

## To know Christ and to make Him known

Followers of Christ may emulate apostle Paul in his holy ambition to know Christ and to make him known, which includes sacrifice and suffering, said Bishop Emeritus Dr Robert Solomon.

When knowing Christ is our deepest desire, “everything else falls in place: our relationships, our agendas, our priorities”. It also guards against the temptation in ministry to turn our focus away from the Lord to ourselves, cautioned the former bishop of the Methodist Church in Singapore from 2000 to 2012.

He was speaking at the 54th Valedictory and Thanksgiving Service of Discipleship Training Centre (DTC) on May 25 this year at Bartley Christian Church. About 70 people attended the event to mark the end of an academic year, including DTC alumni and supporters.

Dr Solomon observed that Paul was still on the journey of knowing Christ, and longed to know Christ more deeply (Philippians 3:12). He had set aside all his trophies and titles to pursue this “one thing”: to spend time with Christ, be taught by him, know what was in his mind, share in his sufferings, serve him, and grow to be like him.

As we know Christ better, we also come to know ourselves better. For example, when the 72 that Jesus sent out to preach the gospel and heal the sick returned rejoicing that “even the demons submit to us in your name”, he told them to rejoice instead that their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:17, 20). Jesus knew their hearts were focused on the demons submitting to them, and not in his name: “If I listen to Jesus carefully,



Photo by Moses Goh

**Marking the handover from retiring Dean, Dr Lim K Tham (centre), to Dean-designate Pastor Alvin Tan (left).**

he is actually warning every one of us who sets out in ministry, ‘be careful that the focus doesn’t shift from the Lord to you’. It’s an ever-present danger—humility and submission to the Lord, and all glory to him, or a growing kind of self-congratulation that takes place in ministry.”

Paul was also driven to make Christ known where Christ had not been preached, even if he had to suffer for it. This was why, for example, he returned to the city of Lystra despite having only just been stoned by a crowd there. “Every one of us who is called to ministry may not have realised at the beginning, but then it becomes more and more clear that it is not plain sailing to serve the Lord. It is very serious business. It may mean life and death.”

Dr Solomon noted that DTC’s motto, “to be with him and to be sent out”, corresponds with Paul’s passion to know Christ

and to make him known, combining “maturity with mission”. “It’s a good heritage. I pray that DTC will continue to do this very important ministry.”

The valedictory service recognised two leaving students: Ms Olivia Mak was awarded the Master of Christian Studies, and Mr Pang Wee Heong, the Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies. Participants of the Biblical Hebrew for Beginners course also received certificates of completion.

A token of appreciation was presented to the retiring Dean, Dr Lim K Tham, for his three years of service by the chairman of the DTC Board, Rev Dr Timothy Chong. To mark the handover, Dr Lim presented the Dean-designate Pastor Alvin Tan with a wooden cross.

# Introducing our new students

## **Asaph Lee Zong Geng (Singapore)**

Asaph (Zong Geng) and Gaylin have been married for 13 years. They have three children: Zephaniah (11), Jedidiah (9), and Isabelle (3).

Asaph came to faith in Jesus through a street evangelist when he was about 18 years old. Even though he did not want to be prayed for, the street evangelist insisted and declared him a Christian after praying for him.

In anger, Asaph stormed home only to find his lips uttering a prayer of thanksgiving to God. He knew he had changed from within but he did not pursue God until he was in university.

Asaph began attending church during his university days where he learnt more about God through the lives of fellow members of Eternal Life Baptist Church (ELBC). He also witnessed the love of families in the church and it touched him. After his baptism in April 2006, he started serving in the music and youth ministries in ELBC.

Gaylin attended ELBC from her youth days, and personally encountered the love of God through suffering. She wrestled with God during two periods of chronic hives, each period lasting up till a year. It was towards the end of the second period of hives that God broke her hardened heart. The Lord responded to her with "I delight in you" three times despite her rants and frustration towards Him.

What followed next was not short of a miracle and she experienced a deepening of her relationship with God through it. God eventually healed her when she focused her energy on praying for a breakthrough, without the help of medication. Gaylin is currently an audit student at DTC while she balances her time for Asaph and her children.

It was in ELBC where Asaph and Gaylin were first introduced to missions through short-term mission trips, and they subsequently did a Family Discipleship Training School (FDTS) by Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Baja California, Mexico, with their 3 children in 2022. Through FDTS and more exposure to missions, Asaph felt a growing hunger for theological studies which led him to explore various theological seminaries.

They were most drawn to DTC as it is focused on missions and it encourages intercultural community living amongst students and faculty staff, which is the heartbeat of missions.

Please pray for Asaph and Gaylin that they will be able to integrate their learning into practice. Pray for the children to love and seek after God.



**Asaph, Gaylin, Zephaniah, Jedidiah and Isabelle.**

## **Don Tan (Singapore)**

My life journey began in a challenging family environment, where I faced numerous difficulties and made some unfortunate choices. However, a turning point came when friends introduced me to Christianity during a youth camp. At that moment, I experienced the profound love of God and decided to embrace the Christian faith.

While my faith journey had its ups and downs, I eventually overcame my struggles through the support of a dear friend and my return to church (Bartley Christian Church). This renewed faith led me to actively participate in church activities and eventually to join Singapore Youth for Christ, where I work with troubled youth.

Now, I am pursuing further theological education at

DTC to deepen my understanding of God's teachings and better equip myself for His service. My aim is to align my life with His calling and be a more effective instrument of His love and grace.

I kindly request your prayers for my continued focus on ministry, family, and studies.



### **Elisa Omega Maggang (Ega) (Indonesia)**



I come from a Christian background. My father served as a pastor in a church in Kupang City.

However, I personally understood the gospel and accepted Jesus as my Savior and Lord at the age of 16, when I joined the High School Students Fellowship run by Perkantas (FES Indonesia).

I then served in the ministry during my time in high school

and college. The ministry supports my spiritual development as a follower of Christ and teaches me how to introduce high school students to Jesus and support their spiritual development as disciples of Jesus. At last, God called me to work at Perkantas full-time as a Staff Worker after I received my university degree.

My former field of study was civil engineering, so after serving at Perkantas for five years, I began to pray for the opportunity to study theology.

God answered my prayer when I attended a staff conference in Malaysia. There I met one of the board members of DTC who introduced me to DTC. Long story short I did my research on DTC and I found the education system here quite interesting. It is a small community designed to form disciples of Christ in a multicultural setting so that they can participate in God's salvation work.

DTC meets my needs because my main concern in ministry is discipleship in a small group, which is similar to what DTC has been doing for years. I hope that my time at DTC will shape me into a Christlike person and enable me to use what I have learned and experienced here to help students in my city.

Please keep my family in Kupang in your prayers. While I am studying here, my wife (Rezky) and my two-year-old son (Zano) live with my mother in Kupang.

My family is unable to accompany me because my

wife is unable to obtain permission to take extended leave. She has been a government officer for three years, and the civil service regulations do not allow her to take long leave before five years of service. Please pray for my son's physical and emotional development. I intend to return during the long break to see my family. Pray for God's provision. Thank you for your support in prayer.

### **Oyun-Erdene Sukhbaatar (Oyuka) (Mongolia)**

Democracy was established in Mongolia in 1990 and missionaries were allowed to openly enter Mongolia since then. My parents are one of the first Christians in Mongolia who received Christ. My parents made the decision not only to believe, but also to serve. I grew up in a pastor's family.

Seeing how hard their life was and how much my parents sacrificed to serve, I grew up with the decision to get a job in a big company, and pursue my career. In other words, I made up my mind that I will not serve in church or any ministry.

After graduating from university, I got a job at a bank and even received a promotion. Even though it was what I wanted and planned for, it did not bring me any satisfaction or joy.

At that time, I was given the opportunity to serve in the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES).

My ministry started with the plan of one year. But during my time in ministry, God showed me that satisfaction does not come only from a high career and fame, and that a life of service is not a disgrace. Over the years, I understood and respected my parents for the wonderful decision they made even when everyone was against them. I got to know myself through a lot of healing and new experiences.

Through these healings and renewals, serving has now lasted six years. Because I want to serve long-term until I have no more physical strength in this student ministry, I decided to take a short break and take the nine-month long Sabbatical Studies course at DTC to improve my Bible knowledge.

When I first came to DTC, I was received warmly by the community and I felt that I would enjoy studying here long-term. I will return to Mongolia in 2024 March as the new semester would start during that period.

Please pray for me that I would be able to pass on well what I have learned here, that my English would improve, for the provision of living finances, and that I would be able to discern God's voice clearly while I am here.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### DTC is open for applicants for 2024

We thank God for His protection over the Covid-19 period when borders were closed, and students could not come to DTC. Since the re-opening of borders, God has sent us six first-year students (2023–2024) from Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Mongolia, and Singapore, including a Singaporean family with 3 children; Zephaniah (11), Jedidah (9), and Isabelle (3). We are now open for new applicants for 2024–2025. By God's grace, we have limited scholarships and continue to seek local church

partnership in missions to support the training of leaders from emerging nations.

We have found in the past candidates recommended by DTC alumni to have a good understanding of DTC's ethos and are prepared to live and learn together in a small cross-cultural community as disciples of Jesus Christ, "to be with Him...and to be sent out".

Please refer to our website at <https://www.dtc.org.sg/admissions> to submit an enquiry form or email us at [disciple@dtc.org.sg](mailto:disciple@dtc.org.sg)

## RECENT NEWS



### Learning Greek (above)

Rev Dr Tan Yak-hwee (left) with her students of the Biblical Greek for Beginners course on a weekday evening at DTC. In the 12-session course, from July to October, students learned to read and translate parts of the Gospel of John.

### Learning about the war in Ukraine and Russia (right)

DTC alumnus Hidekazu Ishikawa (1974–76), who lives in Sapporo, Japan, shared with DTC students and faculty on Sept 19 about his ministry with refugees from Ukraine through partners in Poland, Romania, and Moldova.



## Giving to DTC

Donors may issue a cheque made out to Discipleship Training Centre Ltd. and mail it to **33A Chancery Lane, Singapore 309554**; or transfer the funds to DTC's account number **024-901049-4** with DBS Singapore by ATM, Internet banking or telegraphic transfer. Donors may also scan the PayNow QR code. UEN Number: **197100578E**

Beneficiary bank swift code: **DBSSGSGG**  
Beneficiary bank: **DBS Bank Ltd**  
Beneficiary bank's address:  
**12 Marina Boulevard, DBS Asia Central, MBFC Tower 3, Singapore 018982**  
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# Reflections on ageing and retirement

By Rev John Ting

I am 81. Not surprisingly, from time to time, I think about death.

Thoughts of death and dying tend to make me melancholic, unlike the experience of the apostle Paul who could testify: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21; also Phil. 1:14, 3:20–21). For Paul, the expectation of dying and death was something he positively looked forward to (2 Tim. 4:6–8).

I have been somewhat surprised at how little Paul's thinking and expectations have been true of me. One reason for my lack of joyful expectation in the face of death is guilt. Guilt that I will be leaving David, Rhonda, and Michelle (John's children) with too much to do in settling my affairs after my death.

I like the song 10,000 Reasons. I have found verse 3 especially meaningful. I often choke up when I sing it.

*And on that day when my strength is failing  
The end draws near and my time has come  
Still, my soul will sing Your praise unending  
Ten thousand years and then forevermore*

## How has your week been?

In my twilight years, I believe I will not have any more active, busy ministry. So, my attitude is simply to be available to the Lord for anything or for "nothing". Health-wise, I have had three major surgeries: heart bypass, removal of my cancerous prostate, and removal of my bladder. I am receiving medical treatment for chronic depression, chronic anaemia, Type 2 diabetes, kidney impairment, and hydrocephalus (water in the brain) which impairs my memory and sense of balance.

David, Rhonda and Michelle have been "watching our backs" and helping us in various ways. Last December, Michelle left Singapore and returned to Sydney for good so she could be our main carer.

On Sundays during morning tea after the worship service, I am often asked, "How has your week been?" My usual reply is, "Largely unchanged. My week has been much like the previous week and the week before that!" A few months back I "discovered" Netflix which has led to more "diversity" in our daily lifestyle e.g., increased entertainment and less sleep!

## Counting my blessings

Not surprisingly, I have had a lot of time to reminisce. I have "counted my blessings" and struggled with regrets. When I think of all the blessings the Lord has bestowed on me, I overflow with thanksgiving and joy: retirement living in Sydney; prison and drug ministry for over 30 years in addition to theological teaching and pastoral ministry; the privilege of teaching first-generation Mongolian Pastors and in the first Mongolian Missionary Training Course; mission trips with DTC students.

## The Lord knows what is best

Romans 8:28 has become very meaningful for me: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose". Because of this verse, we may say to someone, "God knows what is best for you." This is true, of course. But at times, I have questioned how the extent of someone's suffering was the best for that person.

I think of the final days of my dear DTC classmates, Lucy Tan and Lim Fong Jwong who both suffered, very, very painfully in their final days. I remember visiting Lucy in hospital. I did not question the Lord why He was allowing Lucy to experience pain, but I did question why she was experiencing so much pain? In what way was this best for her? I am aware of various answers people give to this question. For example, to mould and refine her even more. Of course, before we get to heaven, we all need to be more and more sanctified. But did someone as godly as Lucy need so much pain to sanctify her? Lucy was one of the most godly Christian sisters I have known.

One of Frances' (John's wife) close friends wrote to me when she heard that on top of my previous surgeries and serious health issues, I had just been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. This is when the neurones or nerves in our brain which control our muscles die. When the nerves die, the muscles they control also die. The thought that the time might come when I would lose my mobility and not be able to eat, swallow, and breathe without help was a rather grim picture of my possible end of life.

Frances' friend Alison wrote, "It is good that the Lord knows what is best for him with regard to you." She did not write, "The Lord knows what is best for you." This is true but "the Lord knows what is best for Himself with regard to you".

The Lord knows best how He should sovereignly oversee my life and circumstances for his own praise, glory, honour, and purposes. I saw how this applied so aptly to Lucy and Fong Jwong, how they brought much glory to God and encouragement to others in their final painful days in this earthly life.

*John and his wife Frances were in the first batch of DTC students (1968–1970). John served at DTC for over 30 years as a lecturer, Assistant Dean, and Dean. They live in Sydney, Australia. This is an abridged, edited version of John's sharing at DTC's monthly alumni prayer meeting over Zoom on Sept 19, 2023.*