

CHRISTMAS ISSUE

The Pastor's Message was written a week before Pastor Paul passed away.

Contents

• Christmas Message	Pastor	Page 1
• The Seremban Wesley Choir	Michael Goh	Page 3
• The Pain and the Scar	Bernard Len	Page 6
• The MSF Guilin-Guangzhou Holiday	Thava Ma	Page 7
• Goodbye Pastor Paul	Peter Yew	Page 8



Pastor's Message

FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS

THE HEART IS ENLARGED. These penetrating words, written on the x-ray report, jolted me out of an otherwise relatively calm morning. All three of us were doing our medical tests as required by the

Australian High Commission. Jess and Peter's results came through with flying colors. Sadly, mine had to be verified by a cardiologist. So while the two of them joyfully surveyed the megamall, I scurried down to the specialist friend at Subang to do an *echocardiogram*.

While waiting at the medical lobby for my 'number' to be called many sullen thoughts filled my mind that somber afternoon. What weighed heavily on me was the concern that I had unwittingly taken my health for granted. I found myself pondering over the remaining time left for me to live a life of *significance*. I wondered whether I had been unknowingly swept along by the tyranny of a busy but unproductive life. Not surprisingly,

I was suddenly moved to specially thank God for giving to us, by far, one of the most productive and fulfilling years of ministry and service. *Wesley Seremban* and *Taman Ujong* will always be on our minds. I think these two churches are what probably caused my heart to swell with some measure of pride!

My one-year study break at Tabor College, Perth, is not a quest for additional paper qualifications. At this stage of my life, what is really needed is an opportunity to move into a contemplative mode of ministry that would include a sharpening of the mind and the warming of the heart. To be engaged in reflection on the inner-life / pastoral issues. To seek out an older mentor who can help me work through some of my own inner struggles. To allow God to do *a new work*; so to speak, that will bear good dividends for family and ministry in the years to come. To take time to sharpen the saw of the wise tree cutter, as the story goes.

It is a nice feeling to be needed. Many have asked as to whether we would return to Seremban to serve. Quite frankly, we are open to *any* appointment as long as it pleases our Master. Returning to TRAC Malaysia is a promise we intend to keep. However, the practical questions of *posting* are a matter within the purview of the Board of Appointments. Please understand that when we serve Christ's community we serve you too.

Finally, we want to wish you all a *Warm and Blessed Christmas* FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS and thank you once again for allowing us the opportunity to *shepherd* you through these seven years of friendship, fellowship and learning together. Forgive us, if we have failed to be there when you most needed us. In the words of my favorite yester-year crooner, Nat King Cole, you folks will be *UNFORGETTABLE!* We will remember you in our prayers as we hope you would for us. Till then,

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above!

When we are called to part
It gives us inward pain
But we shall still be joined in hearts
And hope to meet again

(John Fawcett, 1782)

Yours in His Precious Vineyard,

Pastor Paul, Jess and Peter

The Seremban Wesley Choir

Michael Goh



(The Seremban Wesley Choir has become an integral feature of the church that it will be difficult to think of our church without a choir. Yet, this may be a reality sooner than later if there is no fresh infusion of able singers to add to the fledging and aging numbers. This feature article, written by a senior choir member, attempts to take the readers through a journey with the SWC ministry.)

Much has been said about the Seremban Wesley Choir, but few know much about its history and how many back-breaking hours of practice it takes to put together a piece of music worthy of presentation to our congregation. I have been asked to attempt to trace the history of our choir, which, to my knowledge, rank among some of the oldest choirs in our Wesley Methodist churches in the country and if I may add, some of these choirs are fast dwindling because of a lack of men/women power and a lack in interest to pursue a love for singing God's praises in song. It's a common joke in our choir that our 'heavenly choir' is by far stronger than our earthly one, if we are to count those who have already been called to 'higher service' – people like S. Veerapen (Choir director), S.S. Lingam, Tan Jin Hoe, Chan Saik Poh, Gan Nam Chye, Tan Kee Jon, Ong Cheng Geok and Margaret Chang to name a few.

Certainly we must not forget those who have rendered yeoman service in the past – people like Jessie Lingam (K.L.), Robert Lingam Datin Kwok (P.J.), Mrs. K.N. Veerapen (P.J.), Mrs. Helen Aw (P.J.), Ng Swee Chen, Catherine Au, Tan Kim Cheng (P.J.), Margaret Ong, Ong Eng Yau & Ong Eng Bee (U.S.A.), Ong Eng Hang and Rose Ong, Ong Eng Meng, Irene Mong, Elsie Woon, Khoo Swee Kiap, S. Vadivelu, Dorothy Chang, Annie Wee, Helen Ong, Elsie Chin (choir director), Sharmini Su Sivarajah & Anthony Wong – to name a few. And here's a fact few people knew – there was a time when the Ong family members could have easily sang as a choir – they had all the S.A.T.B (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) parts in the family. How's that for a family choir!

So what is our present choir like? We are very fortunate to have two very committed sisters who give off their time tirelessly and they are none other than Li Li Tan (choir director) and Mable Chin (pianist). The other members are:

Soprano: Mrs. Tan Fu Tee
Priscilla Lim
Ong Cheng Woon
Julie Cheah

Alto: Rachel Lee
Maggie Tan
Girly Ng
Natasha Su Sivarajah
Elaine Tan
Amy Chin
Hui Siew (who will be returning to U.K. after singing with us for Christmas)

Tenor: Michael Goh
Robert Tan
Peter Yew
Edwin Tan

Bass: Andrew Chin
Ong Eng Siong
Tan Fu Tee
Eddy Chew

If this motley group of singers is insufficient to pull off an anthem successfully then an S.O.S. is sent out and by God's grace reinforcements would be forthcoming! So don't be surprised when you see occasional new faces in the choir, instead thank God for little miracles that the Seremban Wesley Choir is still singing here on earth and not up there!!

Whenever invited we went on short singing tours to places like Bentong, Raub & K. Lipis and Kuantan. I am told that (hopefully) through our singing the congregations would be inspired to greater heights of worship and praise. This seems to give the impression that our choir is a 'kampong' choir, because we only visit small rural churches. This is not true. Some years back TRAC organized a 'battle' of church choirs beginning from the district level and culminating at the national level at P.J. Trinity; and if my memory serves me well, Seremban Wesley Choir came out tops at the district level held at Melaka Wesley! And we went on to sing at the national level as well! All this took place when Rev. Hwa Jen was pastor then. This was not the only choir outing we had. Sometime in the 60's/70's, we had a combined choir comprising Wesley, Chinese & Tamil Methodists members and, if I'm not mistaken, some Anglican church choir members as well. This combined choir was about 50+ strong; and we sang an Easter cantata that we presented here in Seremban and also in Port Dickson and Jelebu. This combined choir was under the baton of a music teacher from Chan Wa Secondary School, a Mr. Chow Ker Chia.

So from the past achievements of the choir that I have just related, you can see that Seremban Wesley Choir certainly has a rich heritage to which I'm proud to be a part of. I remember I joined the choir sometime in the mid 60's or so through the invitation by the late Mr. S. Veerapen, who was then its choir director. I have been reliably informed by Mr. Ong Eng Siong, our most senior choir member, that the earliest choir director he could remember was a Mrs. Ingensen, who was the wife of the pastor of Wesley Church then and principal of A.C.S., a Rev. C. Dudley Ingensen in 1946 or earlier. I myself knew and met this gentleman, for during that time I was living in the government quarters up on what is known as Hill Road just opposite the school.

After the Ingensens left for the U.S., the late Mr. S. Veerapen succeeded as its director until he handed the baton to Elsie Chin who in turn handed the baton to Tan Li Li our present choir director. Eng Siong also tells me that in those days there were 2 choirs, viz., the junior and senior choirs. I don't know when this arrangement changed, but, just imagine, having 2 choirs, to prepare the juniors for elevation to the senior choir! Today to have one choir is already a bonus! Now to get some of the members to come for practices is an achievement! Some of the members are considering retirement, having served in this ministry for more than 40 years. This is more than the working life of most people. However, singing is both a delight to God as well as a personal past-time. Yet, voices do weaken and the ability to hold the high and low notes tends to diminish with age in spite of our willingness.

(The monthly rendition of the anthem on Communion Sundays as well as on special occasions required many practices on Fridays in the church or in the home of the choir director, and sometimes in the basement and youth centre. The music of these practice sessions in the sanctuary must have drifted across Jalan Lintang into the Terminal One shopping complex to symbolize one church activity that is visible to the public. Yet the time taken out to faithfully come may have been taken for granted. We have fun but perseverance in learning the songs although we sometimes fumbled. Most of all we have the love for God in our hearts. When we sometimes feel discouraged we encourage one another to stay on, occasionally jokingly saying that choir members never retire, they just expire. The truth is our desire cannot be matched by changing circumstance. People grow old, or they move away, or they have changing needs and priorities. If the choir cannot renew itself then perhaps it will just fade away. Most certainly, the memory of the Seremban Wesley Choir shall not fade away. Its heritage, history and contribution to the worship life of the church are too significant to cancel its role in worship. We just pray that the choir ministry, which is a rare feature in many newer churches today, will not disappear but rather re-evolve into a vibrant and more youthful worship group to uphold the glory of God and His church here.)

The Pain and the Scar

Bernard Len

"I am in pain and distress, may Your salvation, O God, protect me"

Psalm 69: 29

Rev. Paul George preached on 'How God Guides Us through Pain' on 21st November. It reminded me of the following incident.

A friend of mine recently underwent a major heart surgery. During my visit, he showed me the lengthy scar left on his chest by the bypass surgery. He remarked that it would be a permanent scar and a deep pain marked on his body. I could feel the same and shared the pain within his body. Nobody likes to have a scar to bear with.

But quickly a thought came to my mind. I consoled him by saying that it was the lengthy scar that saved his life. Had he not underwent the bypass surgery his life would be at a great risk. My friend agreed to what I said.

When I returned to my house after that visit I thought about the scar. Something is painful. I took off my shirt in front of the mirror and examined the scar and the pain that I could feel within my heart. The difference is while my friend's scar is left permanently on his body my scar and my pain are inside my heart and soul.

Many decades of my life have passed. Life's experiences such as disappointments, heartaches, setbacks, unemployment, despair, loss of direction and a sense of helplessness have not only rendered me 'wounded' but also left an invisible scar and pain within my heart. It cannot be seen by others, it cannot be cured by any medical doctor. Year in and year out, I worry that its presence may cause erosion over time.

Then I recalled what I have said to my friend, that he needs to be thankful for the scar which has saved and protected his life.

Although the wounds of life's frustrations and hurt have made me disheartened and questioned my faith, yet they have passed and gone forever. In its wake, the pain has brought forth courage in me, nurtured my trust in God who leads me forward one step at a time. I now reckon that having painful experiences and permanent scars are not that bad after all. They have taught me how to restart my life and to stand firm again.

I now learn to appreciate the true meaning of life. I now say to myself what I said to my friend, 'be thankful to your scars'.

"I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. I this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16: 33

The MSF Guilin-Guangzhou Holiday (October 2004)

Thava Ma

It's good to be home again, in our land of milk & honey. My garden was well watered, not by my neighbour but by God and all else at home are in welcoming order, Praise the Lord!



We landed at Guangzhou's new airport, the world's 3rd largest, where we were met by our tour guide, Ming Ming, and taken to our coach for the week. Our journey took us to Guilin and back again to Guangzhou. We visited musical fountains, an ostrich farm, a jade factory, a silk factory, a pearl factory, medical centres, a tea farm, silver cave (truly magnificent), hills, caves and parks. We went on at least 3 river cruises and did bamboo rafting with a pretty thing in country

costume who sang like a nightingale (called sang ker or pantuns in chinese challenging men to reply). We also enjoyed an excellent acrobatic show, visited a burial ground, toured an ocean aquarium and saw the world's largest man-made waterfall tumbling down the side of a grand hotel. Food was yummy, most always 10 course lunches and dinners. Breakfasts were always well supplied. We returned heavier, naturally! Hotels were 3-star & comfortable.

It would be unrealistic to tell you that everything is fine. The China Southern 757 that we flew in proved that flights can be warm & cramped. Also the public toilets in China were a cultural shock. And then of course with all the scheduled activities we didn't have enough time for shopping!



We were thankful that the time zone is the same, so our body clock didn't suffer shock or strain. And the hand phones have fantastic coverage especially for SMS. The weather was dry and warm so our umbrellas, raincoats, coats and warm wear were quite unnecessary.

The fruits in season were pears, apples, persimmons, bananas, papayas, chestnuts and watermelons, most of which we ate to our hearts content.

We were surprised by the people. Those I met were friendly and honest (although I was warned again and again to watch out for conmen). Our bus drivers and tourist guide were wonderful (one driver had to leave us half-way; he presented us with 2 boxes of pears before he left; our tour guide cried at parting!). The trees, fruits & flowers reminded us very much of our very own (mango trees, hibiscus, etc).



Finally, on a personal note, the native tribal people there have not seen many Indians and they were fascinated by me, the only non-Chinese in the group. But I thoroughly enjoyed all the attention and the whole trip will remain memorable for always.

We thank our God for His love which we passed on to the people we met in China. We managed to visit a church in Guilin where the members there sang a hymn (others hummed along to the tune of Sweet Hour of Prayer) and we gave our offerings. May the Holy Spirit move in this mighty land - the awakening dragon! Also may Ming Ming find Jesus and the abundant life. She told us in parting that she wishes to go to church.

Goodbye Pastor Paul

Peter Yew

Paul George spent about a seventh of his life, or a quarter of his ministry serving Seremban Wesley and Taman Ujong. He came with a luxuriant top and a trim belly but leaves with much want at the top but over provided in the middle. He has made much joke of these physical changes so I hope he won't mind it being repeated at his parting, all said in good jest and love. Thank you for giving your best and farewell, Pastor Paul. May the Lord bless you and your family and keep you under His steadfast wing of love.