

AN INTERVIEW WITH DEACON PETER

I must admit I know very little of Deacon Peter other than him being the head of the Dialect Ministry. Hence I was thankful that out of his busy schedule, he managed to spare some time for The Vine!

Alicia: A little background of you please!

Deacon Peter: My siblings and I attended Sunday school at the Bukit Panjang Methodist church after much persuasion from the owner of the little kampong house our family rented. It was at a Christmas celebration that I first came to know about little baby Jesus and His birth in a manger.



In 1980, I prayed to receive Christ at the Luis Palau Gospel Rally held at the Singapore National Stadium and was subsequently baptised in Jurong Christian Church. I have been worshipping and serving in this church since then. I am happily married to Jessie, my beloved wife for 40 years and still enjoying our family life. Just last year in Sept 2016, on our pilgrimage to Jerusalem, we renewed our wedding vow at the Church in Cana (aka Cana of the Galilee) - the historical village site where Jesus miraculously transformed water into wine at the Wedding Feast. We have 3 children – 2 sons(aged 38 and 30) and a

daughter(aged 29).

I enjoy talking to elderly people from diverse dialect and cultural backgrounds, especially folks who are fluent in their own mother tongues like Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, Hakka and Malay. I have a keen interest in improving and deepening my knowledge and conversational skill in dialects. I would consider myself a warm and friendly person who is still young at heart. Though aged 67 now, I often hear people saying I don't look my age. Maybe it is my family gene plus perks enjoyed in my ministry work - being 'pampered' and treated like children by our motherly/fatherly folks in the dialect congregation. I thank God for His manifold blessings.



Alicia: What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Deacon Peter: I love cooking and trying out food recipes whenever I could find the time to do so. I feel good when I see my family members enjoying the dishes I had joyfully cooked for them. My children are my best critics and sometimes 'guinea pigs' for some of my weird recipes combination.

When the opportunity permits, I will search and sniff out good food outlets in shopping malls and coffee shops or hawker centres to compare and gauge my culinary skill against those 'recommended' dishes. Church members do notice that I have a habit of inspecting and scrutinising canned and bottled food products at supermarkets. It is like treasure hunting, trying to discover and discern the types of ingredients used in certain popular items, and to seek inspiration for new recipes. Most JCCians may not know that I once operated a food catering business too. You can say cooking, Peranakan style, is in my blood.

Alicia: What drew you into serving in this ministry?

Deacon Peter: Having witnessed my own elderly parents receiving Christ during their old age and seeing the challenges and difficulties they encountered when attending church, I felt the urgency and burden to help the old folks in the last phase of their life journey, to win them for Christ's kingdom. Looking back at my 15 years of service in the ministry, I could only say it was my calling from God. By God's grace and with the help of the Holy Spirit, today JCC dialect congregation is maturing and gradually expanding in strength. We have come a long way, since starting this ministry work from scratch with only little Hokkien knowledge and limited, untrained manpower resources. I count it all my joy and privilege to be able to serve alongside our dedicated team of co-labourers, even as we continue to facilitate in the sowing and harvesting work in God's earthly kingdom.



I see dialect ministry as a very important work in God's harvest field. I must say there are many life lessons and good values we can learn from the elderly folks. I had discovered and learnt a lot more about aging problems and issues most frail and aging elderly folks faced in their twilight years. I got to understand and see life from their perspective - through the lens of their weary eyes. I feel a great sense of joy and excitement whenever a window of opportunity is opened for the gospel of Christ to be shared. I rejoiced with a sense of victory and jubilation each time a soul is saved, regardless of the person's dialect, age and health condition.



Dialect ministry is a Cradle to Grave ministry. Majority of elderly worshippers had come to know Christ during the final lap of their life journey and like new born little children, they would need guidance and spiritual food to help them mature from liquid to solid food as they walk the path of eternal life promised by Lord Jesus. Over the years, we have developed close bonding and family ties with many of them and their family members. It can be sad and painful to see some depart suddenly or for some, a gradual decline in their health but all were nevertheless very courageous and ready to be called home by the Lord when the time came. Though tears were shed and goodbye bade, we knew in our heart that they had run and finished the good race and will be rewarded and well rested in the everlasting arm of our Father in heaven.

Alicia: What difficulties do you face in your ministry? How do you overcome them?

Deacon Peter: In our area of ministry work, we do not really get to enjoy the benefits of modern technology like Facebook, WhatsApp, email or even sms since most elderly folks have very little education. Thus, they are not as technology savvy as the younger generation. We try to be sensitive to the needs of these elderly folks by focusing much on relationship building, like face to face communication and bonding in practical ways, showing them respect and patience, covering them with loving tender care. Hospital visits are fairly routine as sickness and falls are common among



the elderly. I have to remind myself to constantly turn to God for strength, patience and good health in order to serve His people. Thank the Lord for a strong and dedicated leadership team and passionate helpers to enable me to fulfil His calling in JCC.

Alicia: We all have certain prayers that we submit to God over different periods of time. What is the prayer that is weighing on you right now?

Deacon Peter: It is my heart desire to see more people come to know the gospel truth and receive salvation in Christ. Pray the Lord will raise up more labourers in JCC and open up more doors for the sharing of the gospel in and around Taman Jurong area using creative and meaningful ways for the lost to be saved, making use of the new and bigger church facilities that God has so graciously provided for His harvest work.

Alicia: What would you like to see in JCC in 5 years' time?

Deacon Peter: A growing, vibrant and people oriented church that is committed to be “fisher of men” - being more outward than inward looking in church ministries and programs. Our church used to be more of a family church; many worshippers are related or connected in one way or another. We have two-generational and even three-generational families worshipping together on Sundays. It will be good if more concerted effort and attention is given for the outreach to elderly parents/relatives of our existing congregation members. I would like to see us encouraging and helping our youths and young adults to share the gospel with their loved ones and facilitate in their participation at church evangelistic and outreach events through a partnership program - deliberate and strategic effort between their children and pastoral/leadership team to connect with these pre-believers – fishes at the fringe waiting to be caught. The Lord wants to enlarge our tent and expand His kingdom boundary to bring in the sheaves. I believe the Lord wants His church to be ready for the harvest and to grow in wisdom, strength and stature too. Considering the urgency of Christ's return, 5 years is not much of a time.

