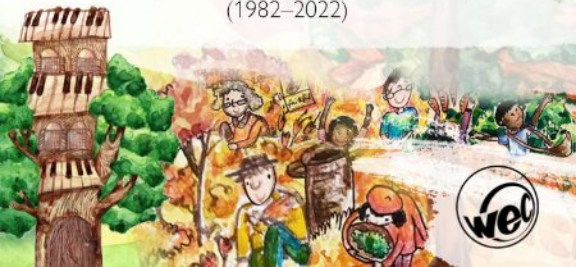




From Generation to Generation

Stories of WEC Singapore

In conjunction with our 40th anniversary
(1982–2022)



WEC Singapore
— My Journey

REV TAN CHENG HUAT
BOARD CHAIRMAN

It was in the late seventies and early eighties that I heard of WEC. Sister Sharon P from my home church heeded God's call to missions and was accepted by WEC to serve in French-speaking West Africa. After many years there, she returned to Singapore as a caregiver for her aged parents. It was during those years that Sharon asked if I was available to serve on the WEC board. I kept declining the invitation.

I was invited to share at the Candidate Orientation course on the topic of Church and Missions, and subsequently became more involved, sharing at the staff devotions and as speaker for some of the WEC events.

Some years later, Rev Henry Hong, who was a board member, approached me to come join the WEC board. I was not ready. After I stepped down from church

pastoral leadership, I was seeking a mission organization for the last lap of my ministry. WEC again came into the picture. I was making my application to serve with WEC when my church decided to send me as a non-resident missionary to East Asia, serving with the unreached people group that we had adopted for the last 21 years.

Looking back, it was God's timing for my involvement with WEC Singapore. Since I was not able to serve as a missionary with WEC, the then chairman of the WEC board asked if I could now consider serving as a member of the board. I recalled CT Studd's words: "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last." Hence began my journey on the board of WEC Singapore, first as a member and now as chair. I thank God for the faithfulness of brother Robin who

held the fort at WEC Singapore for many years. I'm still learning the ropes, to serve alongside the board and staff, to surf the tides of uncertainty and more so to steer WEC Singapore beyond the 40 years of God's leading in missions. May WEC continue to be relevant in this post-pandemic era and be on the cutting edge of evangelism, edification and empowerment.

CT Studd said it well:

“Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven, without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell, when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle.”



Threading God's Pearls

**YOUNG-CHOON
& ELAINE LEE**

Congratulations on WEC Singapore's 40th anniversary!

We consider it a privilege to have been a part of WEC Singapore's 40-year history as a Korean/Korean-American couple, by serving with our brothers and sisters in WEC Singapore (WEC SG) for five years (2014-2019).

At Intercon 2014, the international leaders' conference, Robin Lim, the chairman of the WEC SG board, approached us about taking up the leadership of WEC SG. It was unexpected, but as we prayed we knew it was God's will and we gladly accepted the offer.

At the time, we still had two years left of our term as Deputy International Directors of WEC International. We decided to combine that time with the additional role as the Directors of WEC SG. It was not easy to fulfil both roles

with the increased workload especially as WEC SG became more active. For our international role, we had to travel frequently.

However, WEC SG branch council members willingly made up for our absence. We appreciated their cooperation in attending the lengthy council meetings we had to have every time we returned from our overseas ministry trips.

During those two years, and then for the next three years of our term, the role of the WEC SG branch council members, who not only helped us in our leadership, but also willingly shared in the various tasks of leadership, was critical, and we would like to express our deep gratitude to them.

When my wife and I took over the leadership role of WEC SG, we felt great inadequacy because we were not Singaporean or Malaysian. We would like to thank all the WEC SG members who accepted and encouraged us knowing our inadequacies. In particular, we were so thankful for Bessie Loke who worked close to us as our deputy, making up for our weaknesses with gifts and skills that we did not have. We also express our sincere gratitude to the WEC SG board members who were always supportive of WEC SG.

When we prayed for WEC SG at the beginning of our time in leadership, God showed us a picture of pearls that were threaded into a beautiful necklace. Each WEC SG member was like a pearl. From what we have experienced, East Asian culture and values are quite evident in

how Singaporeans relate to others, but Singaporeans also have outstanding qualities of working with Western efficiency. They are responsible for their work and perform it with sincerity.

Just as pearls are connected to form a pearl necklace, God gave us a picture that when individual members were connected and built into a community that Jesus spoke of in the Bible, they would be used more beautifully by God and He would work powerfully through them.

Later, God showed us more specifically the direction which WEC Singapore should pursue, as shown in the following 5 Cs.

- Christ honouring (in all situations in our lives and ministries, loving Jesus)

- Church relating (with active participation in the local churches, with confidence as mobilizers for mission; not only to serve, but also to have impact on the churches)
- Community forming (as a community of Jesus' disciples; togetherness)
- Commitment reaffirming (to the Lord, to our tasks, to our fellowship)
- Cooperation/connection strengthening (with churches in Singapore & Malaysia, with resources, with younger generation)

We started to see changes internally in WEC Singapore. Fellowship among the members of WEC Singapore was

strengthened and God was healing the wounds in the hearts of discouraged members. Staff retreats gave us such a wonderful memory of warm fellowship in the Lord. Seeing one of the staff emerge from depression lasting a few years was a great encouragement and joy for all of us.

Furthermore, we saw increased recognition and cooperation between members in ministry and creative ideas for new ministries. It was a joy for all of us to see the unexpected positive response of young people and churches to prayer events to pray for unreached people in creative ways initiated by some of our members.

Through the planning, preparation and holding of the Appreciation Dinner for donors and the churches which had been supporting and partnering with WEC Singapore, we saw the hearts of the

members become more united.

Externally, we experienced growing connections and interactions with churches in Singapore and Malaysia.

At our annual conference in 2016, God showed us that WEC SG needed more younger workers. As a result, when we all began to pray together, mobilization efforts among young people began to bear more fruit. Young individuals and families joined WEC, willing to give up good jobs and security to obey the Great Commission to take the gospel to unreached people groups. The increasing number of trips to the airport to see them off to the mission field was not a chore, but a great joy for all WEC SG members to see what God was doing among and through us.

When we were planning the annual conference of our last year of leadership, we thanked God for the word “together” which came up naturally as the theme of the conference.

It is quite encouraging to see the vision of “Antioch of Asia” revived among the churches in Singapore. It is clear that Singapore is an Asian hub in terms of geography and economy. We believe the reason why God is raising churches in Singapore, an exemplary country in Asia which is having an impact on surrounding countries in Asia, is clearly to enable Singaporean believers to pass on the spiritual and material blessings they have received from God to the different peoples of those countries.

We also believe that the missions movement which took place 20 or 30 years ago among the churches in Singapore and Malaysia will rise again, and many young people will rise up and go out to all the unreached peoples of Asia and beyond.

On the 40th anniversary of WEC SG, we pray that God will fill the hearts of all the members of WEC SG, the board, and all the faithful intercessors, donors and partnering churches with joy and thanksgiving for what God has done through WEC SG in the past 40 years. We also pray that WEC SG will continue to move forward in the power of the Holy Spirit with the God-given vision to take the gospel to all the unreached peoples of the world.

*What was All That
Hard Work For?*

T&J

Our first time setting foot in the Singapore Sending Base is still a vivid memory despite it being a decade ago: a barbecue in 2012, where we met many (including the International Leadership Team) who are now like family to us. This is how we have heard people describe WEC: a family for us who serve cross-culturally.

Although we are not Singaporean, WEC Singapore adopted us into their fold. We had our candidate orientation there and played games together. While our own family members did not come to visit us when we were on the field, WEC members did; they sent us care packages, dropped us texts and remembered us in their prayers.

One sister was among the first to connect us to WEC. She spoke often at our church about her time abroad and invited

church members to WEC events. It was through her encouragement that I persisted in getting international accreditation for my professional counselling work.

When going through orientation, the future (and the mission field) is but a distant possibility... One does not know what to expect. One can possibly never imagine what is in store. In wisdom, this sister recommended that I get qualified before setting out to the field.

At the time, I felt that I was doing a lot of work for something less than a possibility. Needing to take care of a young child and another newborn, delicately balancing schedules to rush off to work in the evenings while my husband took care of the little ones at home... Countless hours and monetary investment did not seem to pay off. A

year of paperwork resulted in a rejected application and despair – what was all that hard work for? Me of little faith just sat in tears, confused.

However, the way was not revealed until some four years later. God finally moved mountains to allow me to get licensed in a foreign country all because of this one certification. It would not have happened without this piece of paperwork. We walk in faith, not knowing what the future holds.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17 NIV)

Arts Release
Creative Studio

YAU GEE LAM

As an intern under Arts Release, I participated in the weekly sessions of Arts Release Creative Studio (ARCS). I learnt about how the arts can be the key to unlock the hearts of people and that the majority of the world's population learns and listens through narratives. The Bible reaches the hearts of its readers because of the various parables and stories that touch their souls.

ARCS has a monthly schedule comprising three segments. The first is Arts Intercession, where we use the arts to intercede for the nations, praying for countries in need. The second is Arts Devotion, during which a verse of the Bible is shared, on which creatives meditate before drawing or creating what is in their hearts and what God is telling them. I often feel encouraged by their stories and am amazed at the

connectedness of our narratives or imagery.



Digital collage created during arts devotion

We are encouraged to share what we have created with others, as an encouragement to Christians and also a way to share God's love with non-Christians. People may be drawn to or connect with the artwork, and that can open up an opportunity to tell them of God's love and faithfulness, despite life's ups and downs. In the making of art, I

realised that we are to imitate the nature of God as the creator, taking what He has made, to shape it and work at it to glorify and worship Him, reflecting His divinity and His ideal kingdom, as compared to the reality of the world.

The third ARCS segment is Arts Equip, and the most memorable sessions I attended were on using henna as a means of biblical storytelling, as well as the course Creating Local Arts Together (CLAT). I was surprised how we could learn about the arts and cultures of different people groups, use their arts to reach their hearts, and reimagine the use of the arts to tell the message of the gospel.



CLAT community project

As part of practising what we learnt from CLAT, we formed groups to serve various communities. My group went to a migrant workers' dormitory to conduct a drawing workshop for them. It was heart-warming to see migrant workers relaxing and having enjoyable moments. They were eagerly waiting for the instructor to teach, while we assisted them in their drawing.

I also provided some colouring materials. They spent quite some time colouring the drawings they drew and it touched my heart to see their smiling faces. Even though the time we spent there was short, to be able to serve an underserved community humbles me, knowing that God loves all His people and their lives are valuable in His sight. He provides and cares for them despite their harsh working and living conditions.

*Four Toilets
& a Backyard*

RICHARD & CANDY YIM

In the spring of 2007, we had been ministering in Kyoto for six years, when the WEC Japan base requested us to help a church affiliated with WEC in Nara, about 50km away. If we moved there, we would have to let go of many things, such as ministry, friends, our children's schooling arrangements, etc. It would be like starting from zero - easier said than done!

So we sat down as a family, including our four children, and talked about the possible move. They said they would like a big house, four toilets and a yard to play in. During our time in Kyoto, they used to play in a car park, which was rather dangerous. Candy said that, since she did not cycle or drive, it would be better if our new home was close to the children's school.

For Richard, his prayer was for affordable rent, and with no 'gift' required. In Japanese culture, it is a practice for the landlord to expect a monetary 'gift' as a token of appreciation for renting out their house. All these were our requests to God by faith; now we just had to trust Him to lead.

About two months later, the pastor of the church in Nara called to say that there was a house available for us to consider. We went to have a look at it. It was an old traditional Japanese house with a backyard and four toilets! The children were really excited to see that God answered their prayers. The school and kindergarten were also within walking distance.

We met up with the landlord, who said that the church had been praying for a co-worker. All our requests to God were

fulfilled, including the rental amount, and no 'gift' needed. This was a confirmation from God to move to Nara to start a new chapter of ministry.

During the school summer break, we packed and moved to Nara. The Lord used this house to bless the neighbourhood for the sake of the gospel: we started new ministries, such as children's fellowship, youth ministry, and held events there. Our family really enjoyed our life in Nara too.

*From Uncertain
to Thriving*

KAI CHEONG & ESTELLA HO

Steps toward Short-Term ministry in Fiji

My wife and I heard the call of God to missions in our younger years as believers. However, when we became a young family, we were unsure how it would work out if we dived into becoming missionaries.

We went to WEC Singapore and shared our concerns with Jonathan Chamberlain, the leader then, who gave us the opportunity to go to Fiji for a short-term experience, to see what it would look like for us. We were to stand in for a missionary family who were due for home leave after having planted the Chinese churches in Nadi and Lautoka. We jumped at the opportunity.

Our quick entry into Fiji and ministry

We arrived in Fiji in 1996 with our two-year-old son. The missionary family was leaving Fiji a few weeks after our arrival, but they orientated us well, to go from “arrival mode” to “survival mode”. We quickly adjusted to getting around, buying food, appreciating Fijian culture, understanding networks of relationships among the Chinese community, and getting oriented to the ministry of the church.

Survive we did, but not without a steep curve

English had been my sole ministry language all along. Here, I had to preach in both Mandarin and Cantonese! This was a really, really steep learning curve, with a lot of embarrassment from using words the wrong way.

However, with the patience of people, and help from God, those sermons, week after week, eventually became palatable to the ear as well as to the soul.

One night, a Singapore expat who was working in a textile factory came knocking at our door, seeking help. A group of Chinese ladies who were contract workers had run away due to certain disputes with the management.

I had to drive the church van to look for them in the dark Lautoka streets. Finally they were found, and with the Lord's help they began to calm down and accept some resolutions from the management.

Unknown to us, the ladies had a good impression of the Chinese church and were willing to listen to our counsel. We progressed to having strong bonds with them, and they became great supporters

of the church's ministry. After all these years, we still think fondly of them.

Cyclone Gavin made landfall in March 1997. We were never told how to prepare for a storm. The day before, supermarket shelves were already emptied of food and water, and our landlord told us to board up the windows. However, we could not find any planks in our yard, so we were nervously exposed to what these kinds of winds could do.

It was calm before the storm, but when it hit, everything moveable outside started flying. We were so afraid that if anything hit the glass louvre windows, we would be in real trouble. Our van parked outside was rocking hard left and right, looking like it might topple. Soon after, we lost electricity and running water.

That first night, we were busy scooping out water that had come through the window and door gaps, with only one small candle giving us light. We were very concerned as to what would come next.



Our son, however, started singing cheekily, “With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm, smile at the storm...” We looked at each other speechless, but then started singing along with him. Indeed, our God

amusingly affirmed that He was with us that stormy night.

Doctor B

Dr B joined our church after he arrived in Fiji to work at a local hospital. He was not yet a believer but wanted to understand Christianity. He was already reading the Bible, and wanted to finish reading it before believing. However, he was challenged to believe first in order to read with the Holy Spirit's help. One night, at our small group Bible study, he made that decision. Soon after, he was baptized on Christmas Day 1996 in the Pacific Ocean.



Right after baptism, he asked how he could serve the church. I thought maybe he could help with cleaning up the church after service or fetching members to church and back by van. Little did I know that God had greater works than these for him. Dr B's conversion marked a significant milestone in our ministry with Chinese-speaking people.

Our time in Fiji soon came to an end after 15 months. It was our first ministry experience working with Chinese-speaking people, and the first church we pastored. It was the most fulfilling ministry we had ever been involved in.

Serving in East Asia

Many years went by. In obedience to the Lord, we served about fourteen years in East Asia. Finally, we were preparing to leave for good. A week before our departure, a friend was planning a visit to the city Dr B was known to be from. In jest, I asked this friend if he could look for Dr B.

Guess what? The day before our departure, out of the blue, Dr B called on the phone! In a city of millions, our friend had found him. After more than twenty years without contact, we were thrilled and encouraged to hear his voice. It was

hard to contain our curiosity about how life had been for him, but he skirted around some of our questions.

It was only after we had left that we learned he was leading a church of 500 people. Upon hearing that, we were moved to tears. What a closure to our ministry season! We began in a small way in Fiji, and after all the years of our ministry journey, the Lord affirmed to us that our ministry to the Chinese-speaking people had not been in vain. We are grateful to our Lord who called us and enabled us not only to survive, but thrive.

*Touching Souls
Through the Arts*

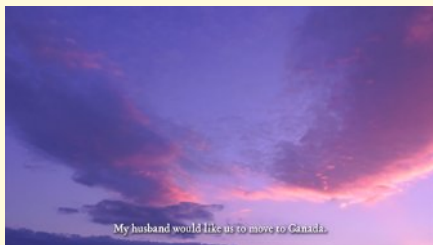
CHRISTEL LIM

The *Arts Projects Across Cultures* course, run by OMF and WEC's Arts Release, blessed me with the opportunity to connect with people of different art disciplines across the globe. Through stories from the field, I caught a glimpse of how deeply the arts can touch one's soul beyond words. As 70 to 80% of the world's population are oral learners, this has implications for how we approach gospel work.

As a video editor by trade and a story-telling enthusiast, I was thrilled that this event gave me the opportunity to team up with two other believers and a WEC missionary who works with refugees to produce videos for Refugee Awareness Day.

The plan was to travel to Malaysia to interview refugees living there. However, with borders reopening after pandemic

restrictions, Singapore was facing a massive surge in passport renewals, and I was one of those contributing to the long waiting times! I tried going to the passport office to expedite my passport renewal, but couldn't get it ready in time. It was time to adapt.



By God's grace, we were able to do the interviews over Zoom instead. Thankfully, the medium did not negatively affect the quality of the video; rather, it elevated it, making it feel more like an authentic conversation rather than a formal interview.

This authenticity, felt by all present in the meeting, was only achieved through the preexisting friendship that had been built between the refugee and missionary. I have been moved and encouraged by the tireless work of this missionary, who has devoted most of her life to serving God and others, emulating Christ who gave Himself up for us.



The refugee told her story in a wholly sincere way, so her video didn't need any fancy editing. As editor, it was my duty to communicate her story as faithfully and sensitively as I could, to handle the material with utmost care and judgment.

Throughout the production process, I praise God that our team was on the same page in balancing the solemnity of the refugees' experiences with hope and light-heartedness, resulting in a more complete and nuanced perspective on their lives. The videos premiered at WEC's Refugee Awareness Day on 18 June 2022.

Having been deeply inspired and blessed by these experiences with the work of WEC and OMF, I wanted my church to be blessed too, for God's glory and the good of others.

As I was on the missions committee of my church, and August was our annual missions month, we invited WEC and OMF to share with us on the arts in missions. What a privilege it is to work together to make the gospel known to all people. To Him be all praise!

Road Trip Gone Sour

RICKY & IVY CHOY

I was planning to visit our missionary language students in a language school in a southern state of Mexico and to explore possibilities for stronger ties with them and their Bible school. I went on my way to pick up my colleague at our ministry camp centre.

While I was focused on unlocking the padlock at the gate, a young man jumped out from behind me with a gun pointing at me, swaying up and down from my face to the chest, shouting over and over, "*Dame su dinero!*" (give me your money). I had to calm him down by saying, "*Tranquilo,*" and that all I had was in the travel bag inside my car. There sat his accomplice, already searching my bag and dashboard and glovebox.

The man with the gun kept saying, "Don't try to be funny," and was about to drag me to the car. In my heart, silently

praying, I realised that it might be an attempted kidnap too. Kidnappings are very common in Mexico, which has the world's highest kidnapping rate, so it is very common for criminals to extort more money from victims' family after robbing them.

Surprisingly, I seemed cool and collected (national service paid off), telling him to take the money and car. He wanted to punch me, and pushed me toward the car, but his partner shouted at him, saying that he'd found the money and to leave me alone.

This took place in broad daylight in the middle of nowhere, in a small town outside the camp ground. They were not masked so I could recognise them.

After the robbers left, I walked the two kilometres up to the camp centre and told my colleagues that I had been

robbed, and my car taken. A police report was made, and roadblocks were set up in the surrounding areas, but with no results.

After spending about six hours at the police station, making all the reports including the insurance report, I was “released”. Finally, I reached the centre late at night tired and exhausted. When I reached my room, I was shaking, feeling the “after-shock,” with my imagination running in my head. Thinking about what else the robbers could have done, and what might happen to my family if I was kidnapped, etc.

After some time of reflection, I prayed and gave thanks to God for his mercy and protection, strengthening my faith that God is faithful and His presence is real and our lives are in His hand. Though

material things were lost, my life was spared.

While I was at the police station, a colleague called my wife. She was asked to sit down while the conversation continued. Her heart raced and pounded knowing that something had happened! She told my wife that I was robbed and I was okay. She needed the vehicle and insurance policy numbers. Imagine, in the stress, I had forgotten my car number!

Worse still, my mobile phone, all our personal details with names, house keys and phone numbers, etc. were in the car as well. Though we lived in a different area, who knew if the robbers would go to our house - after all, they had our address and house keys!

A few missionary friends and a neighbour offered to accompany and stay over with Ivy and the kids. Ivy did not want to bear the responsibility of friends being hurt, should the robbers come, and declined the kind offers. However, to safe-guard the house, she put up barriers at our glass windows and doors so that if they were opened, she would at least be alerted. God is good; nothing happened, and we changed all the locks after two weeks.

*Sisters,
Walking Home*

WEI

I remembered laughing heartily at a skit during WEC's orientation training on peacemaking. It was hilarious watching scenarios on how cross-cultural multinational teams faced conflicts, tried to overcome the conflicts in their own ways and made others even more angry! I had a good laugh!

Weeks later when I arrived at my land of service, I was in the midst of conflicts. Workers were experiencing brokenness within and among themselves.

The peacemaking skit was no longer just a skit.

"Lord, help." I heard my heart crying out.

"Be a peacemaker. Listen to their stories." were words I felt I heard.

I honestly felt it was too hard to obey. I thought, as a missionary, there must be more important things to do than to just

sit and listen to His children. I was so wrong in my thinking. I started listening to our Father.

My bedroom became a space for me to be held by Father, sometimes in tears, at other times with Him quietly, listening. Parks became places of prayer walks.

Slowly, I felt His voice. They were clear, simple and powerful: “have a coffee with her, shop with this sister, cook porridge and eat with her, draw a particular image for this sister, go for the hill climbing together, wash one another’s feet (it was winter)”.

I often see tears as responses towards God’s fatherly love reaching in to a person’s heart. It was the same love for the local and multinational believers alike.

I have been so afraid that people might think I was doing nothing much. I flew here to sit and listen to people? Isn't that too insignificant? Not in His mind! He trusted His daughter, and listening is not too small a work because it was His work for me there and then.

God's quiet victories were seen:

- A sister felt like a porcupine towards everyone. God brought us closer. She opened up to two of us about her pain. It was one beginning of her healing.
- A sister needed space to talk and cry. I was tired. He gave me strength to listen and provided a sister to listen together. The Lord turned our hearts to Him.

- An older sister said “I am sorry” to me. I teared because as an older sister, she placed herself lower. I paused for a while, and responded, “I forgive you.” God protected our sisterhood.

The Lord stayed. He never left the brokenness of His people. I was drawn to Isaiah 55:10 “...giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater”. The Giver gives to both the sower and the eater. He placed His promised Seed, Jesus Christ to change the whole Story of humanity.

I felt the conflicts gave us a space to genuinely feel our emotions. In some of the stories, we may walk through the journey, together.

Even though it was painful, I also needed to surrender to God that some conflicts at a certain time may still be unresolved,

and some do choose to leave, and eventually not walk together.

The greatest conflict in this world between God and humanity is settled through love. God met this conflict by the death of His Son. He initiated His love. At the cross, the Lord's wrath is totally satisfied by the deepest cry of Jesus Christ "It is finished!" And it cost God's Son so much, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" He took it upon Himself of being forsaken at that point, to lead us home to our Father.

May we go into the world together, because of and for God.

*Riding the Roller
Coaster with God*

MAGGIE TING

My 20-year journey with WEC can be likened to a roller coaster ride - it was unpredictable but exhilarating. Let's go!

First, the queue...

When WEC caught my attention, I was serving as a youth pastor in my church. God had called me to serve Him cross-culturally when I was 18; by then, I was 33. The following year, I took leave from church to visit a WEC project in Cambodia for ten days.

A couple of months after my return, I woke up in the middle of the night for no reason. Then God gave me His "PowerPoint presentation", which ended with a question: "Where do you want to serve?"

I knew without a doubt that it was time for me to leave my parents and my church youth, and start a new life

ministering to people in Cambodia. The leadership of my church and WEC Singapore met up and agreed to send me off to Cambodia by July 2003.

Fasten your seat belt, pull the bar down and hold tight

When I arrived in Cambodia, I had the sense of being home, although in the initial months I missed my youth groups the most; they were my greatest joy and fulfilment until then. Our wise Father showed me this 'hole' in my heart, I gladly offered it to Him, and He filled it up with His presence. "It is well" in my soul indeed!

Slow climbs

The months of learning a new language were a very humbling experience but rewarding- from baby talk, making mistakes and learning to laugh about it,

to finally being able to understand conversations and then share God's Word with others. It was not my sheer hard work but God's grace and mercy on the Khmer people that the Lord enabled me to learn to communicate in my first year. I think He did not want me to mutilate this ancient language!

As I started to understand the culture of the people whom I worked and lived with in my neighbourhood, I began to realise why the Lord had held me back from arriving in Cambodia too soon. All of my past 35 years, including the unhappy life experiences, were God's preparation to minister to the people of this nation.

In turn, I learned from many who suffered huge personal loss, extreme poverty, exploitation, betrayal, inequality, lack of access to education and justice, etc. What drew them into the Kingdom of God was

the message of hope. God gave them a hope and a future. They were loved and not forgotten. God is the Defender of the defenceless and Father to the fatherless.



Drops, slopes, fast bends and inversions

One of the first things I needed to get adjusted to was unlocking three locks before I could enter the office for my Khmer language lessons every day.

Despite locks and high fences in the home I had rented, my guests had their motorbike stolen while visiting. The neighbours were sitting outside their homes, but they did not see anyone take the motorbike.

How could I build trust with people whose fabric of trust was destroyed, and for whom betrayal is deemed a virtue?

On another occasion I woke up, and to my horror found my kitchen door broken, the contents of my purse scattered over the floor, but no cash. This happened just a few days before the WEC conference.

I am thankful that my teammates were supportive, and the Lord's peace that passes all understanding kept me secure in Him, even though I was rattled by the violation of my personal space for a few days.

Traffic in a city of two-lane roads, crammed with pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, rickshaws, cars, trucks, and occasionally an elephant, was truly a reminder of how varied people are and how creative our God is.

As a foreigner on those roads, I made the mistake of thinking of my right of way instead of complying with the Cambodian way, which caused my first car accident in Phnom Penh. The lesson learned was that God did not bring me to Cambodia to change the traffic laws!

On the move constantly

Prior to living in Cambodia, I had only moved house once, when I was ten years old. Hence, I had no recollection of what it took for the house search, packing, unpacking, cleaning, etc. I only remembered that we moved to a bigger

house because I had more siblings and we needed more space.

In Cambodia however, circumstances beyond my control, such as flooding, an unsafe environment, and change of ministry placements prodded me to move from one place to another over the span of 13 years in one city.

I learned to be content with little, and decluttering became my pastime! Unfortunately, my internal decluttering was not as effective.

Mental health

The twists and turns, pushes and shoves of living and serving in Cambodia took their toll on my mental health after my second term. Unbeknownst to me, I was just surviving and functioning from day to day, not thriving in my ministry.

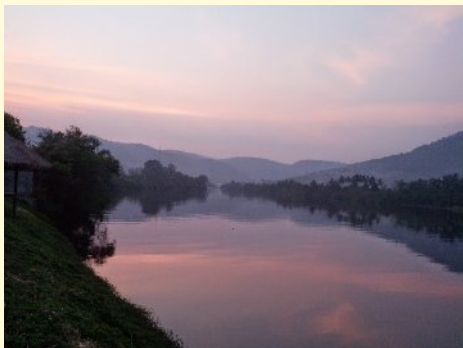
Thankfully, the leadership intervened, and adjusted my roles and responsibilities. My friend kindly connected me to his wife, a visiting therapist. We met for a month. During the sessions, God gave me visions that not only showed me the cause but led to my freedom and healing. Her visit was God's timely gift to me indeed.



In my final term, I travelled regularly to visit my team members in different provinces, spending hours on the bumpy roads, rain or shine.

When I offered my body as a living sacrifice on His altar, I belonged to Him. He had the prerogative to send my body to where He wanted me to minister to the people – WEC members, non-WEC members, Khmers and non-Khmers. It was exhausting physically but fulfilling.

I asked the Lord why I find relationships with a group of people who love Him to be so challenging. His gentle reply to me was, “Because I made you like sandpaper.” What? That was not something I expected. Eventually I embraced His answer, and humbly accepted this role. When I am worn out, I go to Him, and He renews me.



Still onboard?

Yes! Thank you for “riding” with me as I recapitulated my journey serving God with WEC in Cambodia. I believe that my journey has not ended. I am now being prepared for a new beginning.

My new teammate is my husband. We are back in the waiting line for a new track. There are many spaces available on the train. Hope to see you there some day!

Creative Comrades

RAYMOND LI

In my search and quest for meaning and purpose, I was rather lost. I believed that Christian artists have a special calling, a uniquely defined and designed role to play in God's Kingdom. I thought I knew this, but it was not exactly clear.

I attempted to fulfil this divine vocation by spearheading initiatives in church to bring up the awareness of using our gifts (not just art) to reach the world.

I set up an art interest group, Art Appreciate Club, as a meeting place for art lovers (Christian and pre-believers) to meet, learn and share. Though I was born an introvert, I actively went out to meet creatives from different local art groups (urban sketchers, drawing clubs) and even share the joy of art with strangers. Frankly, I felt rather lonely in all I did.

I came to know Arts Release in 2019, and it opened my eyes to see beyond my own little world in the art scene. In search of my identity as an artist, I finally found a connecting point to fellow Christian artists. It was a big revelation to me as I was exposed to abundant possibilities and came to appreciate the “soft power” that art can have in God’s ministry.

Most important of all, I got to know that I am not alone. If I were to name just one thing I treasure most in Arts Release, it is the togetherness. Once a fellow artist shared an image she saw: an army of God’s artists, all holding our unique “weapons” (brushes, pencils, iPads) and marching forward.

We may be limited by our own horizon, but God in His divine provision has prepared fellow artists around us. We do not travel this art journey alone.

As artists, our situation is rather unique. Sometimes, we have an unspeakable loneliness that puts us in a vulnerable position. The constant pursuit of individuality and its daily struggles – the spirit of comparing, the lack of inspiration, confidence, or courage to make breakthroughs, failure in new attempts, learning new things all the time... In the end, we are very much on our own; there is no pre-defined curriculum to map out our path.

Hence, knowing one another and being there for each other as artists gives me a great sense of peace and assurance that we are no longer alone. In Him, we will be united one day. This is our journey of faith. May we stay close together and be an encouragement and support to one another.

*The View From
the Minaret*

T&J

For us, our calling to serve abroad was clear; the calling to WEC was clear. However, we were still praying and seeking wisdom as to where to go. Before embarking for the field, there may be misconceived “mission hotspots” - places that attract more people, having the appearance of a place where missionaries can reach the world. I even had a dream about one such place.

One evening, at a prayer gathering of likeminded ones for the Middle East region, I had a vision of a minaret, the tower of a mosque from which the Islamic call to prayer is sounded five times a day. While praying for the region, my heart started to burn for one closed-access country, and I saw a minaret built of brick and stone, and heard Christ’s voice, as if broadcast from speakers at the top of the minaret, saying: “even the

stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40) - with His praises and worship.

What was strange was that we were not headed to that country. We finally chose a place perhaps not so popular with those who had invested years in language training. We were going to another country with a larger city. WEC Singapore respected our decision to choose a city that would be more accessible for our young family.

So I cherished the vision in my heart, saving it for some time in the future, maybe twenty years ahead, when the children would be much older. But some months after the vision, a job opportunity opened up - a virtual opportunity, allowing us to serve that closed-accessed country from outside - something unimaginable before virtual offices came about.

Father blew away my misconception – He is always a few steps ahead of me. He is all-knowing; He is all-present. He can be found anywhere, bringing me to the furthest place I thought possible from my dreams, only to find myself right smack in the middle of it. His plans are greater than mine, often taking months or years to pan out. But when you look back, how immeasurably greater they were than you had imagined!

*Five Years
Serving Japan*

LARRY & SUSAN LAI



Background

Larry: God has been good to me. From when they were yet babies, our three sons (now in their thirties) went with us to church and even now continue to serve in our church.

I had a fairly successful secular career for forty years. There were times we encountered financial difficulties, when I lost my job, but God saw us through each and every crisis.

In our late fifties, we felt God calling us to international ministry. We shared this with our small group, prayed over it, and in 2016, we began looking at various options.

Susan: I worked in the secular industry for about ten years, before quitting to look after our three boys. When they were older, I answered the call to work in our church. Like Larry, I too heard the call to go serve in the field. But the big question was, how and where?

Why Japan?

When we were evaluating our call, we initially thought God wanted us to go to China. I had a posting in China so we lived in China for three years. During this period, we had built good relationships with several China-based Christian businessmen, local churches and so on.

We thought God was preparing us for ministry in China. But in 2016, we visited our contacts in China and found that the conditions had changed unfavourably.

Susan had always liked the Japanese language, so in 2015, we spent six months in Japan. There, she attended language school while I worked remotely from our rental apartment.

Those six months opened our eyes to the critical need in Japan for workers to support the ministry of existing churches, as well as the planting of new ones.

Since the door to China had closed, we decided to do a vision trip to Japan in 2017. Over a period of six weeks, we met with three international mission organizations, of which WEC was one. We talked to their leaders, met some of their field workers, and visited their field

ministries. It was an eye-opener for us. We learned a lot about ministry in Japan.

Especially emotional was the visit to the tsunami-hit area in Tohoku where we saw the damage caused by the seawater and spoke with some of the people who lived through that disaster. I think all of us cried after listening to their testimonies.

The call to Japan became stronger and clearer. We knew God was calling us to Japan.

Settling in Japan

In 2018, we joined WEC and arrived in Japan in March. In the first few weeks, God sent angels (co-workers and church members) to help us negotiate the complex process of settling in.

One church member helped us find a cheap car that has since served us faithfully for the past four years. Other

co-workers stepped in to help us register our residential status and driving licences.

John and Samantha were among these angels. It was because of John's recommendation that we found an apartment in an estate that we liked.

We firmly believe that it was God who led us to this apartment, because one day, as we were walking to the local municipal office, we saw a group of seniors having tea in a function room.

Susan went to enquire, and found out that the group came together every Tuesday morning for tea. We started going there every Tuesday and got to know them. It was from this group that we started our first exercise class.



Starting the exercise class was also not accidental. Larry used to help conduct exercise classes. We met a WEC missionary from Hong Kong who had been looking for someone to partner with to start an exercise class. Together, the three of us started our first exercise class in October 2018.

Today, between the three of us, we have three exercise classes. Gathering the right ingredients at the right time - that is our Lord's handiwork.

Exiting Japan

As we plan to return to Singapore after five years in Japan, our desire is still for more Japanese people to come to know Christ. This has moved us to seek ways to remain engaged with the ministry in Japan.

We found out that another sister from WEC Japan was planning a project called Kibo (祈歩), which aims to map and trace the 900-kilometre walk from Kyoto to Nagasaki done by the 26 Christians who were martyred in 1597. This is a long-term project that could take years. Part of the objective of the project is to help raise awareness amongst Japanese churches of their Christian roots.

We also hope to inspire overseas Christians to join in mapping the route and, in so doing, come to know more about the needs of Japanese churches.

For us, Kibo offers us the opportunity to participate in annual short-term trips to map sections of this 900km journey.

Again we firmly believe it was not accidental that Kibo came into being at the perfect time, just when we were looking for short-term projects so that we can continue to participate in God's work for Japan.

Summing it up

One thing I learned earlier on during our time in Japan was the need to be flexible, and willing to try different approaches. Not all that we attempted led to successes but neither were these real failures, because if we can learn from each attempt, we can do better the next time.

We need to know that our cultural upbringing is different. What may seem

normal and natural to us may be deemed offensive to others. For example, small things like arranging our shoes when we attend a coffee session. The members notice our efforts to respect their culture and so respect us also.



As part of building trust, we helped in farming, tilling land, and clearing weeds, helping seniors to change their car tyres to snow tires as winter approaches and back to regular tyres as winter ends.

Susan volunteered in the coffee session, serving drinks and snacks to the seniors every Tuesday, and cleaning up before and after each session. She enjoyed doing it as the seniors began to treat her as a member of the group.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit us badly. Many programmes were cancelled. No short-term teams were able to come to Japan. Church services were cancelled. Friends and contacts were avoiding any form of gathering. It was a discouraging experience. We just had to continue to maintain contact with friends and wait out the pandemic.

From time to time, we took some of them out to get groceries, for walks in the park, and called them on the phone just to keep in touch.

As restrictions began to relax, this ongoing contact allowed us to quickly resume our exercise programme, coffee sessions, one-to-one meetings, etc.

From this, we learnt that we just have to keep doing what we can even when it seems hopeless. Every time we call or meet them, we are watering the seed, allowing God to do His work to nurture and grow it.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NKJV).

Re-Entry Hiccups

KAI CHEONG & ESTELLA HO

Money Problem!

Ho Kai Cheong

Having lived 14 years outside of Singapore, on one of my short visits back, I had this re-entry hiccup on the first day.

I was paying the noodle at the food court, when the cashier gave me my change of \$6. I was annoyed and angry with the cashier that he had short-changed me.

I must say that there were times the cashiers in East Asia had short-changed me. So, coming back to Singapore, did I have to put up with this too? I was expecting change of \$94, so furiously I told the cashier that I had given him \$100.

The young cashier panicked; he opened the cash register, going through the stack of notes, but could not find a single SGD100 note. With a long queue behind

me, it was almost a scene that was about to boil.

However in that moment, I suddenly realized it wasn't \$100 of East Asian currency, but only 10 Singapore dollars. I embarrassedly apologized to him with the queue looking on. The cashier would not have known what had happened to this confused customer.

Unbelievable – how could I make such a mistake, looking at Singapore money but thinking it was East Asian money. I suppose this is what re-entry did to my mind. The colour and size of both are so similar. I just had to laugh at myself.

Public Bus Hiccup!

Estella Ho

In East Asia, I was so used to tapping the bus card at the boarding point once, as required. On an outing during my short home leave, I got on bus 106, doing the no-brainer action, and tapped on the card reader.

Reaching my destination, I stood at the exit door waiting for the bus to stop. Then I saw the card reader and the “Tap in & Tap Out” notice.

Uh-oh! I reached inside my bag for the card, but too late! The captain was waiting for me to alight, but my hand was still fidgeting inside my bag to look for the card.

I called out to the bus captain, “师傅请等一下” (“Captain, please wait!”)

The gracious captain waited about one minute, but still no card, so I gave up.

“师傅不好意思，我下车，对不起！”

(“Captain, I will alight now, sorry!”)

I wasn't embarrassed but felt “stupid”, and after a few seconds I stood there laughing. “Aiyoh, why like this ah!” I had overestimated myself, thinking that I would not face any re-entry behaviours.

Since then, I've told myself “It's all right! Re-entry adjustment is for real, don't get uptight, just relax and act cool!”

*Going Deeper,
Stepping out
Through Art*

JILLIAN CHEONG

I am an artist and mother of three young children. I have been an active participant of Arts Release Creative Studio (ARCS) since it started in July 2020 and have been part of its core team since 2021. I would like to share with you how ARCS has blessed me and been a big part of my journey.

God's timing and feeding in a digital format

It all started in 2020, the first year of the Covid pandemic. All physical meetings had been disbanded and church services were livestreamed.

With three young kids at home, I found it difficult to tune in to livestreamed services on Sunday mornings. I felt isolated and disconnected from church and community, and wanted very much to find spiritual feeding somewhere else.

The ARCS platform really helped me in this area. In our online arts devotional sessions, participants listen to a short 10–15-minute devotional sharing based on a verse or short passage from the Bible, then take an hour to meditate on the sharing and create artworks, before coming back to share in small groups what they created during their art time with God.

Learning the value of making art for God

At first the idea of spending an hour to make a finished art piece based on scripture felt very foreign to me. But as I ventured into this through ARCS, I discovered the value of making art for God.

Not only was the process of making art meditative, it helped me to go deeper into the word of God. It was a way of

having a conversation with God, the image co-created with the Holy Spirit.

The artworks made as a form of personal worship and response to God were also a blessing to others who attended the sharing. I started to realize that art can really speak and be used powerfully by God to minister to others.

Using art to press into the word

God used ARCS to minister to me deeply on issues dear to my heart. One instance was from a meditation shared from Psalm 126. I was struck by verse 5: “those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.”

I felt that God was telling me to wait for the prodigal to come home, that I would see the salvation of my loved one.

My first response was writing a poem, “Wait for the rain”.

Wait for the rain (from Psalm 126)

The ground hard dry clay

The land an overheated oven

The work thankless, seems futile

What seed could grow

In this inhospitable place

What seed could grow

In this hostile space

Wait for the rain

There is life in the seed

Wait for the rain

Streams will flow

*The seed planted in faithfulness will grow
in good soil*

And soon a lush field will be abloom

Wait for the rain

It will come soon

It will wash your years of tears away

*The painful sowing will be followed by
rejoicing*

Wait for the rain

It struck such a deep chord within me that I continued to meditate on it, and ended up doing three paintings as an intercession and declaration of this word.



Art as memorial stones

In Joshua 4:1–7, God instructed the Israelites to take twelve stones from the river bed to create a memorial of the event of God parting the Jordan river. This was so that they would not forget what God had done for them and would be reminded to testify to others about it.

I have found that art plays a similar function. Looking back at the art pieces I have done in ARCS, I am reminded of the things God said to me and the promises he made.

The artworks have helped me to remember God's faithfulness and hold on to his promises, far better than the scribblings in my journals have ever done.

The artworks have also served as talking points in my conversations with others, giving me opportunities to share about God's faithfulness in my life.

New directions and developments

God used ARCS to lead me to the life-changing decision to leave teaching and pursue the life of an artist.

It started from my first session attending ARCS where I felt God lead me to put myself “out there” as an artist. At that time, art was just a personal hobby.

It felt scary to do so, but I stepped out in faith and obedience, creating my Facebook art page and listing my works for sale. As I did so, I began to get commissions for pet portraits and saw my skills improve with the volume of artworks I produced.

It was also through contacts in the ARCS community that I was given opportunities to take part in different group art exhibitions.

God really accelerated my learning and training through these experiences and the people he brought into my life through ARCS.

A Hui Marriage

GC

I met a mother and her daughter on the bus one day. They were going to make preparations for her daughter's wedding in two weeks' time. I gathered the courage to ask if I could attend the wedding, and was invited.

On the wedding day, the daughter sat on her bed with her back to the door, waiting for the groom to come and take her back to his home. She was not allowed to get out of bed, even to eat or drink.

When the bridegroom arrived, the bride began to cry, as she did not want to leave her parents. But one of her relatives picked her up, with her face covered, and took her to the car.

I joined the other guests following the bridal car to the groom's house, where the imam was waiting to perform the wedding ceremony.

After the wedding, the couple moved to the bridal chamber. Outside, the bride's dowry items, such as washing machines, refrigerators, electrical appliances, and beautiful new dresses, were displayed one by one. Inside, peanuts and dates were placed on the bed to symbolize the birth of a son every year.

There, according to custom, some guests came asking for monetary gifts in red envelopes. If the amount was deemed insufficient, however, an unhappy guest would stab the bride with some sharp object. The groom might at times receive the stabbing in place of his bride. Some say that once, a groom was stabbed into disability.

On the patio, the parents of the bridegroom are surprised to see their faces painted with black ink to look like clowns, to be teased by the guests in

different role plays. This was another of their customs.

The following day, a banquet was held at a restaurant for the male guests. Female guests have their banquet on a separate day.

In Hui culture, the woman is the field and the responsibility of the field is to produce more, while the man is the cultivator and the goal is to harvest. Unions for love are generally few and far between, especially in rural areas.

If a Hui woman comes to faith in Jesus, pressure from her family is a great challenge and often not easy to resolve. It is almost impossible for a young Hui girl to avoid an arranged marriage, and it is even harder for her to remain single. She desperately needs the care and intercession of believers.

Note: the Hui number around 14 million people, living in several Asian countries. They are almost 100% Muslims. They are classified as a frontier people group still needing pioneer work by cross-cultural workers.

*Not by Might or Power,
but Inner Change*

SHARON LIM

When I responded to God's call into full-time Christian service in the late 1980s, I knew He had called me to be a cross-cultural missionary, working among street children.

After five years of waiting, I went to Singapore Bible College (SBC) in 1993 for my training. While at SBC, God confirmed to me that the field was to be Cambodia, after I had made two mission trips with a few other students during our term break.

In 1996, when I was about to graduate, I applied to a mission organization and was granted an interview. At the end of the interview, my application was rejected.

The reason given was that I was already 38 and single. I was told it would be difficult for me to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture at this age.

But it was also because they did not run a street children's ministry.

Instead, I was offered a role serving migrant workers from China. At SBC, I served in the Students Mission Fellowship, and once a week, we reached out to international students from China; hence this offer came.

I politely turned down the offer. I was disappointed, yes; but I was not discouraged, because I knew it was God who called me to serve the Cambodians.

Every year, SBC runs a Mission Emphasis Week, when mission agencies were invited to set up booths to introduce their ministries and mobilize students to missions.

I was assigned to host WEC's booth and got to speak to their candidate director. I found out that WEC did minister to street

children. I also got an opportunity to speak to their regional director about my desire to serve in Cambodia.

I asked him if they would consider me, being already 38. His reply was very encouraging, welcoming me to write to them. So I did, and was given an interview.

I was accepted to attend the residential candidate orientation lasting over two months, and was subsequently accepted to be a missionary.

I left for Cambodia in August 1997, after five months of waiting for the airport to reopen after civil unrest.

When I left, I had only a verse which God gave to me when I responded to His call: “The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24); a prayer: “Lord, grant me joy in all that I do

and face because you told me the joy of the Lord is my strength;" and of course, many prayer warriors - my church, my family and friends and the leaders and staff at WEC.

As I look back on all that happened in my twelve years in Cambodia, I am totally amazed at how God empowered me. I realize His empowerment did not come as I initially thought it would, by God granting me success in ministry.

God did not turn me into a superwoman, nor did He give me a staff like He gave to Moses, that I could use to meet my needs or solve my problems.

Instead, He empowered me by transforming my life, changing my attitudes, to see things from His perspective, not mine, and to look at others with His eyes.

This was how God equipped me for ministry - to love the people He called me to serve, to trust and obey Him when my will was against His, and to acknowledge His sovereignty over all situations.

God also empowered me to let go of the people I loved, to trust that the same God would also empower our local brothers and sisters to take ownership in running the school and church in the village.

He also answered my prayer by granting me joy in all that I do and face, from learning a new language to adapt and appreciate the host culture and serving on an international team with diverse cultures.

This is one precious lesson that I have learnt about God's empowerment - not just about granting a successful ministry, but about shaping me to be more and more like Christ.

Note:

We started an informal school providing two years of kindergarten and six years of primary education to the children in a poor, unregistered village in a province outside the city. We worked there from 2000 to 2009.

The school was handed over to the church in 2008. By God's grace and provision, the school is still running to this day.

We praise God for a team of committed teachers whose sacrifices and love for the children deeply encourage us. Praise and glory to our only almighty and faithful God, Amen.

*Serving Our
Awesome God
in Japan*

ONG BEE CHOO



The Beginnings

God first planted in me the desire to be involved in student ministry in Japan when I was attending a student conference in 1986.

During one of the plenary sessions, what intrigued me most was the slow spread of the gospel in Japan despite its technological advances.

When the delegates from the Japanese student movement, Kirisutosha Gakusei

Kai (KGK) shared about their ministry, I was so touched by their commitment and perseverance to live out their faith in such a tough environment.

My journey as a missionary to Japan began in 1996, after the completion of my theological studies and internship in my home church.

I joined WEC and in Spring 1998, I was seconded to KGK to serve amongst students in the Kansai region. As I reflect, serving in KGK was the most enriching and rewarding experience I have had as a missionary in Japan.

Here are some snippets of my experiences of our awesome God working amongst the Japanese.

Experiencing the power of God

Two examples of students experiencing freedom through Christ:

Once, I noticed a student behaving oddly during prayer time. It was not until a few weeks later that I had the opportunity to talk to her privately.

Then she confessed her sexual sin and we were able to ask God for His forgiveness. She felt a deep sense of relief thereafter and when we met again later, she was blossoming in her spiritual walk.

When I met her some ten years later, she was really thriving in the Lord. Praise the Lord!

Another encounter was with a pastor's daughter who attended one of our spring camps. My colleague asked me to talk to her, so I did.

During our prayer time, she suddenly went down onto the floor and started chanting in an unknown tongue. She told us something was choking her.

Together with my colleague, we had to trust God to show us what to do. Thank God that after four long hours of wrestling, she was finally set free! Hallelujah! Her facial expression lit up and she said she felt much lighter.

Experiencing the grace & mercy of God

Two memorable occasions of witnessing God's grace & mercy:

In 2014, the Lord directed my attention to an old lady in her eighties living at the end of my street. She looked lonely, aloof and odd as I have been living in the same area as her and did notice her a few times.

However, this time, I could hear the Lord telling me to share the gospel with her. The problem is, I had no idea when our paths would cross.

On a few occasions, I did see her, but wasn't equipped with any gospel tract. I had to kick myself for missing those precious opportunities.

When one of my church mates visited me that year, we prayed for this lady. Guess what? I saw her standing outside her house the next day!

This time, I was equipped with a tract and managed to connect with her. She had the most surprised look on her face, but took the tract with a smile.

A few months later, about 11pm one night, I heard sirens blaring loudly. Braving the cold winter night, I went downstairs and saw four fire engines parked at the end of my street.

When I checked the local newspapers the next morning, horror of horrors, it was the house of this old lady!

A couple of days later, I went to the burnt down site and found out from the neighbours that she had been discharged from hospital and was staying with her sister. I let out a sigh of relief!

Whether she had read the tract I gave her, I am not sure; but by God's grace, she still had a chance to get to know Jesus.

Ms N first came to our church in 2015 for a Christmas event. Thereafter, she came to church week after week as a keen seeker.

Her late mother, who had not been a believer, used to listen to Christian hymns, and Ms N had grown to become fond of them too.

By God's amazing grace and mercy, Ms N accepted Jesus after three years of seeking!

In 2019, she was finally willing to say 'goodbye' to her expensive ancestral altar.



With the help of a few church members, we were able to witness Ms N being set free from idolatry and taking a firm stand for her faith. On Easter that year, she went through the waters of baptism. Hallelujah!

Concluding thoughts

Over the years, God has taught me the importance of seeking Him for my daily agenda, that is, to always listen and discern what His Spirit says and directs.

In May 2021, after 25 years of serving in Japan, I returned to Singapore to look after my elderly parents.

These days, setting out to influence people is not on my agenda. Rather, if someone gets influenced by what I say or do, it is a by-product of my obedience to God. The need to 'feel useful' has somehow lost its grip on me.

If there is one takeaway from my time in Japan, it is the importance of discerning God's agenda for my life and ministry. In other words, to be in the centre of His will is what matters most!

In closing, I would like to share a verse I hold dearly to:

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” – Acts 20:24 ESV

*Lessons from
the Great Steppe
& Nomadic Life*

CHUA THOW CHIANG

From 2019 to 2020, I had the opportunity to serve in Central Asia as a Mathematics and IT teacher. This region is vast and sparsely populated. Its land area is 20% larger than India's, but its population is only 5% of India's. The local people are most proud of the Great Steppe* and the nomadic life. Our school is located on the steppe, surrounded by pastureland.

Every day, we teachers travelled by car to and from the school. From the main road to the school, it was a long and winding road. On the way home, we would always encounter slow-moving cattle and sheep.

** A steppe is an ecoregion characterised by grassland plains without trees apart from those near rivers and lakes. The Great Steppe is found in Central Asia stretching from Ukraine to the Tian Shan ranges in China. (Wikipedia)*



Everyone would inevitably slow down to “sheep and cow” speed, look out over the vast grasslands, and give praise to our wonderful Creator God. Not surprisingly, the fatigue of the day would disappear.

Occasionally, there were horses passing by and everyone in the car will immediately be on high alert. After all, “road” in Chinese is literally “horse path” (马路), so the horses have the right of way and you have to give sufficient space for them to pass by without running them over. Sometimes, when two or

three horses chase each other, it feels like ten thousand horses galloping by, so extreme care must be taken.

The local people say that only nomads are qualified to raise horses because they eat an astonishing amount of grass. Each horse needs one square kilometre of grassland. To visualise the space required, an area the size of Shanghai could only support 7,000 horses. These nomads follow their horses, moving wherever their horses eat.

In the Old Testament, there was a period of time when the Israelites also lived a nomadic life. Let us meditate on Psalm 20:7 as an encouragement in our day of BMWs and horsepower: “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.” Will you consider coming out here to reach the unreached peoples of Central Asia?

*A Prophetic Arts
Prayer Trip...
What's That???*

ANNE SOH

It was already crazy enough when God said to prayer walk the land of Japan. I mean, how huge and outrageously expensive that would be!!

But then He added on that He wanted it to be a prophetic arts trip too! Like, how many Christians even know what ‘prophetic arts’ means?! Who would come with me on this wild venture??

But within a week, He led me to three people who said they would pray about joining the team – and all of them are prophetic artists! So I had to say ‘yes’ to Him, and started preparing for the trip with much fear and trepidation...

Firstly, Job wouldn’t be able to come on the trip so I’d have to lead the team on my own. Secondly, I sensed that there would be some fierce warfare involved and I wasn’t sure if I or the rest of the team would be ready for it.

However, on both counts, God showed up and did all the hard work for us so we breezed our way through with great joy and celebration!

So how prophetic can the arts be?

God spoke to us so clearly through the arts. For instance, on our second day in Japan we had visited the Peace Memorial Park in Okinawa. There's an art gallery with a series of paintings by a particular artist on the theme of 'War and Peace'. I noticed that nearly every one of his paintings had similar wavy lines that looked like the wind.



I was especially struck by this piece which depicts the strength of the people in the face of hardship, as represented by the flowers that stand strong in the midst of the billowy winds.

We had heard that we just missed a typhoon as we had arrived the day after it hit Okinawa. But little did we know that for the rest of the trip, God would protect us from two more typhoons – one changed direction midway and the other struck Tokyo the day before we landed there!

So this painting was God's way of reassuring us that He would keep us safe even when typhoons are raging around us.

Then on another day, God prompted us to do team drawing so we all prayed and drew one picture each. Turned out that all the pictures formed a map for the rest

of our trip as we kept seeing real-life representations of the things we had drawn thereafter!



We got to visit a pottery in Okinawa and through learning about the process of how clay is turned into ceramics, God also showed us many lessons about our Christian walk.

The master potter was from the church we had just visited and as he was sharing about how he realised his true identity was to be found in Christ and not in culture or even the arts, I suddenly saw

the link between his testimony and the impromptu dance that Aimee had presented in the church earlier on.

The pastor (the potter's wife) had requested to see Aimee dance so she chose the song 'Who Am I' on the spot and improvised to it. Amazingly, God had already started speaking to us about our identity in Him through the dance and continued the same message during the potter's sharing.



God also spoke to others through us and the arts. At the church that was hosting us in Kyoto, we had presented the pastor with a postcard print of one of our team members, Chloe's painting, 'The Covenant'.

The rainbow background reminded him of an actual rainbow that he had seen in the morning. It held special meaning to him as the church had just celebrated their 37th anniversary the day before. But he lamented that nobody else had seen the rainbow.

We proceeded to get the four church members who were present to pick out one prophetic art card each from a bag and to our surprise, every single one of them received a picture with a rainbow!

The probability of that happening was really very small as we had multiple copies of nearly 20 different pictures and

only 3 of the pictures had rainbows. What's more, the next day when we met another church member and got him to pick a card, he got a rainbow picture too! So it was clear that God wanted to show the rainbow to the church members too, not just the pastor, in order to emphasise that He will keep His promises to the church.

On another occasion, Chloe was showing some missionaries-in-training the painting that God had inspired her to paint for and bring on our trip (you can also read about God's provision for her to come on the trip in her post).

Through her explanation of how God wants to restore every nation, including Japan, He actually brought about reconciliation between a Korean believer and a Japanese believer who were listening to her!

The arts also helped to usher in great power to tear down strongholds. We were on our way to a place famous for its shrines and we were expecting a fierce spiritual battle there.

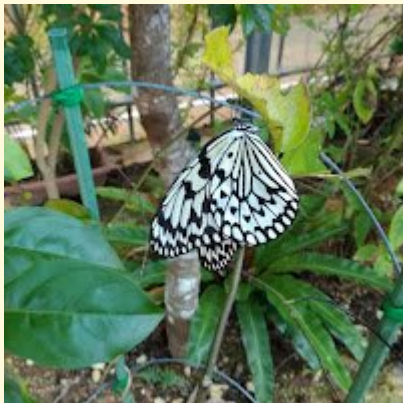
However, a couple of days before the trip, God reminded us of how Jehoshaphat had won the battle through praise and worship (2 Chronicles 20:1-30). So throughout the 2.5-hour drive there, we kept singing song after song from our playlist and even added more songs to the list as they came to mind.

When we finally arrived, we all sensed that God had already won the battle. He led us to a riverside instead of entering the shrine area, and released us to continue praising Him and making a joyful noise unto Him.



Don't forget God's masterpieces!

Of course, God also spoke to us wonderfully through His artworks painted in the skies and revealed through nature. Once when we had just finished praying, a butterfly landed on Jesse's thigh and rested there. Then on the day we did the team drawing, just as we had finished and were packing up, a butterfly hovered over Aimee's head for a while. To us, both incidents were signs of His presence with us.



On our first morning at Kyoto, I was woken up at 5.20am by a pink glow in the room. I looked out the window and for

the next half an hour, witnessed the most amazing live painting with the clouds as His canvas.



That was God's way of reminding me that I was indeed in the land of the rising sun, but also a confirmation of the word we had received earlier that the Son of Righteousness will rise over the land.

What about leading the team?

Well, my fears were unfounded, of course! I learnt to rely fully on God's prompting as He was the leader of our team, not me. Each time He prompted

me or anyone in the team, there would be confirmation from the rest, and then we would act accordingly.

Things would work out perfectly and we would even make pleasant discoveries along the way (one of them being the fantastically clear view of Mt Fuji even though it had been a cloudy day).



However, the only time where the team disagreed and did not follow God's prompting led to a minor understanding with a couple of local people. But thankfully, when we admitted our

mistake and apologised, things were quickly resolved.

To be honest, I hadn't been confident at all that the overwhelming itinerary (4 cities in 10 days, 6 flights and countless hours of driving) would be achievable, or that the crazy things (singing, dancing, playing instruments, flagging, bubbling, drawing, painting, giving out art cards).

He had shown us to do during our trip would have any impact. But thankfully, my team members were willing to obey God's instructions and we got to experience incredibly divine things together!



The final confirmation that we had done everything right came when we saw this at the boarding gate of Sapporo airport as we were about to fly back to Singapore.



It's the same Hachiko dog that I had drawn (see earlier picture). But instead of waiting to hear the voice of his dead master, my picture shows the dog listening intently to his master's voice singing over him (with slight reference to the HMV dog who also happens to be listening to his dead master's recorded voice over the gramophone). When we incline our ears to listen to our Master, who is most definitely alive, we will find that:

The Lord your God is among you; He is mighty to save. He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you with His love; He will rejoice over you with singing.
Zephaniah 3:17