

Interview Transcription
Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church

Interviewee: Mr Ong Heng Kok (OHK)
LCEC Chairman
Lay Leader of PLCMC

Interviewed by: Mr Pan Seng Tai (PST)
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Venue: Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church
LCEC Room
Transcribed by: Mr Pan Seng Tai

PST Thank you for giving us this opportunity to interview you. Can you tell us something about yourself.

OHK I am a member of this church since my youth day, 1937 till today. About myself, normally my professional status, I don't want to mention in this church. Not quite correct and also not to let the members or stewards think of my status are very high and they themselves put in a position not very comfortable. Firstly I am now 78 years old, a British subject once in Singapore. At present they call it as citizen of Singapore.

Regarding my past occupation I work in one company for 35 years that is in a well known shipping company. I started as a co-ordinator and later on promoted up to the senior management executive, can be called as "CEO" of the company.

With regards to my work, I am in charge of the [pause a while] we have a ground staff of 80 and sea staff of 2,000 and is a very well known shipping firm. I retired in the year 1983 after 35 years of service with this company.

I have been in charge of this company for quite a long time and my position is a very high post. Our company is incorporated in UK and for the last 15 years I have been travelling a lot to places where our company have places over there such as Japan, UK, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore.

Base on some of the historical documents that I have, in fact I have seen all the church progress right from the beginning

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from 1937 to today. I must thank God that the Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church has been established for 68 years. We started the chapel in 1937 using a classroom of Paya Lebar Methodist School. At that time we concentrate only on Fujian worship service and Rev Lim Hong Guan, the retired pastor was with us from 1937 to 1938. At that time we concentrate mostly at the Hougang area, very slump area. Around there is Lorong Lew Lian, Lorong Ah Soo and right to Upper Serangoon to Punggol and around the community of Hougang Paya Lebar.

PST Is that a Teochew area?

OHK No, it's not a teochew area. It's a Hokkien area. Punggol side, Upper Serangoon side is the Teochew area but not this side.

PST Hougang 5th mile?

OHK Hougang 5th mile are Hokkien area.

PST So initially we started off with mainly the Hokkien area?

OHK Yes, all the Hokkien area especially all the neighbour here, all the community over here. We started with 4 women members. That was Rev Lim Hong Bang as the retired pastor. He only preached during the Sunday Worship service.

PST Rev Lim Hong Bang (林鸿万牧师) is from where?

OHK He is a retired pastor, also a Methodist pastor.

PST Who liaise or who talked to who, there's a Bethany Presbyterian Church?
(Did Rev Lim approach Bethany Presbyterian Church for assistance?)

OHK That one is Rev Hong Han Keng (方汉京). He will talk to... he is very well known to the Bethany Church. Started by Mr Ng Kim Chuan (黄金泉), an elder there. The 4 ladies are Mrs Ong Eng Leng (王荣能), that is my mother, Mrs Lim Tek Boo (林德武), Mdm Ong Leong Geok (胡良玉).

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Mrs Lim Tek Boo (林德武) is (was) actually a member of Geylang Methodist Church and Mdm Ong Leong Geok (胡良玉) stayed at Lor Tai Seng inside and Mdm Tan Goon Bang (陈银瓶) stayed at Kim Chuan Avenue.

PST Tai Seng area is also a slumpy area?

OHK Yes, very slumpy area. Tai Seng area we called it “Chang Mo Hng” .

To Rev Lim Hong Bang (林鸿万牧师), the retired pastor assist only in the pulpit ministry. So the 4 women stewards laboured and toiled in the slump area of ministry. They spread the gospel message to the farmers and non-believers living in the scattered Attap village in Hougang area. They walked and gave tracks. I also followed them because at that time I was only about 11 to 12 years old. I followed them to deliver the tracks at “Kio Ong Eah” Temple (九王爷庙) there.

PST So almost every Sunday you all give (distribute) tracks?

OHK Not only Sunday, weekdays also. They worked very hard.

PST What kind of difficulties you all encountered, did they treat you all very badly?

OHK Not actually but some of them when you distribute tracts at “Kio Ong Eah” Temple (九王爷庙), they see only they throw away in front of you, but they didn’ t say anything. Actually it’ s the ladies that gave away the tracks they’ ll accept but not man (boy). They will accept but they don’ t scold them.

PST But the impression of people to Christian in general is, the impression of Chinese….

OHK They don’ t like people to… but err.. All of them worked very hard. They travelled by foot in the Kampong area. Just walk around and distribute them from house to house. Not like now with big houses in Lorong Kampong Lew Lian. We have to go through all the streams and most of them are hawkers and

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labourers. But I think on the whole they managed to pull along some of the older folks to worship in this area.

Then in 1939, Ms Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉) from China joined us in full-time ministry that was recommended by Rev Hong Han Keng (方汉京牧师), who was then the district superintendent of the Singapore district.

PST So that was during 1939.

OHK We started also at the Paya Lebar Methodist School and then after that in 1939 Paya Lebar Methodist Church, around August, built their own church.

PST One floor only?

OHK Yes one floor only.

PST Before that, is that the right location at Boundary Road?

OHK Yes, right location at the Boundary Road. That is the first place we started.

PST Is that the Attap house?

OHK No, I don't call that Attap house. The church wasn't Attap house, it was wooden (material) with bricks.

PST So that is actually a school or a church?

OHK They built a church there, beginning with a school.

PST So in 1939, they built up a church?

OHK Yes, 1939 around August.

PST So after building a church you (PLCMC) rent a place there?

OHK We make use of the church. Rev Chew allowed us to make use of the place. We don't rent from them, they allowed us to use the church in the afternoon at 2pm onward, but at times we

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used the classroom next door for Sunday school.

PST About 10 members during that time?

OHK Not many people. About 10 members but they managed to be around that area, managed to get Mrs Lee Kim Tat down there, next to the school. From Lorong Lew Lian they managed to get a few old ladies.

PST So in 1939 they considered officially set up?

OHK Yes officially set up as a local conference, as a local church.

Attendance is about 10 members like that. Then Ms Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉), a preacher, not Reverend as she wasn't ordained at that time yet.

Rev Tan (pastor Tan) started the Mandarin class. It's called the one thousand Chinese characters (千字课), managed to get the old and young people to come.

PST During day time?

OHK Yes, day time.

PST Free of charge?

OHK Yes free of charge and managed to get quite a lot of these people (to attend) because they have no chance to go to school.

PST So during that time is there any financial support ?

OHK Managed to get some support from the 4 women family, and also at that time, Telok Ayer Methodist Church got a few stewards help us.

PST (What about the) Pay (salary) of pastor?

OHK Pay of pastor are very little, I think is about S\$20.00 and

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when comes to the end of the month, my mother will tell my father, "Oh, we are short of money to pay the pastor's salary". So the stewards foot out. Each foot out a little bit like \$4.00 to \$5.00 to make it \$20.00. Not easy at that time, no transport at all, all got to go by foot. Then up to 1941, pastor Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙传道)...

PST Is pastor Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙传道) has some links with Mr Ng Kim Chuan (黄金泉)?

OHK Not yet link. Nothing to do with Bethany Church, only later on, after coming over here (PLCMC) then Rev Hong Han Keng (方汉京牧师) is very good (rapport) with the elder of the Bethany Church Ng Kim Chuan (黄金泉). (Rev Fang) managed to marry Elder Ng's daughter, that was in 1941.

PST I have two names here quite confusing, Fang Zhan Zin (方兆熙) and Hong Han Keng (方汉京牧师).

OHK Hong Han Keng (方汉京牧师) - 1939 is the DS, District Superintendent of the Singapore District.

PST The other name is Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙).

OHK He's the pastor came from Sitiawan - 1941- came to help Rev Tan (陈碧玉).

PST So Rev Hong Han Keng (方汉京牧师) has got to link to Elder Ng.

OHK Yes.

PST So the 4 stewards is actually...

OHK 4 stewards, my mother is from Bethany Church, one of the deacon over there. Mdm Ong Leong Geok (王荣能) of "Chang Mo Hng" also worship down there (Bethany Church).

PST The other one is from Geylang?

OHK Yea, the other one is from Geylang, another one I think is

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from Telok Ayer church. But as far as I know, all these 4 later on worshipped in the Bethany Church.

PST (Did) They all go back to Bethany Church?

OHK Yea, they all worshipped at Bethany Church because Mrs Lim Teck Boo is the elder also of the Bethany Church. When Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙) and Rev Tan (陈碧玉) both of them worked together and membership managed to grow.

PST So is still working along this area?

OHK Ya, along this area, Hougang area.

PST But there's no special intention to ... Hougang 6 mile...?

OHK Not as yet. That time not as yet. That time was still the initial stage so still around this area, Lorong Ah Soo, "Durian Car", "Lorong A Leng", Hougang side.

So Dec 8, 1941 Japanese bombed Singapore, at that time, so Rev Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙) married Ms Ng Cheng Han, the daughter of Elder Ng Kim Chuan. That is at that time, Kim Chuan Ave, Kim Chuan Road.

PST So during that time, do they still gathered?

OHK During that time, one worship place is at our place. Lorong Ah Soo, because we have 2 big house at that estate. Gathering place is at the house, during Japanese time is at that house. We don't make use of the church building, it's not allowed. Japanese won't allow us to use and all of them are also afraid.

PST (Is this gathering an) Ad hoc thing?

OHK Every week. We gathered together every week. We read bible, singing...

PST Before the bombing, the general attendance is around...?

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OHK Before the bombing, that time is more than 80 to 100 (people), with the kids and all that.

PST They gathered at your house?

OHK Gathered at our house, because our house is not only the people living around there, some of them from Telok Ayer Methodist Church. They stayed in our house. We call our house a place for all of them to stay. They are afraid that the Telok Ayer Methodist Church may be bombed by the Japanese. This Seletar area, "Ang Mo Gwee" ... and family and all that also stay at our house.

PST wah, your house so big, can take in so many people?

OHK We can take in about 100 over. We have 2 houses. Telok Ayer Methodist Church have quite a lot of members that came over to stayed at our house because we are very good friend of Rev Tan (陈碧玉).

PST If you are not permitted to gather and then when you sing song people will straight away said "hey, there are people gathering there...."

OHK Our place is far away...it's far away from we got 2 bungalow houses by ourselves. One is my uncle staying and one is my father staying.

PST Preaching is still (going on as usual) ...?

OHK Reading the bible from this side and the other side we try to make use of the noodle factory. Kim Chuan Avenue, that's another place to worship. Mrs Lim Teck Boo (林德武) and Mdm Tan Boon Pang is nearby there.

1942 February Japanese surrendered. 1942-1945 Japanese occupation. At that time it's very difficult to worship. Because some of the church are damaged.

PST During this period, is there any story you come across is very unforgettable , you see anything that is unforgettable?

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OHK It's quite smooth, because at that time Japanese occupied Singapore, all of us got to go to certain area, all the man has to go to certain area to be examined and chopped and stamped.

To all our church family and everyone, they safely arrived. Not one of them been taken away, I think it's by the grace of God.

The severe restriction is on the movement. Cannot preach anywhere you want. But nothing dampened the spirit and faith.

PST But there is no income during that time... How to survive? During this war time... there's no income?

OHK They survived by working ... Make ropes "Ya Zhang" (coconut husk)... for ropes, they make use of that to tie ships. Most of them using coconut husk to make ropes. They make small thin one, I go and collect. Other people to collect and sell it to rope factory and make money out of it.

But quite difficult at that time, most of them do their own farming. Vegetable farm, plant Theopiocca and during Japanese occupation they have ration. Rice ration by the Japanese. All of them are in a very hardship. Give freely, bread and all that, they don't sell. But you have to ration it.

There's one point, we call it at one point at Kim Chuan Avenue, they called it "Bo Shua Tian" another point is our church during Japanese occupation in our house. "Bo Shua Tian" is Kim Chuan Avenue.

In our house, we took a lot of refugees. Most of them came from Seletar area, because of the air-base there. They are afraid of the bombing, also Telok Ayer Church near the sea side, dangerous. They have to come to our house to stay.

PST So at time service is in Hokkien?

OHK All in Hokkien. Nothing in English.

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So 1945 Japanese Sept 5 1945 restoration of worship resumed in Oct (1945) at the sanctuary, go back to Boundary Road sanctuary, so that time all freedom restored. That is in 1945.

So in 1946 we managed to ask for a piece of land Rev Hong Han Keng (方汉京牧师) managed to ask for a piece of land from the Methodist Mission. Methodist Mission, they have land at Boundary Road – at the back of the school. That piece of land is about 7,000 sq ft. So we built there not as a church...

PST So this is where the pastor stay - the pastorage.

OHK Yes, is for the pastor to stay. We can make use of the Paya Lebar Church. No point at that time to built church, also because of money problem.

PST (Sunday) service is still... (at the same church)

OHK Service is still at Boundary Road church, Paya Lebar Methodist Church. We built that pastorage is for pastor to stay. Rev Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙) to stay - 1 story, quite a big hall which can be used for youth work, WSCS, Sunday school also. At that time we managed to ask people to donate.

PST The fund of building is from... The fund to build the church...

OHK From church members and also we asked some Telok Ayer church members to help.

PST Land is given (to us) free?

OHK The Land is given to us free of charge, about 7,000 sq ft, free of charge.

PST Name of this church is called Hougang Church?

OHK Formerally was called Hougang - Sing Chew Hougang

PST Since when they changed to...

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OHK They changed when we moved to this place (Paya Lebar), came here then we changed. Because our church built at Upper Paya Lebar Road, then we changed the name to Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church.

All the time we are using (the name called) Hougang. We don't call it Hougang Chinese Church. We called it Hougang Chinese Church, Paya Lebar.

In 1946 after we built the pastornage, Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙传道) and family all went in to stay. (We) managed to pledge about S\$16,000.

PST Where's pastor Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉)?

OHK Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉) at that time, in 1947, returned to China for vacation. Before that, she (has been) stayed (staying) with us, in our house, all the time staying in our house, for a long time. At one period she stayed with Mrs Lim Tek Boo (林德武).

PST 1947 she go back to China?

OHK Yea, she went back to China. Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙传道) in 1948 was ordained as an Elder. (In) 1946, Rev Fang was ordained as Deacon.

PST During that time he (Rev Fang Zou Xi (方兆熙)) worked alone?

OHK Pastor Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉) went back (to China) and Rev Fang Zou Xi (方兆熙) worked alone together with those women, we called it the "Bible Women" at that time.

PST Any meaning ("Bible women")?

OHK Bible Women, Chinese called "Huey Yu Chuan Tou" (会友传道). 1948 Rev Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉) returned back to Singapore.

PST After 1 year vacation?

OHK Yea, then she was transferred to Justin Malacca, didn't come

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back here again. Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙) remained as our pastor, up to end of 1949.

PST After 1949 who take over?

OHK 1950 from 1st January, Rev Ng More Ting (黄懋庭牧师) - Timonhy Huan from Penang transferred to our church only for 1 year. Most of the members are too close to Rev Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙) and not used to him, and unable to work with him. For 1 year and then transferred out to Geylang Methodist Church and Rev Wu (吴昭智牧师) came back to our church. Pastor Wu Chao Chi (吴昭智).

PST Then Pastor Wu Chao Chi (吴昭智) came as the first time in...during 1951.

OHK Yes, 1951 from Geylang. They swopped. During Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙) time we don't have youth group. We called Christian Endeavour Union and most of them are youth. The Christian Endeavour Union, elder also can join in, but most of them are youth.

PST Youth age between what?

OHK Age is 15 and above.

PST Worship together on Sunday?

OHK Gathered on Saturday, not Sunday since we have the place we worship on Saturday. Then Rev Wu Chao Chi (吴昭智) came we started Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF, but that time they named it differently).

PST MYF?

OHK At that time called Methodist... something.

PST Rev Wu Chao Chi (吴昭智) came, that time you still ... everyweek... how many people gathered.

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- OHK At that time quite strong. Already built up by Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙) - more than 100 plus members.
- PST Still all in Hokkien?
- OHK Yea, even Rev Wu (吴昭智) came to our place also in Hokkien. Rev Wu wanted to maintain that church as Hokkien church, (he) don' t want to split the church. When we gave farewell to Rev Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉), and all that is very strong. We could see...200 plus members. (OMK showing photos) At the background....
- PST This is when Rev Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉) retired?
- OHK Yea, transferred out, have gathering... school, classroom we use for worship.
- PST Then the pastor stayed behind?
- OHK Yea, stayed behind, quite a big group. That time already a lot of members. Rev Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉) time was... This one is Rev Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙), we called it Seng Chew Hougang. This one is farewell Rev Tan Peck Geok...1947- came back- we gave her a farewell...
- PST How do they grow to this number of people? Still giving track or other kind of approaches?
- OHK We slowly built up, very good, they worked very hard. All pastor and women work very hard. All the members are from Paya Lebar area, most are from there, because we started a Chinese school.
- PST The Chinese school last until pastor Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉), went back (to China)?
- OHK Yes.
- PST That one (evangelical approach) is quite effective?
- OHK Yes, very effective. That school had been very effective. Same

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services and all people will come. They bring their parents along. That's very effective. Quite a lot of members. We started from the very scratch, not easy at that time.

PST That time after the war, the economical status is very bad?

OHK Quite bad, but we have some of our church members are working so they are quite ok. When I was the treasurer of the church at that time, we don't have any money, so I recommended we must use envelope system or pledge, like what we are giving now.

When Rev Wu was here, we find it quite difficult to pay him the salary, though the salary was not that high, but still we can't afford S\$200 plus, S\$210. We can't pay pastor's salary and every week how much we collect we give to the pastor, and that's not good.

So around 1960s, Rev Wu asked me to be the treasurer instead of Mr Lim, because Mr Lim at that time was our treasurer - Lim Kah Huat. At that time, we have no money.

PST So how to break even?

OHK We have to give the pastor salary weekly so I think that not a good idea. So I recommended to Rev Wu that we (should) start the pledge. An envelope system up to today. That's why we got the money, that one very effective.

PST That time when we actually get the land? 70s?

OHK When we gathered this piece of land that time was Rev Wu who started the dream - built our own church.

That time we are still using that place. We must built our own church. We still having our Afternoon service. 1956 when the District Superintendent, that pastor was from Heng Wah Methodist Church, S H Kang - Kang Chin Hock.

So Rev Wu started the ball rolling that we must built our own church. Both husband and wife are very active- spreading to

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all church members that we must built our own church and collect the building fund. That time we collected quite a lot then we buy the land and we got someone to support.

One church member to support and also Mr Ang also support us \$20,000. Mr and Mrs Tan Toh Teng, they helped us.

1956 we started the raising of building fund. They are all from our church members. They don't go out to seek for help. We took 10 years to collect and build this 2 story church.

PST What about the land that they rebuilt...

OHK That one belong to the mission. So the school took it over. This is the land, ours is here (OHK showed photos) It's a square shape. Since the school want it we give it to them for S\$30,000. They gave us S\$30,000 and so it's a very good start then. We use those collection... all the family... So we collected quite a lot.

PST So 1956 is the date that they started the collection?

OHK Started the collection. Then up to 1966-1967 then they built this church. We collected up to S\$30,000 that time is cheap- take 10 years to raise the money. Then we built this church for a... this is the first church we built and 2 story church. In all we collected about nearly S\$300,000.

PST So how much for the land?

OHK Land cost we pay... We bought it from Nanyang Finance i.e Mr Ang's Finance company. We bought it at S\$40,985.00.

PST This is a very good deal at that time.

OHK Yea, very good deal. At that time very cheap price also. Mr Ang also don't charged us very high. They donated S\$20,000. In fact that time when we tender out for the church for S\$121,000- very cheap that time, so we started with this 2 church building with the 2nd floor.

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- PST This is extended portion.
- OHK we built together. This floor building together. Then later on we renovated it to 4th floor. At that time we started with the youth fellowship then we got the church Sunday School.
- PST Our church accept anything from Telok Ayer Church, in the very beginning?
- OHK No, in the very beginning, no. There is no linkage. They helped us during the chapel worship service. They helped us as a leader of the worship.
- PST At the very beginning?
- OHK Yea, at the very beginning. After that nothing link with Telok Ayer Methodist Church.
- PST Then Paya Lebar Methodist Church over the Boundary Rd also...
- OHK Over Boundary Rd, we ... The church for 30 over years. Nearly 32 years. Then we moved to this area.
- PST Then the Bethany Pres. Church, not really...only at the begining.
- OHK Nothing to do with Bethany Pres. Church because my mother formerly worshipped there, then Mrs Lim Teck Boo also worshipped there and Mdm Ong Leong Hock also worshipped there. Tan Boon Pang, I think from Geylang Methodist Church.
- Then all transferred to our church. At that time Rev Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉), was quite strict say all of you must transfer to this church. Cannot worship 2 churches, must only have 1 church only.
- PST When she came back again, she goes to Malacca, then...
- OHK After Malacca she came back to our church. Then in 1968 Rev Tan Peck Geok (陈碧玉) came back to our church after we have completed this building. At that time we requested for Rev Tan

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to come back to our church and helped Rev Wu (吴昭智牧师) and it's such a big church and our members are growing very fast.

PST Since then Rev Wu (吴昭智牧师).... All the way... managed without assistant pastor?

OHK Yea, managed without assistant pastor. That time we have Rev Tan Lye Keng (陈耐卿牧师) that time still studying.

PST Then the Chinese, English congregation when they started?

OHK That time, very difficult because I have to persuade Rev Wu to start the Mandarin Worship Service, the English Woship Service.

They don't want. Rev Wu don't want to start. They want Hokkien only. In our Sunday school also Hokkien.

Our Fujian service started in 1937- right up to present . Now still quite strong, have 300 over members. 1970 we started the Mandarin Service.

PST The English Service also started same time?

OHK No English, later. I have to persuaded Rev Wu to start because at that time nearly 100 members went over to Paya Lebar English Service. So I managed to persuade Rev Wu to start. 1980 we started-10 years later- English Service.

PST Rev Wu (吴昭智牧师) can speak mandarin?

OHK Yea, he's a University graduate.

PST So English who lead the English Service?

OHK That time, we got Rev Williamson, he's fluent in Chinese

PST So that time no LS (Liturgical Service), CS (Comtemporary Service)?

OHK That time is traditional. When we first started the English Worship Service it's traditional, then later on when Rev

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Victor Goh (吴崇正) came, then slowly, I don't know how... became Contemporary Service.

PST So the whole Liturgical converted to Contemporary and later convert back again.

OHK Then later on there are people who don't like Contemporary Worship Service, not use to it. The band irritates them, so they want ... so I have to start that . I got scolding also, when we wanted to start back the traditional worship service. So traditional service, we called Liturgical in 1992... 1999...we started mandarin service in 1970.

OHK Then we got Ang Mo Kio Mission Point in 1978. By 1980 Ang Mo Kio- they build their own church. We transferred all our members there.

PST The Mission Point is initial started by our church?

OHK Yea, by our church member. So the English church and our CAC combined built the Ang Mo Kio Church. We transferred to them 1978. 1980 they formed their local church so we transferred all members to them.

We started in 1980 then we have the chapel again at Brighton Avenue, that building of CAC donated by Mrs Lim Teck Boo's eldest daughter. At that time was under CAC- they formed "Pu Tou Soh" affiliated to us.

We pay the expenses because they want them to under the church. They worked until 1997. At that time the grassroot people, this place a residential area not for church. So all transfer back to our church.

All members transferred- 130 to 140 members. That's why our Mandarin very strong. Teochew we started in 1992.

That time Rev Koh (许克源牧师) was attached to our church. At time the Teochew Worship Service was about 30-40 members not that high.

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- PST English one.... When they convert to CS? 1980 you start english...
- OHK That was Rev Goh' s time. We can tell you when Rev Goh (吴崇正) came to our church we started English Church in 1980s - 10 years later then Mandarin....1980... when we start the English Church at that time it was a very good start.... Nearly 150 members.
- PST Where did all these people comes from?
- OHK All from children of our mother church.
- PST So a lot of people go to English school to study?
- OHK Yea, some of our members also returned back. Very strong. Rev Wu (吴昭智牧师) officially retired in 1980. At that time we have Rev Tan Lye Keng (陈耐卿) helping because Rev Tan graduated from Trinity College- our own breed. Rev Tan Lye Keng at that time was not ordained as pastor yet. Only Preacher so helped us - Bishop Kang came in and helped us. Lye Keng and Rev Fang, 1981 both are preachers and English was Rev Devenstone helped us, that time we don' t a English pastor.
- PST Until when?
- OHK 1981- then Rev See (施谦益牧师) came in. After graduation from the Staets, Rev See came back to Singapore and officially appointed as interim senior pastor because of this middle...
- PST So Rev Tan Lye Keng will assist Rev See at that time.
- OHK They supply....and Fang "Mou Xi" , 2 of them. Then in 1981 pastor Tan Lye Keng ordained as the deacon, MOT on 27 Nov and pastor Seow (萧春盛) also.
- Later in 1981, Rev Seow is our church member, a graduate of TTC at that time. So he was appointed asst pastor of Hak Kah Methodist Church, not to our church.

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PST Rev See also helped up Telok Ayer at that time?

OHK At that time not yet, so at time we have MYF. Our MYF celebrated the 30th anniversary May 16. In our church celebrated 42th anniversary on Aug 23 1981. So Rev See with us. At that time when Rev See came to our church we managed to build up our church again. Rev See also lecture in TTC. At that time Rev See went to U.S to study music. He came to our church and started the choir. Then we managed to form the choir and sing the Crucifixion Can Ta Ta held on 9 April. That time we were very active and also bought the gospel van in 1982 for S\$30,000.

PST After Japanese Occupation until 80s is there any big crisis happened?

OHK so far very smooth no problem.

PST Financially all the while self support?

OHK Yea, self support financially. Even we built our church self support.

PST But you also helped out in other church?

OHK Yea, also helped out in other church. Helped Toa Payoh a lot of money and Ang Mo Kio also. Ang Mo Kio church we helped about S\$10,000- that time very big. Then Toa Payoh we helped S\$50,000 when they built, big sum. 1983- Rev See was appointed as pastor in charge so we got "Mou Xi" to help and "Wai Lee Tan" . "Wai Lee Tan" is Ms Mary Gan' s newpew.

The Father is.... Pastor... "Bee Kok" . Mary joined us also when Rev See was here in 1983 as music director. That time Rev "Wong Kiam Toy" is the District Superintendant in 1983. In 1983 we add the new sound system in the sanctuary- 2nd floor.

That sound system cost us S\$8,000. In 1983 we also purchased computerized organ. That cost us S\$32,000. American Brand - Allen Computerised Organ. That time Rev Tan Lye Keng 1983 was

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ordained as an elder “Zhan Mu” and Rev Seow Choon Seng was ordained as a deacon-same year.

I have been a church treasurer for almost 15 years up to 1977. 1977 I took over as LCEC Chairman from Mr Tay Hock Boon. Mr Teo Tuck Teck the principal of Serangoon Secondary Technical School helped me as a vice chairman. Mr Koh Kok Wah (许国华) continued as a layer leader -1997.

PST That time how many lay leader?

OHK We got 1 lay leader and 1 vice lay leader not like now we have so many lay leaders. 1979 Lian Huat (陈联发) came in elected as lay leader in place of Koh Kok Hwa because of health reason.

PST Let me back-track a bit, when the MYF at the very beginning stage, you already involved in the MYF?

OHK Yea, MYF in 1961, I am already involved in the MYF as a president at that time. 1951 I was a committee member, 1953 or 1954 I was one of the president.

PST As MYF you spend how many years in this MYF?

OHK I spend quite a lot of time until I was elected as chairman of the LCEC.

PST So the MYF- what kind of activities during that time you all have?

OHK our activities-very good. At that time we combined with Malaysia. Every year we have retreat in Malaysia. Either we go to Malaysia or the Malaysian come to Singapore. We have very big retreat with the Malaysia group.

PST What language?

OHK We speak in Mandarin, Hokkien, Bible Study

PST Sunday school you all don' t have?

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OHK Yes, Sunday school like the principal is.... Mrs Goh of the Sunday School. My sister is also one of the Sunday school quite a few of them. They go on turns. At that time the students are quite a lot 200-300 our MYF also very strong about 80-100 at that time. Not like now, dying off.

PST The MYF speak in Mandarin or Hokkien?

OHK Mixed. Hokkien English mixed.

That time John Ang, Andrew Ang also helped out-very active. Dr Goh inside also "Kobin" also inside. David Tay and family, sister, all in. Koh Kok Wah more elder a bit. She started with the Christian Union as president.

PST His Sister also inside the church?

OHK That is within the church. But after we dissolved it in 1951? Then started the MYF. So at that time 1981, 1982,1983 Rev See become our pastor in charge then by 1984 Mr Koh Kok Wah came back and become our leader again.

I continue to be LCEC Chairman. All the years we are very active. We have evangelistic meeting. We invite one of the Indonesia speaker, Rev Tong. 1984 we air con all our building.

The Sanctury, we also white wash the building about S\$120,000. Then by 1984 we started the computer in the office.

PST Rev See still around?

OHK Yea. That computer cost us S\$7,000-1984- quite a bit sum. Rev Wu was here. Rev Wu work with us for about 30 years then March 21 was called home by the Lord, 1984.

PST Then Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙) all this people?

OHK Later on than passed away. In fact about the same age. They are very good friends.

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PST Passed away in Singapore?

OHK No. In U.S when retired in U.S. Rev Wu down here in Singapore. Fang Chao Hsi (方兆熙) in U.S. He came to our 50th anniversary and in... meeting speak Hokkien. In 1985 Rev Tan and Rev 邱少华 they joined our church as retired pastor, Pastor 邱少华 came to our church-retired.

So in 1986 Rev See official appointed in Telok Ayer Methodist church and Rev Williamson and Rev Tan Lye Keng appointed as assoc pastors.

1986 Rev See left, both of them joined us as assoc pastor because they are already ordained and Rev Victor Goh came to our church in 1986.

PST So there were 3 pastors at that time?

OHK That time pastor Victor Goh not a reverend yet. Appointed pastor in English ministry. 1986 the church choir went to Southern Malaysia by evangelism under Rev See. No doubt Rev See appointed in Telok Ayer Methodist Church but they also help us. By 1987 Rev Tan Ly Keng was appointed pastor in charge in our church and Rev "Chua Wee Chua" as conference speaker and Rev Victor Goh continue to be asst pastor in the English ministry .

PST So Rev Victor Goh all the way is here?

OHK From there onward up to today and Rev Williamson returned to the States in 1987. After that 1987 4 Aug, Rev Tan Lye Keng went to Texas, USA to further her studies in Theological study with southern Bethany university and our church pay for everything.

He's also under the crusade scholarship, not CAC. At that time we have no pastor so we asked the retired pastor Rev Tan Peck Geok to take over as supply pastor - 1987 August. At that time 1987 we filled up this church building to 4th floor.

At that time I was the chairman and I managed to persuade my

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family members to donate \$100,000 to build up this building. My mother always very faithful to the church because she is one of the former member and she always tell me if you don' t help the church who will. In fact at that time I was also reluctantly to... To work for the church- is not easy.

PST Can I have some of the old pictures?

OHK Group pictures- don' t know where now. By 1998 Lian Huat stepped down as lay leader I took over. 1998 Rev Koh was ordained as a deacon.

During Rev Wu Chao Hsi time we don' t have what you call office staff. I helped Rev Wu and nan ya also helped to prepare to write and prepared and later on got no time Rev Wu... we use handwriting ... I come to print.

Now we have staff, easy. Rev Chong joined us in 1989. At that time he was newly ordained as a pastor. Rev Chong joined us until he went to the States for study, that time was 1996.

When we want to built this church, Rev Chong went to states to study and Rev Koh was pastor of our church at that time-1995.

PST Rev Koh ordained in...

OHK Time with us no change, ordained as an elder also. When we built this church we have no money- 1st story - not even a single cent.

A lot of people came to tell me we will not succeed. I said we must pray hard and have faith. All this are faith so we managed to raise \$3 million to built this church.

PST 1998 ordained as deacon and 2 years later ordained as an elder. Rev Goh all the

OHK How long?

PST From 1995- by 1996 we start building. As we go a lot of money came. Members are like that... we start very slow when they

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see the building coming up, then they start giving -so we managed to raise.

Then we have a balance of \$9,000 plus. So the 58th anniversary we had a very grand annual dinner. In all we have to thank the Lord cos our church progress very safely. All members put in effect, money,etc. I would say that never forget the old people. It's all the old members-hardship.

OHK That's why we have to educate the history of how church come about to younger generation....

PST That's right. Look at the collection we received almost 70% to 80% ...from our church members, they are willing to give.

On the whole we have to thank the Lord and now with the younger generation we hope they will improve further. My term will be ending this year I hope new people will come up....

And in fact financially we are very strong, we are not short of money now. We have 6 pastors and manage to pay them well.

OHK I have people telling us we have too many pastors.

Because our pastors want and we are taking in, your wife coming in. You are the 2nd one to write the history. 1st one is Annie Soh. She's a TTC graduate. That time we have Rev Tan Peck Geok here. She knows a lot of things, 1939 up to retirement. In fact Rev Wu now-not convenient to talk to him, otherwise, 30 years.

No one in this church knows more than me. I am from the very beginning - 1937 started that's why I know the history of our church. Soo Chin, later on, (he) born in 1943, joined our church 20 years later- in the 60s.

In fact my sister also knows a lot. My sister also from beginning. We have 3 families-4 generations. My mother, myself, my son, my grandchildren. My professional status I don't like to put in church. In the press Nanyang Sang Pau, in 1972, got my name also as ...

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I still kept this, they interviewed me - working time as traffic manager in Far East. We introduce container service at that time.

Nowadays young people, I don't know why when replying email they put their (professional) status inside, they must only put their church status for example I am "XXXXX" PPRC secretary or something like that, but not your company status.

(looked at the old newspaper) that was 1972, I built this containers, truck and brought to HK, our company is in Hong Kong.

PST They interviewed you is to find out how these (services) worked?

OHK Yea. That time I was in Far East. Even when I retired, they employed me as consultant for 2 years. They asked me to run the company but I don't want. I'd retired and I want more time to play golf.

Even the president came from Tokyo... these are (the people during that time) sometime they played golf with me... it's very difficult to play golf with the Japanese president you know? Not that easy. They don't anyhow played with people unless you are someone or key person.

In fact I don't want to run but they asked me to help. I set up the company for them. Ong showing Tai pictures of the past.

This is a party in the office. This is my boss, I'm the no. 3 men in this office.

I worked in this co for 35 years, I never moved. That time my promotion is very fast. I rarely take sick or annual leave. They trust me very much. It's a multi-billion pounds company you know, not Singapore dollar. The company trust me very much, They put me as one of the key person in-charge, I am a senior management, like a CEO.

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PST So today' s session recording I hope you can authorized the school to use the material.

ONG You have to write, rewrite (transcript) it carefully.

PST Yes, we' ll write and rewrite.

ONG You know I am one of the board member of TTC now?

PST Ya, I heard about it.