



Tears of Thanksgiving

Esther Kao

It has been almost a year since Rev. John Kao left us to be with the Lord. During the past year, I have gone through a range of emotions, from periods of broken-heartedness and sorrow to uplifted moments when I experienced God's boundless grace. While rationally, I am cognizant of God's ever-present grace, but emotionally, the sense of deep loss, helplessness, and loneliness has driven me to tears. However, through God's love, and comfort of his Word I have been consoled. I look forward to uniting with John at the end of my earthly sojourn in heaven, where there will be no more separation, sufferings and tears.

In the past year, I have continually witnessed God's bountiful blessings and providence. The two sentences that John frequently uttered before passing away were: "The God whom I believe is real!" and "I'm well prepared to meet the Lord face to face!" These two pronouncements have stayed with me and become constant reminders motivating me to stay the course.

What follows is a brief summary of the ways God has blessed the Kao family through his passing. May all glory be given to God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord!

God's grace manifested through His humble, ailing servant

When God first called John to full-time ministry, he was 17 years old, sick with tuberculosis, and severely underweight. Though he was eventually cured, John was always in poor health. Despite sickness and hardship, John leaned on God's grace, and dedicated his whole life to serving God and his people. When his two kidneys ceased to function, sister Diana gifted him with one of her kidneys. The transplanted organ enabled him to continue serving God both locally and globally (albeit carrying plenty of medications with him), until the Lord received him home at age 79. John often said "Every day I live is a bonus!" To him, living a long life was a gift from God, an attitude which resulted in a heart full of thanksgiving.

God's grace manifested through His servant's humble and blessed family

One of our grandsons, being a smart and confident young lad, had always thought that he could achieve everything by himself without God. But through Grandpa's sickness, he realized how fragile and helpless life could be. At the same time, he was able to see God's faithfulness and how God had demonstrated His power and showed His mercy in his grandfather's life. The day following Grandpa's passing, the Holy Spirit moved him to repent and accept Christ, and we have enjoyed witnessing his changed life ever since.

Our younger son has also been transformed, like the prodigal son in the Bible. Through caring for dad's sickness, the father-son relationship was bolstered. God has answered our prayers by allowing him to relinquish his past bitterness and jealousy, reconcile with his father and older brother. Praise be to the Lord!

God's grace manifested through His humble, loving family of ACEM churches

The ACEM pastors and staff have always treated John like a close family member, and deeply respected and cared about him. For decades, the ACEM churches have been marked by love, collaboration and serving with one heart, so much so that these characteristics have become woven into the fabric of our ACEM tradition. Even though John was ready to meet the Lord, he was sad to have to say goodbye to his ACEM family. Now I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ACEM pastors, brothers and sisters for organizing last year's joint memorial service to celebrate John's life, which was both dignifying and uplifting. Our immediate family deeply appreciated the warm, collective outpouring of love.

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Handing down the **ACEM Spirit**

Dominic Tse

My ACEM journey is a 35-years one. I started attending TCCC (Lawrence) in 1979, then started serving in full-time ministry in 1986, participating in church planting ministry, which eventually led to the formation of Milliken CCC, and eventually became Pastor of NYCCC in 2000. At this one-year anniversary of Rev. John Kao's passing, I would like to reflect upon what the ACEM spirit means to me.

1. A spirit of total dedication.

Rev. John Kao was a man who worked hard, very hard. But it is not just a character issue, but one rooted in his total dedication to serve his Saviour and Master. From his CNEC fundraising days, to the Lawrence and Agincourt years, to his decision to take on General Secretary of CCCOWE, Rev. Kao gave it all for God, as Paul says, as a drink offering to be poured out for God (2 Tim 4:6). Today, Rev. Kao's example will continue to challenge us to live and give more for God. We cannot be satisfied with being a Sunday Christian, leaving behind our faith as soon as we get out of church. As pastors, we must go beyond treating our ministry as a job, thinking mostly about our career development, but must seek to take up our Cross to follow Him.

2. A spirit of love for the lost.

Evangelism and Missions have always been high in the ministry priority of ACEM churches, thanks to Rev. Kao's love for the lost. He would challenge us, younger pastors, to do more personal evangelism. He insisted that young pastors had to participate in personal evangelistic ministries, irrespective of gifts or talents. He backed that up with his own example – he personally led many to Christ, many of them later became leaders in the ACEM churches. His love for the lost inspired him to launch Missions works in many parts of the world. Today, we live in a media-driven world, where we can easily delegate evangelism to the media, including TV, internet, YouTube, etc. We must rekindle the fire for the lost and share the gospel with people, individuals with faces, feelings, history, and aspirations. As pastors, we have endless tasks to complete, too many meetings to attend, but we must place a high priority to ministries that care for the lost.

3. A spirit of mentorship.

When I decided to enter full-time ministry in 1980, Rev. Kao had taken time to encourage and develop me, making sure that I would walk on the right path. In the

summer 1983, when I was about to leave for Hong Kong for my theological education, he invited me to his home for dinner. We had a good talk and even a game of ping pong together. In 1986, before my graduation from seminary, he passed by Hong Kong and asked me to meet him at the airport. He was very busy and only said a few words to me there: Come back to serve in the Church Planting project, which would eventually led to the formation of the Milliken CCC. In late 1999, when I went to see him to ask for a reference for a part-time position in another church, he just told me to come back and serve at NYCCC. Without his generosity and guidance, I would not be the person I am today. His example has inspired me to try to become mentor of younger pastors.

2015 would mark the 40th anniversary of the ACEM family. ACEM has grown so much since its inception in 1975. It is my prayer that the ACEM spirit of total dedication, love for the lost, and mentorship, would continue to define what we are a community of the Kingdom of God. 家

(Rev. Dominic Tse is the senior pastor of NYCCC.)

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God's grace manifested through His humble, beloved maid

The abundant support, comfort and encouragement that I received from our ACEM brothers and sisters have prompted me to reorganize my life, and return to serve in the TCCC choir. Singing hymns of praise is wonderful therapy and has brought me immense joy. I have also started to actively participate in the Emmanuel Fellowship programs and once more I feel my life is fulfilled.

I don't feel lonely anymore, especially now that I am living with my son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren and enjoying their company. I will make the most of the remainder of my life and continue to live for Christ; there is no need to worry about me. I thank all of you for your loving concerns over my well being. I also thank God for his unceasing care and love for me. 家



Finishing Well

In the past couple of years, several of God's faithful servants had passed to be with the Lord. They include Rev. Mark Cheng Kor, Rev. John Tsang, Rev. Paul Shen, Rev. Ligong Yu, Rev. John Pao, Rev. Xian Gao Lin, Rev. Philip Teng, plus our own beloved Rev. John Kao. These men were not some ancient spiritual leaders but all had once been friends and pastors close to our hearts. We have personally heard their sermons, read their books, been impacted by their testimonies and greatly encouraged by attending the revival meetings that they led. Having lived lives that shone so brightly and been a blessing to so many of us, they now have returned to the heavenly home to enjoy their rewards.

During a recent T3C pastoral/deacons leadership retreat which I had the opportunity to ponder and share on the topic of "Quality of Spiritual Leaders," I was once again reminded of the legacy of these faithful servants of God. What a fulfilling thing that when coming to the end of one's life, by the grace of God, one might look back and be able to say with confidence and gratitude: "I have finished the race well!"

The three marks of "Finishing Well" are:

1. A True Great Leader Has Committed Followers.

The bible records that at David's old age, he gave orders to write down the long list of names of his band of mighty men and there was the anecdote of the Three Brave Warriors. At the time, David was a fugitive running for his life from his father-in-law yet his archrival King Saul, one day perhaps out of nostalgia and by chance, he blurted out that he wished a drink of the cool water that he used to enjoy from the well besides his hometown Bethlehem. The three men heard his words, then risked their lives by breaking through the Philistine camp to bring the precious gift of water to David (2 Samuel 23:13-17). David did not anticipate his casual comment would cause these willing volunteers to devote their lives for him and became quite overwhelmed. A great leader knows the importance of his team; he needs his mighty men and the rest of his faithful troops in joint force and unity to accomplish God's purpose.

2. A True Great Leader Always Gives Glory To God.

The three men presented David with the water from Bethlehem, David was so touched that he could not drink it, but exclaimed that the water was like the blood of the three

warriors who had risked their lives for him. David poured out the water to the ground to the Lord, an action symbolic of a libation offering (2 Samuel 23:13-17). Only the Lord deserves something so precious! According to the Levitical system, the priests of Israel would make a special drink-offering to the Lord where wine would be poured out in front of the altar where the sacrifice was laid and consumed by the fire, giving a sweet aroma pleasing to the Lord, signifying the climax of the offering. Great leaders love God and endeavor to serve God with their best. Yet they appreciate the fact that the allegiance of others to them are but a reflection of their devotion to God, hence they will quickly turn them over as due credit to God who alone deserves all the glory!

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ACEM ordination, May 1996



*With Rev. Kao after meeting: (from left to right)
Rev. Dominic Tse, Rev. Harding Ng, Rev. John Kao,
Rev. Simon Wong, Rev. Sam Chan and Rev. Kai Mark*

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3. A True Great Leader Recognizes His/Her Own Insufficiency.

In that same passage of the long list of David's mighty men, a name leaps out "Uriah the Hittite" from the page when it reaches the last verse "and Uriah the Hittite, there were 37 in all." (2 Samuel 23:39). David had committed adultery with Uriah's wife and then plotted his death by letting him be killed in the battlefield. Those were David's heinous crimes and darkest moments of his life and abomination in God's eyes. Yet, contrary to burying the fact so as not to tarnish his records, he in his last words actually praised and honored Uriah in stating that he was one of his elite warriors. A true great leader is forever indebted to the "hesed" faithful steadfast unchanging love and forgiveness of God. He has the courage and transparency to acknowledge his failures and brokenness before God. David also wrote the Psalm 51 as genuine penitence which helps countless people throughout history, we included in our confession of sins before God. Rev. Kao in his later years would often claim: "I am not like anyone young; I have dwindling health; I don't feel I am gifted as many others; I am not seasoned with experience, but by the grace of God I am who I am and God's grace is always sufficient for me! For that, I rededicate myself on God's altar, may He continue to use me till the end!"

Lately I am preoccupied with the flow of thoughts whenever I contemplate on Rev. Kao's life and his legacy in ACEM. Here is a man who had been involved with building the body of Christ, his brotherly love toward both old and new members of ACEM churches and especially his incalculable care and influence to all the pastors that he had helped trained. For several decades, he had served with the ACEM's pastoral teams in the fight for the gospel for the salvation of souls to the glory of God. I pray that the ACEM pastors and churches will carry on this ACEM spirit, flourish and be faithful with many more of us to be "Finishing Well!" 家

(Rev. Harding Ng is the senior pastor of TCCC.)

Church Planting today

Simon Wong

2. Church planting with different ethnicity

Our society is like a global village with many cultural groups living in the same city. This is a common phenomenon not only in North America, but in the Middle East, Australia, Europe, South America, Africa, and Asia. The newly planted churches are made up of many ethnic groups. With different cultural backgrounds and languages, the key is to know how to co-exist in harmony and with mutual understanding.

3. Return to the City Center

When the growth of city centers has reached saturation, residents begin to move out and new communities sprout in suburban areas. Many new churches have been planted in suburbs while downtown churches have begun to shrink and wither. In the midst of people vacating the urban core and with the rise of poverty in city centers, how should church planters respond? In recent years, many municipal governments seek to revitalize downtown areas and create an atmosphere for people to move back to city centers. Church planters should not neglect this fact.

4. Be Part of the Community

There is a new evangelistic approach among the young generation of Christian called "Move In". The families of some church planters are moving into condominiums or apartments for the purpose of spreading the gospel and starting a church in the community. This is similar to families of missionaries who leave their hometowns and live abroad. Moreover, these believers live in the midst of different social strata and experience firsthand the lives of various groups, e.g. among low income families in low cost housing complexes, new immigrants in rental apartments, etc. The opportunity and the challenge to spread the gospel are great!

ACEM strongly believes that churches must grow in a healthy way to please God and be producers of fishers of men. Under the leadership of Rev. John Kao, our founding pastor, we have adopted five distinct visions: unity & love, discipleship training, church planting, world missions and social concern.

Rev. John Kao committed his life to serve and uphold the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout the years, he led ACEM churches in evangelistic undertakings and planted several churches in the Greater Toronto Area. He also wrote about his insights on church planting and training of church planters. At present, ACEM has planted 13 churches, each with its own uniqueness and size.

Instead of the traditional way of planting one church at a time, churches nowadays often use campaigns as their strategy of multiplying churches. The ministry of church planting involves many processes. Many experts have analysed and made recommendations on how to make this ministry more effective. From what I observe, the following are the latest trends and directions of church planting:

1. Healthy Leaders

In the past, we were keen to meet the needs of mission fields. If a pastor had the passion to serve, we were eager to send him/her out immediately. Today sending churches not only want to affirm the passion of the pastors, they also look at different aspects of their lives: character, gifts, interpersonal skills, spousal support, stable marital relationship, harmony at home, ability to face challenges and solve problems, etc. All these factors are increasingly important as they affect church planters' ability to lead and handle stress related to the pioneering work of church planting.

In the Beginning of ACEM

Sam Chan

5. Multi-site Strategy

In North America, a new way of church planting is initiated by a mother church that sets up several sites of worship. This is mainly due to concerns about the cost of purchasing land and building a church, or the difficulty in finding competent lead pastors. Often, a mother church establishes new worship services in community centers, schools, or movie theatres where they broadcast video recording of the mother church preachings. This can be effective as people nowadays are more receptive to video presentation in worship. In fact, 50% of church planters in North America adopt this strategy. These newly planted churches belong to the same mother church, but they do not belong to a denomination or association.

Regardless of what strategy or direction we adopt, the goal of church planting is to lead people to follow the one true God, sins forgiven, and to re-establish relationship with Him. As children of God, it is our duty to worship Him and bring glory to Him. Likewise, spreading the gospel and church planting are our response to our calling to serve Him. 家

(Rev. Simon Wong is ACEM General Director)

Rev. John Kao went to be with the Lord on March 24, 2013. To commemorate his passing away, ACEM recently compiled his writings and talks a Chinese book on church planting and publish a book. We hope that his insights will bless and encourage the Christian community at large. Not only that more churches will be planted in Canada, but more bodies of Christ will be established all over the world and bring glory to His Holy name!



When it was time for Rev. John Kao to return to the Lord, I was moved by the Holy Spirit to say some final words to him. Sitting next to his hospital bed, I told him how I whole-heartedly appreciate his continuous love and care for me since I became one of his flock years ago. I was forever grateful for his kindness, thoughtfulness, and encouragement over the years. Without his guidance and inspiration, I might not have taken the path of serving the Lord.

In 1975, I was an undergraduate student majoring in education at the University of Toronto while regularly attending the newly established Toronto Chinese Community Church. Rev. Kao promptly invited me to be a counsellor for the youth fellowship. He said, "Since you are learning about education and pursuing a teaching career, you can certainly be a coach to the teenagers." Before Rev. Kao had an in-depth understanding of me, he readily affirmed my gifts and boldly gave me the responsibility of taking care of the youth group.

When I graduated from university, it was very difficult to find a teaching position. I became a substitute teacher while participating in church ministries in my spare time. Every now and then, Rev. Kao would encourage me, "Don't despair, God has a wonderful plan for you." Half a year later, I found a six-month contract teaching position in a Northern Ontario high school. Being away

from my home church and friends and in the midst of the harsh, cold winter, I was sometimes lonely and disheartened. Rev. Kao often wrote to me and asked me how I was getting on. In his letters, he not only sent his warm greetings, but also kept me posted about the home church and asked me to regularly pray for the ministries. Rev. Kao wanted to instill in me a heart for Christ and His Kingdom.

Upon finishing my contract term, I returned home and worked as a research assistant at the University of Toronto. At that time, I sensed God's calling for me to serve Him. I was especially interested in counselling and my goal was to pursue a career in Christian clinical psychology and become a Christian counsellor. However, Rev. Kao said to me, "If you want to dedicate your life to serve God, don't set your mind on a particular job. You should first offer yourself, both heart and soul, to God and allow Him to use you in His way." He believed that if I wanted to be God's servant, I should have a heart for spreading the gospel and discipleship. He suggested that I should first equip myself with theological education at the Tyndale Seminary. I enrolled in the seminary and even before my graduation, Rev. Kao and the Church Board already offered me a position and asked me to join the pastoral team. Before long, I became an English pastor and also continued to pastor the young people of the church.

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The Call to Plant a Church

Kai Mark



Dr. Paul Smith (left) from the People Church, Toronto, was the officiating minister at ACEM's early ordination services.

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Even after I became a pastor, I still clung on to the idea of advanced education in counselling, and hoped to pursue a Doctoral degree in this specialty. Nevertheless, Rev. Kao advised me that if I wanted to care for His sheep, I should focus on becoming a pastor. After praying and seeking God's will, I decided to follow Christ and serve as a pastor for the rest of my life. Rev. Kao recommended that I should pursue my Doctor of Ministry studies as further equipping would bring greater joy and satisfaction in ministry. In reality, getting my D. Min. degree at Fuller Theological Seminary and learning about church growth greatly enhanced my ability to pastor a church, especially in the development of RHCCC.

Rev. Kao's encouragement and advice affirmed my desire to serve God and His people. His assurance gave me the confidence to move forward with faith and courage. In my 32 years of ministry, Rev. Kao gave me much valuable guidance and pastoral support. Without his teaching and advice, I would not be able to have such satisfaction and joy in serving God. Rev. Kao started the first ACEM church and planted many churches. I surely hope that we will strive to work diligently and fulfill the vision that God has given Rev. Kao and all of us. 家

(Rev. Sam Chan is the senior pastor of RHCCC.)

One of the values of ACEM that Rev. John Kao impressed upon us is church planting. Many Christian leaders have reasoned that church planting is one of the best ways to share the gospel. Why is this the case? Obviously handing out a tract to a stranger on the streets is much easier than to plant a church. Planting a church is hard work, but it is also rewarding. Planting a church takes much time, money, resources, manpower, and commitment. It is much simpler and more economical to run an evangelistic program than to plant a church. Why should we keep planting churches? Why is church planting one of our core values?

First, we need to plant churches because it is biblical. The Apostle Paul planted many churches in the different places where he travelled. Paul shared the gospel of Jesus Christ and left behind a group of believers in that town or city. Today we think of "church" as a structure, or an organization of believers in the community. The church is a gathering of disciples of Jesus structured or unstructured for the cause of the kingdom. When we plant a church, we are starting new communities of believers just as Paul did in his travels.

Second, we need to plant churches because it brings the lost into the kingdom. There are many seekers out in the community who are hesitant to step inside an established church. This is not to say those with established church buildings do not reach out to their communities. We have many established churches that do have effective outreach to their communities. However, there is a segment in our society who will not step inside a "church building," but they have no hesitation coming to a school, theatre, or a neutral location to learn about God and faith. We have found over the years that "Christians" at large are not attracted to church plants; however, many seekers will

drive even more than half an hour away to a church plant. Church plants tend to attract more seekers than believers.

Thirdly, we need to plant churches because it is the practice of discipleship. Some Christians believe that discipleship is this learning program that can be taught in the church. The reality is that being a disciple of Jesus is a complex matrix of understandings, disciplines, and practices that impact our personal journey with God, our marriages, our families, our church communities, and our witness in our world. Planting a church is the practice of discipleship. It is a commitment to the building of new community with seekers for the cause of the kingdom. To plant a church is to exercise every aspect of discipleship.

Finally, we need to plant churches because there is a need for more churches. We could plant another 100 churches in our own community alone and just begin to scratch the surface of reaching the lost. Churches were not planted to satisfy the believer but to open up to the lost. Church planting takes commitment. It is a commitment to share the gospel. It is a commitment to a new community. It is a commitment to discipleship. It is a commitment to the call of God. There are many who will start in this Church Planting race, but not so many are there in the end when they realize that Church Planting is really a marathon. As Rev. Kao once said, "Our Lord Jesus Christ placed the burden of church planting into the hearts of the leaders of ACEM churches. Without the labour of church planters and evangelists before us, you and I may not have had the opportunity of being saved by Christ, receiving discipleship training and serving in the ACEM family! 家

(Rev. Kai Mark is the lead pastor of Unionville Oasis.)

Why Does ACEM Carry A Business?

– Good Shepherd Day Care Centre

Simon Shiu

In 2013, the news disclosed that there were many illegal daycare centres operating unchecked in Toronto. Some were ill equipped, unclean, untrained; some were simply profiteering; some were totally in disregard of the laws. In a few cases, they caused illness to the children, even a death!

In wake of such news, some members of ACEM churches were surprised to find that ACEM is the licence holder of Good Shepherd Daycare Centre (GSDC hereafter.) They followed with the question: "Why does ACEM carry a daycare business?" If Rev. John Kao were there, he would give a full and complete answer to this inquiry. He might even start his answer with "Why not?"

Indeed, Rev Kao had long instilled the concept he embraced: a holistic ministry - which the church not only ministers to its congregants in a church setting, but also cares for its sheep as early in life in a daycare and as late in life in a senior home - a complete life cycle - from cradle to grave. What a grand shepherding concept!

In Rev. Kao's vision, ACEM will operate daycare centres, schools, senior homes and even cemeteries. He had convinced the early ACEM Board to put this vision in ACEM's Constitution.

Being a man of action, when Rev Kao saw a need, he would soon galvanize able bodies with same conviction to bring the vision to reality. So, shortly after TCCC erected its building, Rev.

Kao proposed to the TCCC Board to start the first daycare centre. Elder Chester Hu, then the Deacon of Finance, and Mandy Lo, an experienced daycare teacher with her ECE qualification, took on the challenge. In just a few months, GSDC came into being. In October 2013, GSDC has rendered 30 years of service.

In the beginning years, parents of GSDC were mostly members of ACEM churches. In the past 10 years, we have many new immigrant parents. GSDC became an entry point for these unchurched families to connect with a Christian church.

Perhaps it was the utilitarian nature of Rev. Kao that spurred him to start GSDC: to optimize the otherwise unused facility during the week. Perhaps it was his financial shrewdness: to bring in rental income to help service a large mortgage. Perhaps it was his outreach savviness: to create a point of contact to reach out to the unchurched parents, while at the same time providing day care service to the community.

One may ask: If daycare is such a great idea, why don't other churches follow suit?

These may be the factors.

Space Limitation: governmental regulations require a minimum space for each kid to play and learn in. It needs a certain number of children, (thus lots of space), to make it a viable operation. Some churches just cannot meet this requirement. Even if a church has large facility, its layout may not be able to secede a self-contained area that the children are kept out of harms' way. Security of the children is of utmost importance in the day care operation.

Concession from the church: for ease of uninterrupted operation, the rooms that day care occupies may be precluded from church usage during the week. This demands a lot

of understanding and concession from the church. [GSDC is thankful to TCCC and TMCCC for their generous accommodation all these years. Their support is imperative for GSDC's existence.]

The next factor could be the lack of committed overseers to ensure that the operation of the day care meets government's criteria, complies with regulations, works smoothly with the church board, etc...

Last, but not least, perhaps some churches do not believe that there is evangelistic opportunity in running a daycare, or they even doubt if day care is a ministry. But there is and it is!

All churches run different children's programs. Besides Sunday school, there are Boy Scouts Club, Kids for Christ Fellowship, just to name some. The church begs the parents for a few hours' time to instill the kids of God's teachings. In a day care setting, the parents put the kids in our charge for 6 to 7 hours daily. We partner with the parents in their upbringing. We give feed back to the parents about their children's ups and downs daily. We have three children performances a year with songs, dance and drama to highlight various Bible stories. The parents are our captive audience to a short and focused preaching. We gain the trust of the parents and ease their way into the church.

We are glad to say that over the years, many unchurched families have passed our way and have been channeled to different ACEM churches.

In retrospect, when Rev. Kao initiated the day care 30 years ago it was not a fluke. It was an inspiration from above. He planted it. All teachers continue to cultivate it. God sustains it. 家

(The author is one of the GSDC board member.)



In the beginning

My 1st Senior Pastor

Victor Lee

As a young man born and raised in Windsor, Ontario, my family and I had never really gone to church before. But when I moved to Toronto in 1983, my brother brought me to the church where he became a believer. And in that church, I also accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. The problem that we faced was that there was no English pastor available to serve in that church. In fact, there wasn't even a Chinese pastor dedicated to serve in that church. There was a missionary worker sustaining the ministry in an afternoon Cantonese worship service that provided some English translation. It was due to this shortage of English pastors that prompted me to consider going to Bible College to get some training, even though I knew almost nothing about the Bible at that time. So in 1984, I enrolled in part-time studies at the Ontario Bible College with the hope and goal to become an English pastor in a Chinese church sometime in the future.



ACEM ordination, May 1996

In 1988, after completing 3 years of full-time studies and with one more year to go, I got a call from Rev. Andrew Lau inviting me to consider leaving the small Chinese Presbyterian Church where I had been serving and to consider coming over to the Toronto Chinese

Community Church that had a need for an English worker with the possibility of becoming their English pastor in the future. That was so exciting because the small Chinese Presbyterian Church where I got converted did not have any future plans for me. And so I asked Rev. Andrew Lau what would be the steps to begin the process. I was so excited until I found out the 1st few steps.

Step 1 was for me to get a copy of my report card for the past 3 years and Step 2 was to bring it with me to meet the Senior Pastor of the Toronto Chinese Community Church, that being Rev. John Kao. I can't remember ever feeling so small because of the huge reputation that Rev. John Kao had ... I had heard he was one of the most innovative Senior Pastors in all of GTA. And for me at that time, not being able to understand Cantonese or to know very much about Chinese culture, I must admit ... I was literally shaking in my boots. But after having met Rev. John Kao and with the huge encouragement and support of Rev. Andrew Lau, I began serving as the part-time English worker in the last year of Bible College where Rev. John Kao was my very first senior pastor.

I must say that I could not have had a better first senior pastor as a young English Ministry worker. He mentored me, took care of me as a real father and even gave me his car after he bought a new car so that I could use it for transportation to school, church and visitation. Even though the car broke down a few times and only lasted a couple of years, I could see and feel his sincerity and genuine kindness. I had heard many stories of how tough and how hard a man Rev. Kao could be but in my experience, he was a very kind, thoughtful and humble Senior Pastor.

One time he came into my office and told me he had booked a speaker coming over from Asia for both the Chinese congregation

and the English congregation. However, I had already booked a special guest speaker to speak in our English Congregation on that date but because he was the Senior Pastor, I eventually agreed but with many vocalized reservations because I was supposed to be "in charge" of the English pulpit. This may have been one of the very few disagreements we ever had in ministry. However, around 7:00am the next morning, the phone rang and awakened me so early. To my total surprise, it was Rev. John Kao. And he called just to apologize to me because he said he had trouble in his morning devotions and wanted to "straighten things up with me." And to my astonishment, he instructed me not to cancel my special speaker and to go forward as originally planned. I knew from that moment on, he had a concern for me and my leadership that was rooted in Christlikeness, empowerment and the kind of partnership rarely experienced between a Senior Pastor and a local born CBC (Canadian-born Chinese) like me who couldn't even speak any Cantonese.

I am forever indebted to have Rev. Dr. John Kao as my first senior pastor and shall be constantly inspired to develop the kind of heart, passion and energy that he had to serve in the Kingdom of God. All praise and glory to Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). 家

(Rev. Victor Lee is the English Pastor of Toronto Mandarin Chinese Community Church.)

《華基家訊》

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