

Auld Lang Syne/The Changing Generations

We are all familiar with the words “Auld Lang Syne” which means “Days Gone By”.

The lyrics of the song “Auld Lang Syne” begin by posing two questions:

*“Should auld acquaintance be forgot, And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot And days o’ auld lang syne?”*



Surely, the answer must be: “No, we should never forget our good old acquaintances.”

Even if people lose contact with one another, the memory of the good old times together contributes pleasant nostalgia with cherished hope of being able to meet up again by God’s arrangement.

It was by God’s arrangement in an unexpected way in October that I got to meet up with my Singaporean Indonesian friend, Alston Manik, an elder in Huria Kristen Batak Protestan Singapore (HKBP Singapore) after more than 30 years. Let me

share with you a piece of history that is even much longer than the decades that I have known this brother.



Mr. Manik, Leader of Bahasa Section in Queenstown Lutheran Church, delivering a speech, before 1982. He was appointed in 1977 when Malay language was officially registered as a third language section of the Church. - <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/printheritage/detail/040b3185-a965-4d30-8548-339c23143743.aspx>

In 1974, an Indonesian Lutheran service was inaugurated in Queenstown Lutheran Church (QLC), catering to a small number of expatriate Indonesians. **One man with the surname Manik, an elder in the church, faithfully served as the service leader and took up the responsibility of preaching God's Word when a guest Indonesian**

preacher was unavailable. (I shall come back to this point again later.)

At that time, Reverends Noel Anderson and Myron Danford (as some of the old Lutherans in LCS may remember them) handled the administration of the Holy Communion.

On 31st Oct 1981, the new church building of Bedok Lutheran Church (BLC) was dedicated by Bishop Peter Foong. Not long after, the Indonesian Ministry was shifted to Bedok. Elder M Manik was the preacher with support from invited guest preachers from time to time, and Rev. John Nelson administered the Holy Communion Services.

It was around that period that I began my attendance at BLC as a young Christian. A little earlier, in 1979, I had come to know Alston Manik, who was serving his National Service in MINDEF where we attended the same workplace Christian fellowship group. We got along quite well. He was a nice brother, gentle in conduct, and a humble guy with a willingness to ask questions to understand more about God's Word. I remember that he would occasionally share his thoughts in the newsletter of QLC while I would help him with some editing work.

As time went by, our good times together had to take a long break, which turned out to be 30-plus years. He completed his National Service and I also shifted to Jurong, and so I left BLC. The exact occurrence of our parting of ways is not well-registered in my memory. All these 30-plus years that we had lost contact, I have been thinking that he had gone back to Indonesia, and wondering about how his spiritual life had been. In fact, he had gone to Scotland for his further studies.



Then, on 28th October 2018, this brother, Elder Alston Manik, the 2nd son of the late Elder M Manik (snr) came to JCC, leading a large bevy of

beautiful Indonesian sisters praising God with their sweet voices bursting forth in Christian songs. He had no difficulty recognising Peggy and remembering my name despite the passage of decades from the time we were together in MINDEF and Bedok.

Above, I said about the late Elder M Manik (snr) in QLC, **“One man with the surname Manik faithfully served as the worship leader and took up the responsibility of preaching God’s Word when a guest Indonesian preacher was unavailable.**

Today, I came to know “by accident” (or more properly, “by God’s arrangement”) with gladness that one man with the surname of Manik (i.e., Alston Manik, my old friend and brother-in-Christ) is growing well spiritually with a happy family and that he is taking after his father Elder M Manik (snr) in faithful service to God, playing a significant role as one of the spiritual elders in shepherding His flock in Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) Singapore (a Lutheran-affiliated church serving the Indonesians in Singapore). **Like his father, Elder Alston Manik leads worship service and at times takes on the preaching role when a guest preacher is unavailable.**

The two of us enjoyed a great time of lunch fellowship early this month, recalling our old times together and giving each other the encouragement to continue in our Christian service, allowing God to lead us through the ups and downs.

When old friends get together, we reminisce fondly the years gone by and and look forward to what is yet to come.

In the church, the changing generations are like what a Chinese proverb (长江后浪推前浪，一代新人换旧人) reflects about the rear waves of the Yangtze River driving on those that pass on. We pray that as each new wave replaces the old, each new generation will surpass the previous in faithful service to God. Amen!

John Lee