so we would like to bless others too," Sheryl shared.

A sermon they once heard at church together had provided the inspiration for this common vision. "The preacher advised care groups to avoid being inward-looking and focused on fellowship with one another, but to be outward-looking instead," Chin Siang recounted. "We feel the same applies to couples and I remember discussing that with Sheryl after the sermon. We both feel that we should be outward looking as a couple."

But they hadn't counted on being separated for nearly the entire duration of this difficult 23-day mission. Sheryl was stationed at the Basey Emergency Hospital, which, although small, had most of the facilities of a full hospital. "All along, I had thought that we were going to be

together on the trip, so I was very apprehensive after learning that we wouldn't be stationed at the same clinic. But I decided to trust God and go in faith. And God was good to us. There was transport available so we were able to meet each other once a week during the trip, and despite poor communication channels, somehow we were able to keep in touch almost daily. God also kept us safe despite the threats and warning of bad weather."

Meanwhile Chin Siang was stationed at a very basic health care unit in rural Balangiga, where toilets were emptied only once a week, cooked food was hard to come by and mobile phone reception was intermittent at best. He recalled a stressful incident that elicited many a fervent silent prayer from him: "A very sick child was brought to us unconscious by her mother late one night with signs of severe infection. I initially had strong doubts about her eventual prognosis because as her heart rate was very fast and the oxygen level in her blood was very low. We couldn't even measure her blood pressure accurately. After stabilizing her as much as we could, we evacuated her to the hospital where Sheryl was working. But along the way, the ambulance broke down because water had gotten into the fuel tank, and we ran out of oxygen. Nevertheless by God's grace and healing, she recovered, and some days I later met this patient and her mother while visiting Sheryl, and we gave them a lift back to Balangiga. I thank God for her recovery."

ABOUT CHIN SIANG AND SHERYL

They both work at the National University Hospital: Sheryl as a doctor with the General Medicine department and Chin Siang as a Cardiothoracic Surgery resident. Sheryl has been attending CMC since childhood and her parents attend the 8.30am service. She met Chin Siang at medical school and introduced him to Christ Methodist Church. They dated for 4 ½ years before getting hitched on 28 Dec 2013.



Those about to marry and start life together may not imagine this sort of experience to be anywhere close to an ideal honeymoon, but trust that selfless acts of love and service will never go unnoticed or unrewarded by God. There were lessons to be learned and spiritual growth opportunities that strengthened their relationship even as they spent time apart.

“The mission taught us how to pray and trust in God in uncertain times, and to treasure the time that we have with each other,” Sheryl said. “Yes, the distance and duration apart, especially so soon after marriage, gave us time to reflect, and made our meet ups in Tacloban on the weekends even more precious,” Chin Siang echoed. “It was a timely reminder for us both not to take each other for granted.”

Of course, for young adults like Chin Siang and Sheryl, decisions to travel to dangerous disaster-hit areas naturally arouse the concerns or even objections of family members. But mature parents who have been through this will tell you that letting go of kids and allowing

them make their own life decisions is an important contribution to their success as a new family nucleus.

Both sets of parents were initially very apprehensive about them going to a place that had recently suffered a typhoon. “There have also always been sporadic news reports of unfortunate things happening to newlyweds in unsafe places, so they were worried for our safety.” shared Chin Siang. “But in the end, they did not pressure us not to go. They gave us time to decide, respected our decision when we decided to go, and did whatever they could to support us.”



Alas, Elena has no personal experience of marriage, but hopes for the day when she can share testimonies similar to this one. ;) (Maybe minus the blood and needles and suchlike.)



If Sheryl and Chin Siang’s 2014 adventure has inspired you to consider undertaking a similar mission of kindness, many opportunities await! It isn’t just medical professionals who can participate in disaster relief aid work.

“Medical professionals only play a small part in a larger team of volunteers (or ‘delegates’ as they call us), explained Sheryl. “We were working with volunteer administrative staff who helped with the booking of air tickets, logisticians who ensured all the equipment was in order, team leaders who led the mission, drivers who ensured we had transport, and water engineers who were overseeing the water purification programme. We recommend that our church-mates seek out opportunities to be used by God, in whatever way possible with whatever skills they have.”

More information about crisis relief volunteering is available on these websites

- www.crisisrelief.org/help.php
- <http://www.charis-singapore.org/index.php/be-volunteers>
- www.redcross.org.sg/articles/volunteer
- www.habitat.org.sg/overviewvol.html

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and pray with you. All you need to bring
is an open mind and heart.**



"One Sunday at the 8.30am service, Pastor Edmund talked about the healing power of our Lord Jesus Christ. When he invited the congregation to pray for healing of whichever part of the body was afflicted, I put my hand on my left shoulder which had been in pain that morning. I immediately felt a 'current' that went through my affected shoulder and thereafter felt the pain going off. Praise our Lord for He is indeed a great healer!"
~ James Poon