

MAY 2016

WITNESS



A publication of Christ Methodist Church



STIRRED TO

Speak

STORIES OF INSPIRED CONVERSATIONS
THAT HAVE LED TO CHANGED LIVES

Inside



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EDITORIAL

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



A word from the Editor

Elena May Gudgeon

This year started with a (frankly very exciting) rallying call from our pastors to “Go in His Power” and fulfill our commission from Christ to make disciples of all nations.

It was a rousing call, with interactive response tools like cards to write names on and a do-it-yourself mobile phone dock given to each of us to assemble and place on our desks at work or at home and remember goal this year. (Some of you are now saying to yourself “Oh YAH hor!”)

That was a few months ago though, when the year was still fresh and young and full of new resolutions. What about now? Are the names of the persons we have committed to spend time with still constantly on our minds? Have we been asking one another about how that’s going?

The persons I have committed to pray for are old friends. There’s often a lovely familiarity and ease of conversation when we spend time with old friends. So much history, and such an irreplaceable level of comfort! It can be a struggle to find the appropriate time to mention in conversation that other old friend (and so much more), Jesus Christ, who has been dying to hang out with them too.

To submit feedback, story ideas, or testimonies to this magazine, please email elena.gudgeon@cmc.org.sg

But there are ways to do that without making the moment awkward. We just need to pick up these social skills from others who have tried them and found that they work well in varying scenarios. Hopefully, you will be inspired by those who have shared their ideas in this issue.

My care group recently embarked on a course developed by Mark Mittelberg, Lee Strobel and Bill Hybels called “Becoming a Contagious Christian”. We discovered that there are six general styles that people naturally adopt when they wish to share something that they’re really into (like Christ). They are the ‘Direct’ style (Heya, try this!), the ‘Intellectual’ style’ (Heya, consider the benefits of this!), the ‘Testimonial’ style (Heya, listen to my experience of this!), the ‘Interpersonal’ style (Heya, let’s get together and talk about this!), the ‘Invitational’ style (Heya, wanna join us in watching this?), and the ‘Serving’ style’ (Heya, let me make you a cup of tea!)

We each filled out a questionnaire to discover our dominant personal style of evangelism, and mine turned out to be the last (and seemingly least direct) one. Bummer!

But I take great comfort in the fact that the God who commissions me “Go and make disciples” is the same who “knit me together in my mother’s womb”. He knows what He’s doing. I’m made this way because, in His eyes, it is the combination of traits that has greatest potential to bless the community He attached me to, and testify of His love.

You too, are not incapable of or unskilled in proclaiming Christ. If we’re honest with ourselves, all we really need to do is make it a priority. 🙌





A WORD
FROM YOUR
PASTOR

HOW ARE YOU?

BY PASTOR SHAUN CHONG

I find it strange that when people ask “How are you?” they often do not really mean to ask about your wellbeing. In Western countries I’ve more often experienced the question as a greeting, like “hello”, rather than an actual question.

The first few times I was greeted with “How are you?” in a Western country, I tried to respond, only to realize they’d already walked by, and I was left feeling silly, telling them that I was “doing great” only to realize they weren’t really interested in me. After several such encounters abroad, I concluded that it was just a way of saying hello. No intelligible response was needed.

On other occasions, I’d approach a cashier to pay for something, and find myself greeted with “How are you?” once again. I respond with a hello, only to face a chasm of awkward silence. It’s then I begin to realize that particular “How are you?” was an actual question! The cashier was honestly asking about my day! So we begin to chat about where I’m from, the weather, etc.

NOW, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE GREETING “HOW ARE YOU?” AND THE QUESTION “HOW ARE YOU?”

Back here in sunny Singapore, we often respond to that question with “I’m fine, thank you,” without articulating how we are really doing. It’s almost a formula. We do that because we’ve been cultured into not disclosing our true feelings or we are afraid they aren’t really interested.

In the same way, I often find my well-meaning question replied with the “I’m fine” or “I’m good” formula. So in order to really get my question across (and let them know I’m really asking about their wellbeing) I ask it a second time, “So, how are you REALLY doing?”

As a faith community, I think it’s time we began to ask “How are you?” intentionally.

At the personal level, it presents us with the issue of our own soul care. It’s important to check in on how we are doing, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

At a relational level, being concerned about how our friends or family are doing is part of being human. We are meant to love others. In

this society, where people aren’t accustomed to honestly asking about each other, we as Christians need to respond differently.

On an outreach level, an intentional “How are you?” opens up a window of opportunity to talk about the spiritual. It opens up a window into the life of someone else. When we begin to speak about real life issues and concerns of our neighbor or colleague, we start to minister God’s love to them.

It gives us opportunities to describe how God has helped us in similar struggles. In doing so, we bring the God of the Bible into everyday real life. In wanting to show them love, we might find that Christ is the real answer to their struggles.

So church, how are you?

‘How are you, really?’ ^w

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN PRESENTED WITH AN IDEAL OPPORTUNITY BUT STILL FELT RELUCTANT TO BEGIN A CONVERSATION WITH OTHERS ABOUT YOUR FAITH IN GOD?

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...” ~ 1 Peter 3:15

It’s normal to feel like you might not have a good answer to questions you are asked about Christianity. 1 Peter 3:15 seems like a tall order for us average Joes and besides, the topic rarely comes up naturally at mealtimes with friends. But sometimes it does happen – someone asks

us about our weekend activities, or we find our faith being discussed by others either in positive or negative light because of something someone read in the media.

How do we handle queries from skeptical friends ‘with gentleness and respect’, as the bible advises? What responses could we mentally prepare ahead of those moments that will help steer us away from feeling flustered, shy or embarrassed when we need to ‘give the reason for the hope that we have’?

Andrew Wee, our church’s Witness & Evangelism chairperson is here to help us begin thinking through some queries that our friends may have about the Christian viewpoint.



I'm happy being a free thinker. Life after death isn't particularly important to me, so what's wrong with not following any religion?




Every human being lives by his/her beliefs, so in a way, nobody is a true “free thinker”. When someone claims to believe in nothing, it simply implies that he believes that there is nothing worth believing. If this person was referring to Atheism, then it a self-refuting statement since the term Atheism is a definitive assertion of belief!

Just because one does not care about something important does not negate its importance, especially when the subject in question is the matter of death and life after death. For example, not placing importance on the death penalty for drug smuggling in Singapore does not relieve one from his legal obligation to stay away from drugs. Ignorance is not bliss!



Nobody can prove the existence of God. Why should I believe God is real?

We can't prove the existence of God because he transcends this universe and is therefore not fully comprehensible. However, God created the universe and made it simple enough so that we can comprehend it. We have sufficient ‘sign posts’ in philosophy, science, history and archeology etc. to point us to a creator and by studying the characters of this creator we came to realise that God is:

 Rational	 With great power
 A source of love and morality	 A designer of this universe and the author of life

And all these attributes correspond to the Biblical view of God.

In fact, to prove that a creator doesn't exist is more problematic! Many have tried, but failed. Consider reading one or several of these books to help you further understand.

- Does God exist?* By J P Moreland
- The language of life.* By Francis Collins
- Reasons for faith.* By Norman Geisler
- Beyond opinion.* By Ravi Zacharias
- Mere Christianity.* By C S Lewis
- Scaling the secular city.* By JP Moreland
- There is a God.* By Anthony Flew



Jesus can't be the ONLY WAY to get to heaven. You mean all other religions are wrong?!

Every worldview makes a truth claim. Christianity claims that Jesus is the only way to heaven, Islam claims that Allah is the only way to heaven, Eastern religions claim that there are millions of ways and Atheism claims that there is no heaven; how can all of them be correct at the same time? All truth claims are exclusive because it describes reality – including Atheism. Therefore it is not possible for all truth claims to be right.

When one claims that 4 is the only answer to $2+2$, he is neither arrogant nor narrow-minded. To exclude 5, 6 or 'all the above' as the right answer is only stating the truth, and it allows others to investigate and draw their own conclusion. When Jesus said: "I'm the way, the Truth, and the Life," He challenged every human being to examine this claim, for if it is true, it has eternal consequences.

I've met some Christians who behave very badly. Why should I become one and follow their God?

I would agree with this view only if "all" Christians behaved badly. The word 'badly' assumes some form of aberrant (deviating from accepted standards), i.e. behaviors that do not reflect the teaching of Christ and the basic tenet of Christianity. Hence, instead of focusing on the deviations, trying looking for genuine Christian conduct.

No one should reject a worldview by its abuse. No one turns away from the study of science because of a bad scientist; no one rejects law because of a bad lawyer. When you walk into a supermarket in search of apples, you choose the good ones and put away the bad ones, not walk out empty handed at the sight of a few bad apples. In the same way, attend a church to sincerely seek Christ, instead of focusing on the bad behaviors of others.

Furthermore, the church is a place for imperfect sinners to seek God, and by the grace of God, work to become better Christians. In a sense, everyone in church is a work in progress.

If Jesus taught love and acceptance, why do many Christians not support homosexual relationships?

From a Christian moral framework, not all kinds of love are acceptable in God's sight. Adulterous love, pedophilic love, and narcissistic love, just to name a few, are not within the sanction of God (and in most cultures also). Yes, Jesus taught us to love. As Christians we should love all people the way Christ loves us. We are called to show the love of Christ to all, and help them to know of and receive the grace of God first, so that they can be transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, we must call sin as it is, if it encroaches the boundary set by God in terms of sexuality; this includes homosexual practices and all heterosexual activities outside of marriage (e.g. pre-marital sex and adultery).

Remember that without the acknowledgement of sin there is no repentance, and therefore, no forgiveness. We must differentiate one's inclination and tendency from one's rebellious and willfulness to sin. Christ loves us not because of who we are, but in spite of who we are. Remember, he also loves us so much that he doesn't want us to stay in sin!





The bible was written by people, so why should I trust it as the 'Word of God'?

The Bible was written by man but it was edited by a transcendent God! Here are some reasons why I'm convinced that God has spoken, and the Bible is His message to mankind:

- The bible is the word of God because it provides comprehensive and coherent answers to four big overarching questions for mankind: Our origin, our destiny, the meaning of life, and morality.

- The scriptures contain numerous amazing scientific revelations that pre-date modern science. Many top scientists like John Poulkinhorn, Francis Collins, Stephen Meyers, and Hugh Ross (just to name a few) have discovered God in their own field of study. Even Albert Einstein said: "Science without faith is lame. But faith without science is blind."
- The unity of the Bible demonstrates the supernatural providence of God: there are 66 books written by about forty authors, from kings and nobles to fishermen and soldiers, in three languages and on three

continents, spanning 1500 years and yet, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible reads as one book. It is just not humanly possible that it was written without a divine author.

- The Bible is affirmed through historical accuracy. Over the centuries the archaeologists have uncovered countless evidence and made discoveries that bolster (not refute) support of the Bible as being a true and accurate account of history.
- The Bible has predictive power to authenticate its message. Prophecies recorded in the bible predicted and fulfilled the claim of Jesus Christ as the messiah in his birth, life, death, and resurrection. It also contains many fulfilled predictions of the history and future of nations.
- The Bible relates and identifies with all human experiences, and the truths contained in its words has the power to change lives, as we have heard through thousands of testimonies through the centuries.

To gain deeper insight, consider reading these books:

- Why trust the Bible?* By Amy Orr-Ewing
- Can we still believe the Bible?* By Craig Blomberg
- The New Testament Documents, are they reliable?* By F. F. Bruce
- Questioning the Bible.* By Jonathan Morrow

This list of questions and answers is by no means comprehensive. But we hope it will help you to at least begin thinking through what you could potentially say to someone who has interest in and concerns about Christianity.

If you have encountered a question that really stumps you, try asking Andrew for help by emailing him at andrew6262@gmail.com. Or you could attend his next apologetics training course in the second half of this year.



Editor's Note:

The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and are intended to help you reflect on, pray about and develop your own convictions about these issues. They do not necessarily reflect the official views of CMC or The Methodist Church in Singapore.



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Bridging CULTURES

BY CHEW CHIEN WAY

As I stepped into Auditorium 2 on the fourth floor of our church, the unfamiliar sound of Mandarin worship songs greeted me. For a brief moment, I faltered, uncertain as to whether my paltry proficiency in Mandarin would be enough, until the ushers at the door smiled encouragingly in a gesture of welcome. It was my first time attending the Mandarin service at CMC.

I took a deep breath, walked in further and found a seat somewhere at the back. There were probably about 50 people in attendance that day, and what soon struck me was the simplicity and rawness of their worship and passion. Unlike the contemporary English service that I attend in the sanctuary every Sunday, there were no animated projection slides or special lights at this Mandarin service. The worship team was simply attired in jeans and polo tee-shirts that had the CMC emblem on it, and the congregation sang wholeheartedly, their voices rising as one above the sound of the instruments.

This was my initial impression of CMC's Mandarin service, and the memory of my first five minutes in that auditorium stuck with me throughout the time I spent later that afternoon with Satish and Veera, two construction workers from Chennai, India, who attend CMC's Mandarin service.

Satish and Veera work in the same construction company, and their current supervisor is Marvin, who comes from China. Marvin has similarly been working in Singapore for many years, and used to stay at a hostel right next door to CMC, which was how he started coming to CMC initially. Over the years, Marvin has been inviting his fellow Chinese colleagues to join him in church. It's his way of reaching out to those around him and sharing his faith.

About six months ago, Marvin invited Satish, Veera, and three of their fellow Indian colleagues to CMC's Mandarin service. They agreed, and after having such a positive experience on their first visit, they continued to come back every week thereafter. This was the first time Satish and Veera had ever attended a church in Singapore, despite having worked in Singapore for over a decade. I asked if they found it strange to be attending a Mandarin service, where everything is conducted in a different language. Satish and Veera replied that it was ok, because they understand a little "something, something" (i.e. a little bit) of Mandarin, and generally enjoy the simplicity of the service. I also asked if they remember



how they felt the first time they came to CMC. Satish said he liked it, and Veera remembered feeling very welcomed. I understood immediately what they meant, as I felt exactly the same way in my first Mandarin service experience.

In fact, Satish and Veera enjoy not just attending service at CMC, but also the bible study lessons that Alvin Teh, CMC's dialect ministry staff, conducts for them personally after the Mandarin service every Sunday late afternoon.

As I observed Alvin interacting with Satish and Veera, I understood why they choose to make the one and a half hour train journey from their dormitory in Kranji to CMC every week, on their one free day off from work.

Alvin genuinely cares and is interested in these men's lives. He asks about their work, enquires after their children, and as the casual chatting ends, he starts the painstaking bible study session proper. Painstaking is truly an apt descriptor for the session, as due to language differences, the session is conducted in both English and Tamil (and no, Alvin has not picked up Tamil just yet). Alvin uses the English version of the bible and bible study workbook, while Satish and Veera refer to their Tamil copies of the bible and workbook. Every reference to the scripture passages and every explanation takes longer than usual, as Alvin needs to find creative ways of

overcoming the language barrier to refer them to the right verse or page, and elaborate on the learning point he's trying to get across.

Despite the distance to CMC and laboriousness of the bible study session, Satish and Veera continue to turn up faithfully every week. What drives them is the sense of peace they generally now have after accepting Christ – particularly after their baptism last year at CMC's Christmas service. They were two of the three Indian workers who were baptised. The fellowship they receive from the Mandarin service congregation (they know almost everyone), as well as the patience and kindness of Alvin, also give them a sense of belonging here.

I can fully understand what Satish and Veera feel. In just one visit to CMC's Mandarin service, I was touched by the passion and warmth of the congregation; my husband and I were instantly recognized as newcomers and enthusiastically welcomed by everyone; and I saw first-hand Alvin's dedication and commitment in his outreach and service to all whom he ministers to.

God truly works in mysterious ways. Through their faith, He has made Alvin and Marvin "fishers of men" (Mark 1:17), leading them to reach out to and touch a group of construction workers who would otherwise have been overlooked. Through Marvin's invitations to church, many of his fellow Chinese workers have come to know Christ. God also planted in Alvin a heart for service, hospitality and perseverance, enabling him to overcome the language differences and reach out to Satish, Veera and their friends.


"These workers deserve our respect and time. They sacrifice so much to come to Singapore to work and build our homes for us. I just pray that our outreach will help them and let them know Jesus better," said Alvin.

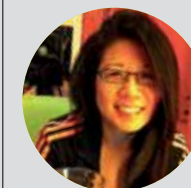


"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Isaiah 55: 8-11

Learning about the story of Satish and Veera, and how they came to attend CMC, has been a timely reminder that God has a plan and purpose for every one of us. While we may not always know what His plan is, it simply means that we have to have faith, and let His will be done. 



CHIEN WAY is a lifelong Eastie who loves to eat, travel and bask in the company of her two nutty dogs, Toby and Ariel.

Great CONVERSATIONS

BY JENNY TAN

Connecting with people isn't everyone's strength and you may be a shy person who isn't comfortable conversing with an unfamiliar face. In the event you find yourself seated or standing beside someone who is visiting CMC or your care group for the first time, and you feel prompted to reach out in friendship, this article may be helpful to you.

You'll hear how our church members have started conversations and friendships with those who were new in church, as well as how visitors felt when others went the extra mile to make them feel welcome.

"It usually starts with an intentional interest in getting to know someone. If I see someone new in church, I will try to observe from afar first, before approaching to get to know the person. Try to identify common interests, as that will be a point of connection. For example, my interest is tennis. Some time back, I met a friend of a friend from church whom I discovered to share the same passion for tennis and also came from the same school. So from there, I took the opportunity to invite him to play tennis and build the friendship."

~ Daniel Gan

"When talking to new visitors in church, start with more general questions like 'how did you find the sermon?', then slowly find out how they came to visit CMC. This direction of conversation helps you connect the dots and figure out where people are in their faith journey. People come to church for various reasons and in various ways. For instance, some may have found the church through an internet search. This reply would help you figure out that they are actively looking for a church."

~ Celest Chia

"A good icebreaker when you see a new face in church is a simple 'hello'. I follow that up with something along the lines of, 'I come here often but I have not seen you before. Do you come here often?' When they say they are new, ask them who brought them here...start a conversation. Just chat for 5 or 10 more minutes; that's when people usually warm up. It is normal that some people are more open, and some are more closed. But you never know where that will lead.

One of my current care group members, Susan, had moved to Singapore from London with her husband. She was looking for a church and chanced upon CMC during a bus ride. She came to our church the year we first moved back to our current premises, and I befriended her and invited her to join the care group. She's been with our group ever since."

~ Audrey Lee

"I was looking for a church to settle in when I came to Singapore, and I met Audrey from the Befriender's Ministry. What Audrey did was she followed up. In my experience, CMC one of the most organised churches where the befriender programme is concerned.

Audrey followed up with an email and invite to have coffee the next week in church. It was friendly, not too threatening and very gentle. Audrey also sat with me during the service. If you are new, particularly if you are on your own, it's really nice to have someone to sit with and someone who's going to look out for you and wave at you and welcome you at church.

The next few weeks, she sent me texts and continued inviting me to sit with her. After a few weeks, she invited me to join a care group. During our morning 'coffee chats', she would ask me about how my week went and

how Singapore was treating me. She took that 10-15 mins each week to make me feel welcome and help me get to know people.

I later signed up for Zumba classes at CMC on Tuesday mornings. We would exercise and have a drink and some food downstairs. It was easier to get to know people, as you did something together and had a chance to sit and speak to each other. It really helped that they remembered my name when we came back the next week, and there was always someone who came up to me after and said 'have a coffee with me?'

CMC is one of the friendliest churches I have ever been to and is one of the things I will really miss when I return to London this April. A big part of me just wants to take everyone back with me to UK!"

~ Susan Candlish

Article photos by Eugene Wang

In addition to striving to be a warm and caring church always, we've also been encouraged this year to 'Go in His Power' and intentionally bring Christ into our conversations with others.

This is a challenge for many of us because our daily chitchat doesn't naturally meander towards faith-related topics. How can we better succeed at 'giving the reason for the hope that we have' to others?

"Starting a faith related conversation can be done very subtly. Start by asking what your friend does over the weekend and then you can share what you do on Sundays and what that means to you. Then you can discuss your values and your beliefs.

But the most important thing is to first walk the talk. Show Christ in you daily and it will be obvious to all. One can identify a tree by its fruit and fragrance. Just continue to be that friend who has a compassionate listening ear, who gives off the fragrance of Christ in your life, and people will be drawn to you and find that they like hanging out with you.

Pray continually for the Holy Spirit to convict you when is the right time to speak. Our role is not to convert but to converse. Share Jesus and then allow the Holy Spirit to convict. This could be a long journey. Don't despair if they do not come to know Christ immediately, but do your best to sow seeds of His truth in their lives."

~ Toh Guek Hong

"When starting faith related conversations, keep a lookout for the right opportunities. I have a colleague who is a Buddhist but reads the bible every day! She wears Buddhist beads but verbally thanks God for blessings. Out of curiosity one day I asked her which God she is thanking and discovered she was thanking Jesus all this while! As we chatted further, I realised she is exploring and not hesitant to find out more about Christianity."

~ Daniel Gan

"To begin faith related conversations, first suss out how responsive a person is to the topic of faith. Consider mentioning that you attend a church, and then see how they respond. When I chat with my clients in my role as a financial planner, I try to share about my own spiritual journey – for example, I talk about how I receive God's guidance through times of prayer, and about how I put Him first in decision making. Personal sharing opens the door to reciprocal sharing by the other party later on, even if it doesn't result in a great conversation right there and then. I had a few clients who were discouraged at one point, but because they knew about my faith in Jesus, they eventually shared with me their circumstances and I was able to encourage and guide them."

~ Audrey Lee



Jenny has been in the Food & Beverage communications field for the last 15 years. She first visited CMC in 1997 and has been attending the 10.30am service since 2015.



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Executive Director



Mr Rupert Lim
Worship Director



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Senior Ministry Executive (Dialect Ministries)



Mr Hoi Kok Fu
Senior Ministry Executive (Pastoral Ministry)



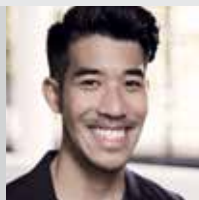
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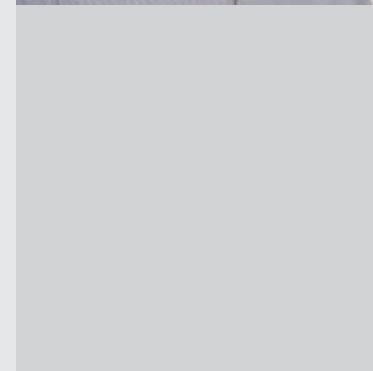
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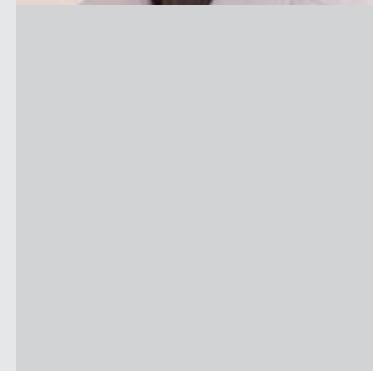
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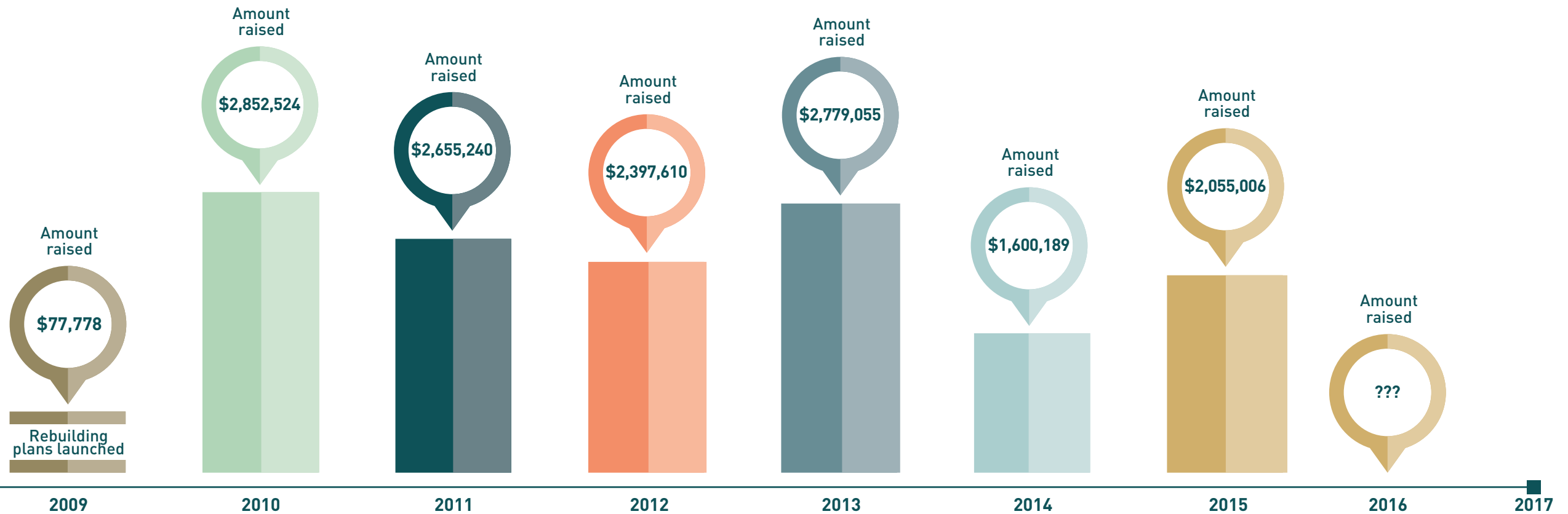
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OUR REBUILDING

SEVEN YEARS AFTER ITS INITIATION, OUR EVENTFUL REBUILDING JOURNEY IS NEARLY AT AN END.

Milestones



In **2009**, research by an ad-hoc committee in CMC concluded that our church membership had outgrown the worship space available and that a larger and more purpose-built home was needed if we desired congregation growth and community engagement in the years to come.

What followed was a whirlwind of proposals, relocation site reces, architect bids, fundraising plans and preparing our 1000+ cohort to cross the red sea (East Coast Road).

We moved into our temporary home at St Patrick's Secondary School on the first week of **Dec 2010** and learned a lot about serving one another as church became a weekly set-up-tear-down affair.

Demolition of the old building began in early 2011, and after a small ground-breaking ceremony in **May 2011**, the digging and piling began to create CMC's very first basement.

Completion of the new premises was targeted for end 2012, but in **Jun 2012** we were delighted to learn that our government was now allowing a 1.4 plot ratio (up from 1.0 previously) for community buildings in the neighbourhood.

In **Nov 2012**, our request for plot ratio increase was given an in-principle approval and we submitted architectural plans for a fourth storey.

It took slightly longer than we expected to clear necessary approval processes for our new plans, but by God's grace we received approval in **Aug 2013** and could stack on a fourth storey and a lovely attic that now houses our library and creative loft.

We moved into our new home on the first Sunday of **Jun 2014**. Remember that wonderful day?

In **Aug 2014** we welcomed our friends and community to celebrate our very first Open House with us.

Though we had already moved back home, fervent fundraising continued with a host of activities like our Food Fair & Flea Market on **19 Apr 2015** and Fundraising Gala Dinner & Art Auction on **29 Aug 2015**, among other initiatives.

We've now come to the last mile in our rebuilding journey (for this decade at least! Phew!)

As at **Apr 2016**, we have SGD 1.9 million left to raise before we can fully pay off our rebuilding loans from sister churches.

The goal is to be debt-free by 31 December 2016, so we can finally celebrate the official dedication of our building!

YOU CAN HELP US REACH OUR GOAL TO GO DEBT FREE 2016 IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

Get together with your CG, friends or family to create a fundraising project. (Email your ideas to rebuild@cmc.org.sg)

Write cheques in favour of 'Christ Methodist Church Building Fund' and drop them into the Sunday offering bag.

Place cash contributions into the envelope titled 'My Faith Promise' and drop them in the Sunday offering bag.

THE MARKETPLACE Missionary

BY SHERENE KANG

As a Christian, we all idealise about being that transformational missionary in the marketplace. Before we enter the mission field, we commit to being the salt and light in the office and working for the Lord and not for human masters (Colossians 3:23). After all, the average working person spends 70% of his waking hours in the marketplace.

Then the marketplace overcomes. Unbeknownst to us, the stress sets in, the targets appear like daunting numbers in our dreams, and sometimes, we find ourselves ensnared in the corporate politics. The harsh reality of the working world gradually strays us away from God's destiny for our lives and our intended purpose in our workplace.

When I first joined my company slightly more than a year ago, I admit that I had God's work in mind. However, as the hours grew long and I was exposed to a sea of worldly activities, I gradually steered away from God's destiny. Often, I had to deal with challenging situations that bordered along grey areas, leading me to rationalise my actions with trite excuses.

Soon, I relied more on myself than God when I had to deal with difficult situations at work. God's words dissolved to a whisper, the Holy Spirit dwindled into a figment of

my imagination and my plan to conquer the mission field dissolved into spreadsheets of to-do tasks. In the attempt to fit in with the corporate culture, I laid down my armour for Christ.

THE CALL

We are called to be in this world, but not conform to its pattern (Romans 12:2). This theory was faultless, yet seemed wishful when I tried to apply it. When I heard about the Marketplace Connection Conference that CMC was holding on 27 February, I vehemently wanted to know if it was ever possible to uphold the armour for Christ at work. I signed up for it, in hope that the line-up of speakers would impress some greatness in me to be like David and conquer the Goliath of worldly temptations at my workplace.

Listed in no order of greatness, Mr. Philip Ng, CEO of Far East Organisation, Mr. Choe Peng Sum, CEO of Frasers Hospitality, Ms. Kelvyna Chan, Divisional Director at the Ministry of Education, and Ms. Vivienne Ng, Chief Psychologist at the Ministry of Social and Family Development spoke that day. As each of them shared, it became evident to me how crucial it was for a Christian to bear witness for Christ at work.

BEARING WITNESS FOR CHRIST

Any business that Christians do in the marketplace, is God's business. For Revelation 3:16 says "So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth". To bear testimony for God is to be a living example to the world. We are God's special possession, called out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9). As we have freely received His mercy and grace, we should give unto others what we have been given.

When we are a walking witness for God, this glorifies Him. As we are called to "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16), whatever we do at the workplace is an offering to our Father and a form of worship to Him.

Walking in His light also helps us to strengthen our faithfulness and dependence on Him. Often at times, we find ourselves at our wits' ends having to deal with situations that are out of our control at work. Isaiah 40:31 urges us to hope in the Lord as He will renew our strength and enable us to soar on wings like eagles. This allows us to go in His power whilst acknowledging that we do not have complete control or authority over all circumstances.


MARKETPLACE MISSIONARY SKILLS 101

As the stories from the speakers unfolded, I noticed three recurring responses that set them apart in the marketplace. Relentless prayer was a common differentiator. Many of the executive decisions were covered with prayer from beginning to the end. Such admirable submission and obedience to God can only be cultivated if one had a genuine love for our Father. The sheer juxtaposition of biblical to worldly response, to take matters into one's own hands, brought to mind how beautifully different being a Christian was, and how I had

to unlearn the teachings of this world to be born again in Christ.

The topic of stewardship also arose a few times during the conference. Like the Parable of the Talents that teaches us to be the best 'manager' for God's possessions, managing the small things is indicative to God of our ability to handle bigger responsibilities (Luke 16:10). God sees our attitude towards these small things – like being punctual and doing menial tasks at work – and calls for absolute obedience and faithfulness in the same.

As much as we think it is sufficient to lead by our actions, it is hard to transform lives when we do not have that personal connection with others. Coupled with being sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the speakers shared how God opened the doors for evangelism through simple conversations with colleagues or employees. From dealing with difficult issues like retrenchment to reaching out to colleagues who were going through personal set-backs, such in-depth conversations enable us to understand the needs of our neighbor, whether a non-believer or a backslidden Christian, and this equips us to reach out to them in ways that matter.

Walking out from the conference, I felt truly encouraged to see that I was not alone in facing the challenges of being a Christian in the marketplace. Come Monday, I would be back on the mission field, experiencing the same challenges of being in the world, yet set apart. A sentence from one of the speakers struck me. "Many of the hardest battles at work were won on my knees," he shared. When I reached home, I got on my knees, and started my week with a prayer. 



SHERENE KANG is the latest addition to CMC's awesome fundraising team and during her free time, she enjoys visiting her under water fishy friends and exploring foreign lands.



Eternal Investments

BY JENNY GAN

HAVE YOU EVER FELT JADED AND DISCOURAGED IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL OR MINISTRY WORK, AND GREATLY IN NEED OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND REASSURANCE FROM GOD?

Quite early on in my life, I came to be certain that God’s mission for me was “to touch lives”, and I had been doing my best to live out that call as a teacher/volunteer in school, and in my many years of ministry with the Girl’s Brigade Singapore. But somehow, in recent years, I began experiencing emptiness and disillusionment in my efforts to reach young people for Christ, and wondered if I should call it a day.

As I reflected on Matthew 9:37, where Jesus shows His disciples that “the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few”, I was drawn to become involved in CMC’s monthly 2-day-1-night Bintan mission trips.

I have been involved with these trips for over a year now, sowing seeds in the young children who attend sessions at the Gloria Methodist Preaching Point that we visit on our mission trips. On several occasions, God gave me much-needed supernatural encouragement and reassurance to help me see that my life’s ministry work has not been in vain. This is an account of one such incident.

FIGHTING THE SETBACKS!

In March 2015, as I was preparing to leave for the Bintan mission on a Saturday morning, I fell in my home bathroom and hit my head quite severely.

I was all alone at home, but remembered that God said in Hebrews 13:5 “I will never leave you nor forsake you”. So while I was on the floor nursing my hurting head, I began singing a song that I had prepared to teach the children in Bintan, and declaring out loud that nothing would stop me from going on this mission trip.

“Satan, you cannot destroy this trip because Jesus is in control!” I declared, and then I got up, fetched some ice from the fridge to put on my head, and continued getting ready. Besides, this wasn’t the first time that the enemy had tried to deter me from going on a mission trip. One year prior, I found my beloved dog on the verge of death the very morning I was to leave for Bintan! (But that’s a story for another time.)

I had been greatly looking forward to this particular trip because I would have the chance to teach ukulele guitar to a boy called Rizky,

one of the kids from a particular village who visits our Methodist Center in Senggarang. I felt drawn to minister to children like him, and had prayed that I would have the opportunity to at least interact with them at some point.

On arriving at our destination in the afternoon, I realized that there were more children gathered there than usual, and many of their faces looked unfamiliar. I led them in some action songs and played games with them, and then our team ‘tested’ the children on the meaning of the 5 colours in the ‘Wordless Book’ gospel that had been taught to them last year. It really warmed my heart to hear them recall perfectly what each of those colours meant!



MEETING RIZKY AND FRIENDS

As the sun set and most of the kids went home, I made preparations to teach Rizky how to play the ukulele, and was surprised to learn that 11 other children had stayed back together with him from the afternoon session. They desired to learn the instrument too! So I taught them a few basic chords and they took turns practicing



suddenly troubled by thoughts of whether my role on the trip had been impactful enough. This 'blue streak' continued into the next day, and on my return to Singapore I found myself thinking about the children I had met and experienced a new wave of self-doubt and sad thoughts, and started wondering again if any of my life's work in ministering to children had been significant.



them on the two ukuleles we had brought from Singapore. It was a simple time of fun and learning. Three children, including Rizky, were so enthralled by the music lesson that they even stayed back after dinner time to carry on learning!

Later in the evening, I talked with the Methodist center's local facilitator, Silpa, and found out that these children were actually from the village I had been praying about. Halleluiah! My prayer was answered! It's amazing how God had brought these children in His time. During our prayer walks in Bintan, our mission teams had claimed the children from this community for God's kingdom. Prior to this occasion, we had only been able to give them sweets or interact with them in very small ways. (For instance, a team member once tended to a boy who had a minor cut by cleaning his wound and dressed it with a plaster).

After our activities for the day came to a close, I retired to my room, and although I was thankful for the day's breakthroughs, I was also



MEETING AN EX-STUDENT

This was the day our nation was standing outside in long queues waiting to pay their respects to the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew. While I was in the queue, I heard a voice call out "Miss Gan!" I turn around and waved at this lady who then, to my astonishment, revealed that she had been my Primary 3 student over 40 years ago. She had been part of a very sweet primary school class who once came to my house on teacher's day with a bouquet of flowers 8 years after they had graduated!

Later that day I texted her to thank her for remembering who I was, and she replied me with a message that left me in grateful tears, saying "Thank you, Thank you Lord!"

Here is an excerpt of the message:

You have left a deep impression in my heart since Primary 3. I loved my Pri 3 days in OPEGS, especially you being my form teacher. I need to let you know that it is you who led me to Christ. I always wished that one day I could have the opportunity to tell you this personally for showing me and some of us a picture of Jesus. Somehow you had unknowingly sowed a seed in my heart to search for this Jesus who loves little children. All these years I have not forgotten because each time friends asked me how I came to know Christ, I would tell them it was my Primary 3 teacher who simply showed me a picture of Jesus. I don't know if you can still remember this but I clearly do till this day. Thank you Ms Gan!

Honestly, I can't remember at all which picture of Jesus I had showed to those children, all those years ago! But the message from God at that point was quite clear: my time of sowing into the lives of children was not yet over. There was still work to do, and I should continue to persevere in reaching out to the children of Bintan.

NO ETERNAL INVESTMENT WASTED

Through this incident, He reassured me that the time I have invested in children over the years has not been wasted. They belong to God. I believe each child is like a raw precious jewel, waiting to be found, cleaned and polished. Helping them shine in Christ is the greatest gift that we can give to them. We ought to spend our lives picking up these precious gems, and with God's help, lead and guide them through the polishing mechanisms of life's journey, so they become an invaluable diamond in God's eyes. Their transformation is our rich reward.

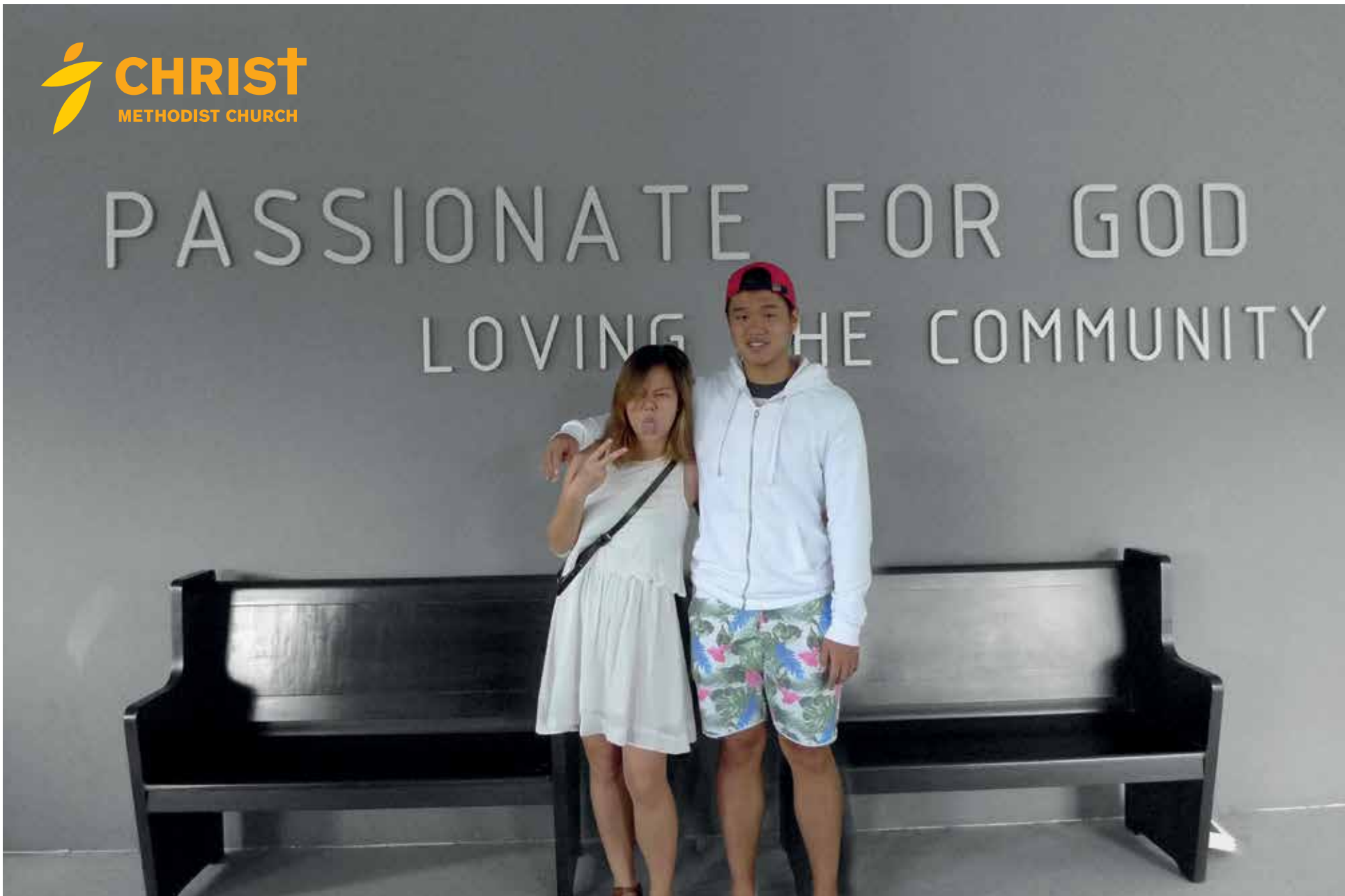
Telling others about Jesus is not about receiving recognition, or even about experiencing success or failure. It is about faithfully planting seeds, watering them and allowing God to grow them.

May He find us faithful in this effort, always and in all ways. 🙏



JENNY GAN Love dogs. Favourite cartoon character is Tweety Bird.

PASSIONATE FOR GOD
LOVING THE COMMUNITY



TAKE A LEAP OF Faith

BY ANGELYN KHONG

Marcus and Jenna were colleagues at a Liao Liao stand and worked together serving up frozen yoghurt for a month in 2015. They built a close rapport after finding common ground and became good friends ever since, which is almost a year now. But one thing set them apart — Marcus wasn't a Christian and had a long list of doubts about Christianity.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRIST

Like many pre-believers, Marcus had many questions about the faith. He constantly grappled with the credibility of Christianity. Between Marcus and Jenna, religion was a recurring topic of conversation and because of that they had a lot of debates about God.

One Saturday morning, they met up for brunch and were having their regular religious debate. As per usual, Marcus had many questions for Jenna. Regarding his slew of questions, Jenna explained that being a Christian was not about making sense of the Holy Trinity nor about science versus religion. She pointed out that the point of Christianity is the gospel and that we are saved by grace because Jesus died for our sins. Seeing that it was a lot for Marcus to take in, she reassured him saying that in time, trusting in God will lead to answered questions.

Marcus remembers that in the middle of all his doubts, Jenna just said, "Sometimes you just have to take the leap of faith and believe."

COMING TO CG

Realising that Marcus' active curiosity was an opportunity to clarify some doubts, Jenna invited him to her care group (CG) of 19-year-olds, called Liberation Broadcast. Initially hesitant, Marcus tagged along. At that time it so happened that Andrew Wee, Chairperson of our church's Witness & Evangelism Committee, was leading a series on apologetics at their CG meetings. When CG ended, Jenna asked Marcus how it went. Unexpectedly, he said he had even more questions now.

Not one for inhibition, Jenna acknowledged that it was natural to respond in such a way and encouraged him to come for CG again the following week.



By the grace of God, a very apprehensive Marcus came for CG a second time. After CG, Jenna had to head home and Marcus stayed to mingle with the rest. When she got home, Jenna received a text from Marcus saying that he was coming to church the next day! In disbelief at Marcus' change of heart, Jenna took to the CG Whatsapp chat to ask what happened after she left. Turns out, Howard and Jacqueline took the opportunity to invite him for Ignite youth service.

A SIGN

Of the many times Marcus considered accepting Christ, he'd ask God for a sign. He remembers praying about it and saying: "I'm ready to put my faith down, all I need is a sign from you, God. Just anything and I'll believe. A flicker of light, a gust of strong wind, anything." There was nothing for a while.

And then God answered.

"The first day I went to church, I argued with my dad for not cleaning up my room. I still remember it was Pastor Rudy from Planetshakers preaching at Ignite service that day. At one point in his sermon he said 'No matter how bad a week you had, if your parents scolded you for not cleaning up your room, we come to church before God as equals and God loves us unconditionally.'"

Marcus distinctly remembers chills going down his spine and his face turning white. "That pastor could've used many examples to elaborate, but the fact that he used that particular example I'd just experienced... that was when I realised God comes to you, so long as you accept and open your heart to him."

DO NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST. Matthew 4:7

After that incident, Marcus started attending Ignite service every week and even attended an evening worship event for young adults in CMC. It was on that night that he accepted Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

A LIFE CHANGED FOREVER

Marcus decided that he wanted to live his life in Christ. Less focused on life on earth and more on life in eternity, he also conducts himself better for others to have a good impression of Christianity.

Though evangelism was never something initiated as Marcus was always curious about Christ, Jenna learnt that it isn't as challenging as we make it out to be. Inspired by her mentor Grace, who leads The Fireplace CG, she realised that sharing your faith begins with being honest with what you're doing, what you think about and believe in.



According to Jenna, leading a prayerful life is an important aspect of embodying Christ. When approaching a pre-believer's qualms, there's no point sugarcoating the truth as that undermines God's capability as seen in apologetics and through life's seemingly unexplainable mysteries. What stirs people to accept Christ is your honesty about your experiences of the reality of who Jesus is and what He has done in your life.

On inviting Marcus to church, Howard says he adopted this simple mindset: you can only do your best and trust God to do the rest.

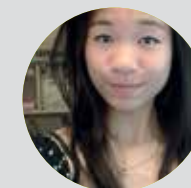
SO, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Marcus, before he came to know the Lord, could be someone your pre-believing friends can identify with. I asked him, "If I am a pre-

believer and curious about God, what would you say to me?"

His reply: "Join a church session with an open mind and heart and take a leap of faith."

This article was written with insights from our lay preacher, Chan Mun Wai, and well as my mother, Winifred Yap. [W](#)



ANGELYN KHONG loves stray cat spotting, writing and above all, God. Proverbs 3:24



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