

Loving the Community as We Serve One Another

DISCIPLESHIP AND NURTURE



LOVING THE COMMUNITY AS WE SERVE ONE ANOTHER

In John 13:12-15, Jesus washed His disciples' feet and said to them:
"Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." As an act of humility, Jesus took a towel and basin and washed the disciples' feet, an act reserved for the lowest of the low.

Serving one another is God's calling for us. Compared to the worldly view of servanthood as a lowly act, being a true servant is pleasing to God and essential to Christian living.

John Wesley reflected on what it means to be a true servant:

"DO ALL THE GOOD YOU CAN, BY ALL THE MEANS YOU CAN, IN ALL THE WAYS YOU CAN, IN ALL THE PLACES YOU CAN, AT ALL THE TIMES YOU CAN, TO ALL THE PEOPLE YOU CAN, AS LONG AS YOU CAN."

There is no income, status or age requirement to be a servant of God.

What does it mean to have an attitude of servanthood? At its core, having the heart of a servant is to be humble. In order to serve, we need to put others' needs before our own, and understand that our service may not be recognized or acknowledged by others. (Philippians 2:3-4).

We also need to be compassionate, able to put ourselves in the shoes of others and bear one another's burdens. Lastly, we need to serve with a joyful heart, as we are created to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). When we serve others, we are fulfilling what we are made for and glorifying God. It is no longer "what's in it for me", but "what's in it for you".

It seems easy to serve when it doesn't cost us our comfort, or when there are foreseeable benefits that outweigh the cost to serve. If we avoid serving when in difficult circumstances, we may miss the chance to mould ourselves into better disciples in our walk with God.

Slightly more than a year ago, I was asked to join the Discipleship and Nurture (D&N) Ministry in TPMC. My first reactions were hesitation and inadequacy. "Why me? Will I be good enough?" were the first thoughts that came into my mind. I decided to take a leap of faith to start serving in a ministry for the first time.

Since then, serving fellow TPMC members through facilitating various workshops and writing articles as part of D&N, have strengthened my faith and confidence as I seek to deepen my own knowledge of the Word. Having the chance to contribute towards building one another up in our Christian journey is truly a blessing.

As busy people, we often have to juggle different commitments. Some of us may compartmentalize Sundays in church as sacred, and weekdays as secular. Here, I would like to bring forth the notion that our role as servants of God should apply across our various communities, even in our daily living and activities. We can serve not just within the church setting, but also at our home and workplace.



Nicky Gumbel, pioneer of Alpha and former Vicar of the Holy Trinity Brompton in London, once commented:

“IT IS NOT WHAT YOU DO THAT DETERMINES WHETHER YOUR WORK IS SACRED OR SECULAR, IT IS WHY YOU DO IT.”

It is our core purpose and value as Christians that define what we do and why, wherever we are.

We are to be consistent servants of God on Sundays and weekdays.

Our home and workplace are our mission fields, and each day becomes an opportunity to bring change and blessings to people we would never meet on a Sunday. As we do so, we often find that we will be blessed in return.

Let’s hear from Rutchanie Jarabilo “Cha Cha”, Sun Hwee Chein “Sun” and Matthew Ling on why and how they go beyond the church to serve in the community that they are in.



Cha Cha is the first one on the right in pink and white



RUTCHANIE “CHA CHA” JARABILO

What areas in TPMC do you serve, and what made you decide to serve in these areas?

I am one of the leaders in the Filipino Ministry (FM) so I'm involved in various service areas such as ushering, reading the Family News, and planning events and activities for FM. We also do outreach to other migrant workers around the Toa Payoh area, to pray with them and invite them to our service and activities.

I do this because of my faith and love for Jesus. I want to minister to others to help them have a deeper love for God. I am a migrant worker too, so I understand the difficulties and challenges of a migrant worker leaving the family to work overseas, and the longing for a sense of belonging in a community while away from home and family. I experienced these struggles when I first came to Singapore.

Cha Cha speaking at a Migrant Writers event

So, it's important to have this ministry to others, to share stories, to help one another feel heard, seen and valued as children of God. I want to help others overcome these challenges together. As we share the same stories and encourage one another, we grow in faith. I am thankful that the FM helps me keep my focus on God while I continue to work here.

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As we share the same stories and encourage one another, we grow in faith. I am thankful that the FM helps me keep my focus on God while I continue to work here. I personally think I might have given up earlier if I didn't have this community here. (Background - I am blessed because God gave me a good employer whom I've served for four years already. I have two daughters, 14 and 10 years old. I had to come to Singapore to work because my mother had a stroke and I needed to help with her medical expenses.)

What does having a servanthood attitude mean to you?

It is to have a loving heart, to love Jesus, love my family; and therefore have a willingness to put their interests before your own. Not thinking of compensation for yourself but the interest of others first.



Apart from serving in TPMC, you also serve the community by being involved in an organization called the Migrant Writers of Singapore. How do you see God using you as a servant for him in this area of blessing the community at large?

I joined the Migrant Writers of Singapore (MW) in Sep 2023. I saw their Facebook post about wanting to give away books, so I visited them. Their mission is to connect people to grow in the creative arts and writing, promote cultural diversity, and showcase the talents of migrant workers in Singapore. I joined them in various workshops to learn new skills.

I was inspired by Dinah (another Filipino leader in the FM). She learnt the guitar and went on to teach others in FM how to play the guitar. She even bought extra guitars to give to others who were interested to learn. So I joined MW to be equipped so that I can, in turn, share what I have learnt to others in the FM. MW also aims to help migrant workers in their mental health. I want to educate myself in this area so that I can impart my learnings to others in TPMC's FM. I think that is the one thing about servanthood – being willing to spend on others and not expecting anything in return.



Appreciation for Cha Cha's participation in Migrant Writer's event

In the Philippines, I was an advocate for environmental conservation. I am very passionate about being a good steward of God's creation and the environment, that our lifestyle should be caring for nature and not abusing it. Little things can help to make an impact. MW asked me to share my story on this with others. I see this as a way of serving the community. MW allows me to express my beliefs, my stories and faith with others. There are cultural exchange opportunities and I share how the love of God touched my heart. If I can demonstrate the love of Jesus, I hope to invite others to come to church

SUN HWEE CHEIN “*SUN*”

You're currently serving in the Hospitality Ministry, and as an Assistant Connect Group Leader. What made you decide to serve in these ministry areas in church?

I started to serve in a church-wide event - The Knitting Project for the Shan People, in 2015. That project allowed me to see how enthusiastic the leaders and members were. That was the first time I felt the warmth of the people because everyone, including the guys, learned to knit and contribute towards the project target. I felt a sense of belonging to TPMC through involvement, although I had not transferred my membership to TPMC at the time.





When I finally retired from my full-time job in 2018, I knew I had to do something meaningful to keep myself occupied. The priority was to devote my time to serve God. I was also looking for opportunities to serve. The opportunity came in 2018, when there was a call for people to help in a creative arts project for the Light of Christmas event.

I was excited as I used to paint during my school days. I quickly signed up and subsequently embarked on a 3-month journey with the creative arts team. That was the first time, after so many years, that I had a taste of joy, working together with the saints. The following year, I got myself more involved, and spent almost 3-4 days in church every week, leading to the Easter and Light of Christmas projects.

After I transferred my membership in 2019, a co-worker approached me to share her vision of starting a new hospitality service to welcome the newcomers in church. I immediately accepted the invitation because I received hospitality in the past 10-year period while attending TPMC's Sunday services. I felt this is the home I belonged to, and had to show hospitality to others as well.

What does having a servanthood attitude mean to you?

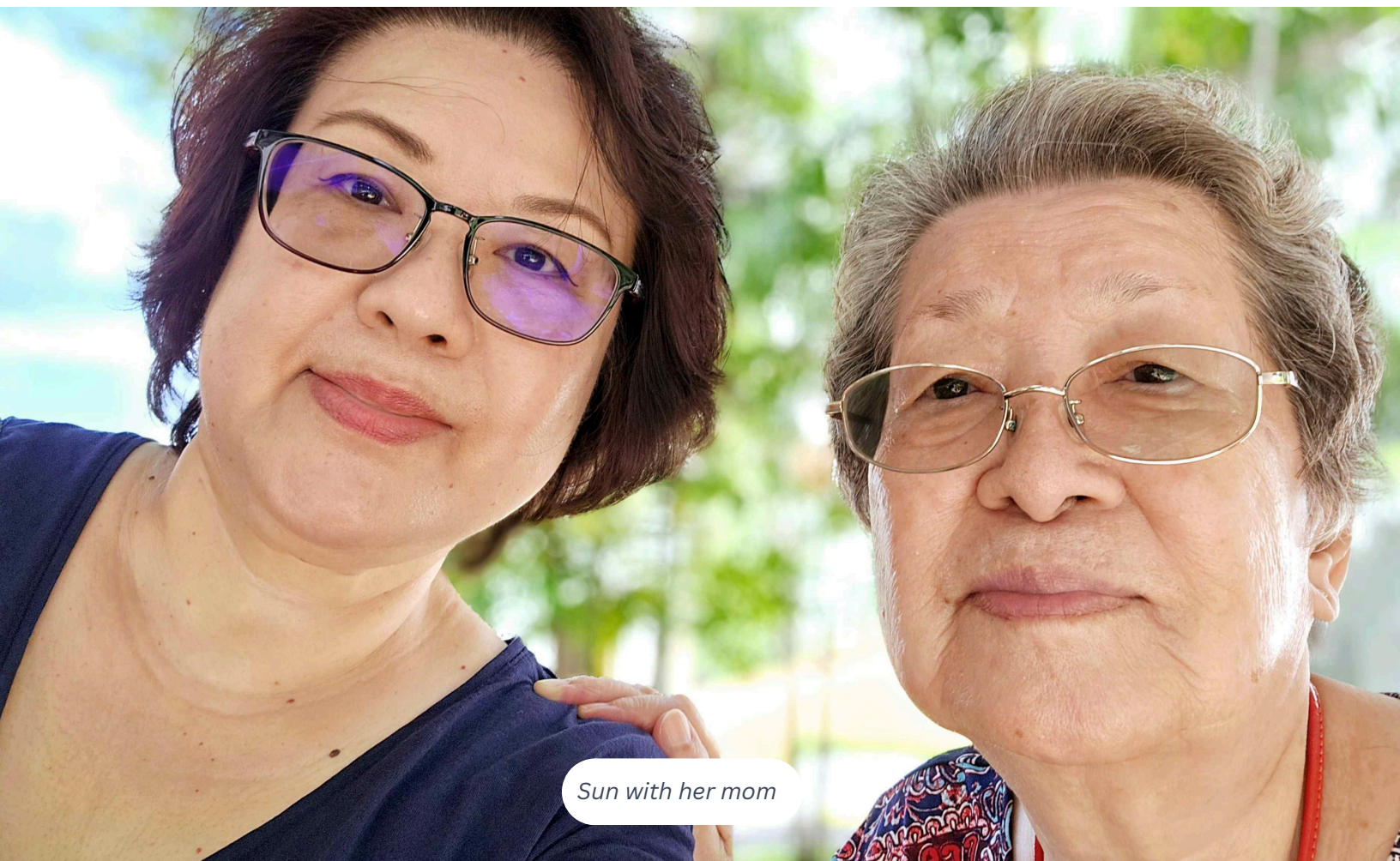
It means to focus more on meeting the needs of others, to care for them and have less of my own gains. As a leader, I need to serve with humility, have empathy towards others, and help to bring the team members together. The perfect servant is found in our Lord Jesus Christ. His life and teachings show us how to lead with love, compassion and a heart of serving others.

How do you practice a servanthood attitude as you serve your family?

It is one of the most powerful forms of leadership when we serve our family. Yet, it is also the most difficult because we are so used to being ourselves and the way we used to be prior to becoming a Christ follower.

My 85-year-old mother, who is also a Christian, attends the Toa Payoh Chinese Methodist Church. I thank God that she will criticise my wrong-doings and/or laziness when needed. Although still mobile, my mother is getting weaker day-by-day. She has decided to reduce her church attendance so that I can serve more in church.

As her main caregiver, I have to give priority to meeting her needs, such as buying her favourite food instead of mine, bringing her out for brief walks if she is well on a particular day and would like to do so, holding her hand tightly when I bring her out as she is not able to walk for long nowadays, and giving her body a massage when she feels unwell. Asking whether she has slept well the previous night has become an everyday line each morning.



Sun with her mom



MATTHEW LING

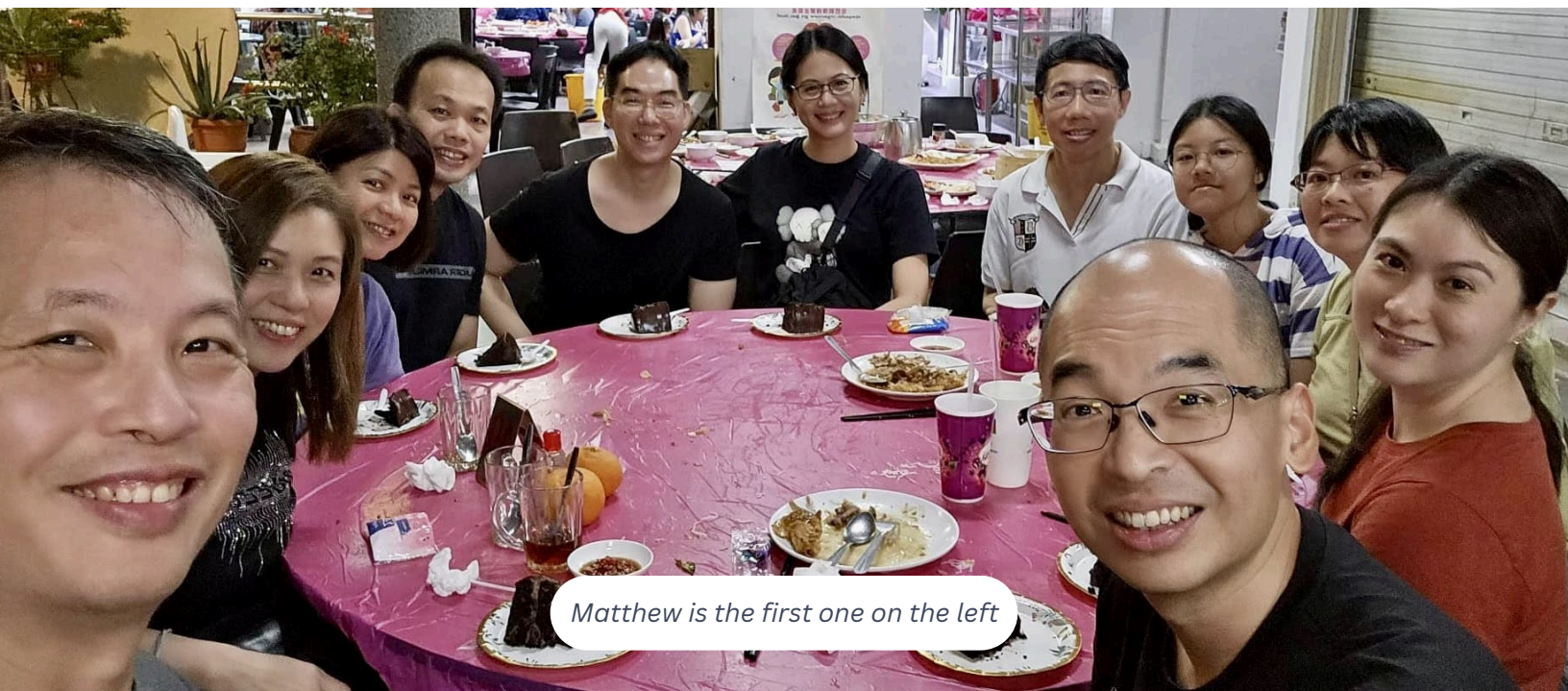
What does having a servanthood attitude mean to you?

It is to put other's needs first (sacrifice) and obey Jesus' command to love one another by serving in ways we can.

You're currently serving in the TECH Ministry as well as CGL. What made you decide to serve in these ministry areas in church?

I was encouraged by my first CG leader (Kenny) to serve in areas we were interested in at that time.

With his encouragement, and the motivation to serve or give back to the wider church community, I joined the TECH ministry which I thought I could contribute to within a short time.





Apart from serving in church, how do you see work/ your job as a service to God? How do you practice a servanthood attitude at the workplace?

As a Deputy Director for semiconductor chip development at an MNC, I develop battery management products for electrification as part of the bigger global effort for carbon neutrality, which is a form of taking care of God's creation.

It has been my practice to always enable my engineers and colleagues to grow their capabilities through mentoring and coaching. I have told my colleagues to subscribe to being a servant leader, not a leader to be served by servants.

Cha Cha, Sun and Matthew have demonstrated that it is possible to be the torchbearer of Christian servanthood in the wider community. What is common among them is the extension of their love for God by serving others in areas that they are passionate in.

A food for thought for the rest of us will be to identify our own areas of interest and spheres of influence. Will it be in our family, workplace or friends?

A second takeaway will be to keep in mind the true purpose and motivation for serving in the community. I believe this can help us overcome self-doubt and inadequacy, as well as concerns in committing personal time and energy towards serving.

Like Cha Cha, Sun and Matthew, allow God to work in us, and through us, to grow stronger in faith. Remember that Jesus handed a “towel and basin” in our hands. It is up to us to look for opportunities to serve our families, neighbors, colleagues, communities or fellow church members. When we serve others, whether in big or small ways, we demonstrate God’s love towards others. Be encouraged by John 12:26 which says:

“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me”.

REFLECTION AND PRAYER

Dear God, you came to the earth, not to be served but to serve. Help us understand what it is like to be a true servant of Christ, and to have the courage to step up in serving others around us across all parts of our lives. In serving others, let us grow in our discipleship, and see the transformative power of Your love in action bringing blessings to others through us as Your instruments. Amen.

