

# **PLMC LEADERSHIP RETREAT 2023**

## **PIC Address 2023**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

As we begin to reflect on the past year and chart the directions for the coming year, let us remind ourselves of our calling:

**We are a Family Blessed to Bless the Community and the Nations.**

### **II. CELEBRATING 2023**

Though 2023 has yet to come to an end, we are thankful for what the Lord has done in and through PLMC as we prepare for the coming years. This year is

## **THE YEAR OF EMPOWERMENT.**

We thank God for the many opportunities and efforts in preparing ourselves for the coming years of engagement and expansion. Some of these opportunities that we praise God for include the following:

### **1. PRAYING TOGETHER**

When we think of empowerment, prayer comes to mind. Significantly, from January 2023 we moved our Corporate Prayer Meeting onsite. We felt the call to gather physically to seek God's face, to seek His renewal and revival in our church and the nation. In the month of March leading up to Holy Week, we gathered every Wednesday to learn how to pray and cry out for His presence with us. We thank God for those who were committed to pray every first Wednesday of the month. At the same time, I lament that not more persons, especially leaders, were present to seek God's face together. We must constantly remind ourselves that unless the Lord builds His house, we labour in vain. And the primary way in which we demonstrate by our actions that we really believe that apart from Christ, we can do nothing of eternal significance is coming together as God's people to pray. This passion for praying together is even more critical as we move into the years of engagement and expansion.

Many of you are familiar with 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV),

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

If we are to see the healing of our community and our world, the people of God must humble themselves, repent of our sins, pray and seek God's face. As we move into 2024, prayer must continue to be at the centre of our church life and ministry.

## **2. GROWING TOGETHER**

As a cell church, the main vehicle for growth is the cells. In 2023, we celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> year as a cell church. We thank God for the 1,750 people in 147 cells. That means more than 1,500 church members have yet to be connected to a cell in PLMC. One key to connecting more people into cells is leadership. This has been what the cell ministry has concentrated on in 2023. Besides the Cell Leaders Training, we praise God for the W champions from 36 cell groups who attended the W workshops. As we run the workshops again and level up some of the workshops, I pray that more champions and even cell leaders would avail themselves to these opportunities for honing their skills to serve their cells. The cluster leaders set the example by going through training as life coaches; training that will help the cluster leaders develop their cell leaders in life and ministry and identify and raise apprentice cluster leaders as part of leadership growth and renewal.

## **3. SERVING TOGETHER**

The primary way in which the cell ministry celebrated her 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was to mobilise the cells to bless 1,054 households in the Lorong Ah Soo community. This was not only an expression of our calling but also a strategic step towards fulfilling our calling. Hitherto, we have not made a significant effort in proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom to the community diagonally across from our church building. Moreover, the Lorong Ah Soo community is where Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School is located and where the Agape Concert Hall in the school is. This blessing activity is to prepare us for the coming year as we intensify our efforts to make an eternal difference in that community.

Another effort to prepare us for the year of engagement is the Reach'In Out Programme that is carried out with the Secondary 1 cohort of the Youth Ministry. This programme saw the youths participate in a wide range of outreach activities including Block Blessings at Blk 223A Serangoon Avenue 4 where they helped to distribute breakfast and essential grocery items to the families there, visits to the Friends of Jesus and organizing an outing for the children of Hope Student Care Centre. I pray that not only does this programme

cement in these young lives God's call to be a blessing to the community, but they will also inspire many adults who have not fully embraced God's call on the PLMC family to bless the community.

As a church family, we have a commitment to serve the migrant community around us. Since the 40 Days of Blessing in 2021, the Filipinos in our church family have increased their efforts in blessing their fellow nationals, leading to some worshipping with us and coming to faith in Jesus. Our desire is that our Filipino sisters and brothers will steward this culture of blessing others wherever they go; leading many to glorify God our Father.

Due to COVID-19, our ministry to the migrant workers from South Asia was toned down. With Singapore coming out of the pandemic, we are re-embracing our call to bless our friends from South Asia.

#### **4. WORSHIPPING TOGETHER**

We praise God for the ministry of worship in PLMC. Throughout the year, they have prepared the spiritual atmosphere for us to host God's presence. Through their ministry, we see an increasing freedom of worship in our PLMC family that often led to a God-encounter in the celebration services.

These moments of God's tangible presence in our midst should not be limited to our celebration services. The gathering in our cell meetings should likewise be times when we experience the visitation of God. As many cells have challenges to identify and develop someone to prepare a God-encountering environment through worship, the Worship and Music ministry prepared several worship song sets that cells could use in their meetings. This wonderful resource is a blessing to many cells, and I hope more cells will avail themselves to them.

#### **5. LEADING TOGETHER**

Empowerment includes empowering new servants to lead in the ministries of the church. We are thankful to God that we began the intentional renewal of our LCEC a couple of years ago. I am also grateful that our long-standing leading servants in our LCEC were very willing to step out from their role so that others can step in to serve.

One such person who has served faithfully in PLMC and in TRAC is Mr Robert Chan. He will be stepping out of the LCEC at the next Last Local Conference. Thankfully, he is one of our Honorary Stewards and he will continue serving as a Cluster Leader. I am assured that I can always turn to him for counsel in the days ahead. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:12a (NLT),

Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work.

So, sisters and brothers, will you help me honour Mr Robert Chan?

There are others of you who are renewing your ministry with new persons stepping into your roles. Thank you for leading the way in leadership renewal. Thank you for your faithful service all these years. As you step away from your current role, I trust that you will follow Robert's example in continuing to serve. If you have yet to arrive in heaven, then your ministry on earth is not finished. As someone bluntly puts it, 'If you're not dead, you're not done.' So, press on faithfully all the days of your life, making the rest of your days the best of your days so that when you meet Jesus, you will hear those wonderful words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into my joy.' For others of us, will you take intentional steps in preparing someone who will follow after your footsteps in ministry? That will be a legacy you can take with you into eternity.

Besides bringing in younger persons into the LCEC, another innovative step in leadership renewal was to invite young adults to be observers in the LCEC. Our first three young adults have just completed their year as LCEC observers. We are looking forward to the contribution of another three young adults in the coming church year.

## **6. A SAFE PLACE TOGETHER**

Since the days when my predecessor, Reverend Dr Jonathan Seet called us to establish cities of refuge, PLMC has made steady progress to be a safe place for all. We see more people with disabilities joining our church family. We are seeing more racial diversity in our celebration services. We have more conversations with people who are struggling with their sexuality.

A critical step for us to be a safe place for persons struggling with their sexuality is educating the church family on the issues of faith and sexuality. The repeal of 377A did not end the attempts to normalize unbiblical understanding of sexuality in Singapore society. If we are to respond biblically and lovingly to this challenge, we must know and understand the issues involved. Hence, Faith and Sexuality Forums and dialogues had been held for leaders, youths, young adults, and the general church congregation including our Mandarin speaking sisters and brothers. We will continue with these and other learning opportunities in the years ahead.

These are just some of the activities that sought to empower the people in PLMC for ministry. These activities and many others will continue in the years ahead. After all, we do

not ever want to come to the point of thinking that we can do ministry without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We are grateful for what God has done in and through us in 2023 and we look forward to greater empowerment as we embrace the directions for 2024.

### III. DIRECTIONS 2024

2023 is The Year of Empowerment. 2025 is The Year of Expansion. The coming year, 2024 is

## THE YEAR OF ENGAGEMENT

The Year of Engagement is the season when we emphasise our calling to bless the community. Three Scripture texts anchor The Year of Engagement. Let us read two of them.

<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8–10 NIV)

<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18–20 NIV)

You were born to do good works. You are not saved by your good works, but you are saved to do good works. This is God’s plan for your life from eternity. However, the end goal is not good works. The end goal is making disciples. So, when we speak about blessing the community, we must not think of only doing good works of blessings. Our focus must always be making disciples even as we bless the community.

A paradigm shift must take place in all our minds. Many people understand ministry to the community as doing good works to earn good-will to share the good news that Jesus died for their sins. Once they come to faith in Christ, they are handed over to others to disciple them to be like Christ. In other words, help them to be converted and then disciple them.

This sounds so right because it is the prevailing thinking of many. But this approach is not found in the Bible. Jesus plainly commanded His followers to make disciples, not converts. This applies to our engagement of the community. From the very first contact with the people

in the community, our goal is to help them to be disciples of Jesus. And along the way, that will include surrendering their lives to Jesus as their Master and Lord.

This is the pattern of how Jesus disciplined His followers. When the disciples followed Jesus, Jesus had not risen from the dead. He had not even gone to the cross. So, there was no message of the cross to proclaim when Jesus called them to follow Him. The message they had was that the kingdom of God is here because Jesus the King is here. As they followed Jesus as their rabbi, their teacher, they were learning what the kingdom of God is and how to live in it. They were being disciplined. They were only converted (as conversion is popularly defined today) possibly when Peter declared that Jesus is the Messiah, and certainly when the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost.

As important as that moment of our expressed faith in Jesus is, when we are regenerated and filled with the Holy Spirit, our journey towards perfection in Christ continues with many other conversions of our heart and mind. By God's grace given to us even before we acknowledge Him (what John Wesley called prevenient grace), we are continually in the process of conversion which is another way of saying that we are being disciplined.

As we embark on The Year of Engagement, it is critical to embed this mindset into every PLMC member. Without this mindset, we will see the community as a project to complete. Once the person professes to follow Jesus, we will move on to the next project. With the mindset of making disciples, we will not merely do good works. We will not merely focus on getting them to 'pray the sinner's prayer'. We will seek out ways to serve the people such that they will become more like Jesus, even before they follow Jesus. Since the journey to be a disciple is a lifelong one, we will continue to bless them long after they have committed to follow Jesus.

With the conviction of making disciples, let us now consider the community that we are to engage. When I think of community, I think of four concentric circles:

- The Community With You
- The Community Within
- The Community Without
- The Community Beyond

The Community Beyond is about blessing the nations. Hence, I will talk more about this at next year's Leadership Retreat. For 2024, we will focus on engaging the Community Within, the Community With You, and the Community Without.

## 1. THE COMMUNITY WITHOUT

The Community Without is defined in PLMC as the neighbourhood up to 5km around our church building. To help our church family habitually engage our neighbourhood, two church-wide outreach programmes will be organized next year.

On Palm Sunday, 24 March 2024, the PLMC family will be sent out to bring Easter blessings to the community at Lorong Ah Soo. Besides the Easter blessing gifts, an invitation to join us at the Easter Services will be extended as well. Two Sundays before Christmas Day, 15 December 2024, PLMC will similarly bless the Lorong Ah Soo community, this time inviting them to the Christmas Services. Between Easter and Christmas, cell groups and PLMC worshippers will be encouraged to go back to the same blocks and/or units to continue building bridges into the lives of the people in the community.

This venture into Lorong Ah Soo does not imply that we will cease our current ministry to the Community Without. On the contrary, we hope to see an even greater participation in the community with which we are already engaged. This will include our outreach programmes to the migrant workers, Friends of Jesus, St. Luke's Eldercare, Block 223A, PLMGS, and so on.

To help more PLMC worshippers to move beyond a one-time engagement with the Community Without, other more targeted experiences will be curated for the congregation and cells to participate in. The ideas include spring cleaning and senior proofing of specific homes in need, faith-based movies and board games for students in the community, kopi time with the residents that you have established a relationship with, Christmas parties for the residents and with our community partners like St. Luke's Eldercare, nature field trips for seniors (especially seniors living alone), and Tour de Singapore outings for migrant workers.

Details of the church-wide and targeted outreach programmes will be shared in the coming months. When the outreach activities are shared, and for whatever reason you find it challenging to see how you can play your part in blessing the Community Without, please speak with the Director of Outreach, the pastors, or your cell or cluster leaders. There will be a place for everyone to serve in if you are willing to be God's blessing to the Community Without.

By the way, don't let these organized outreach programmes limit what you and your cell can do to bless the community. Let me encourage you to bless the people the Holy Spirit is leading you or your cell to (whether they are people in the HDB blocks, the cleaners, the migrant workers, the hawkers, etc.); bless them in the way the Holy Spirit directs you. Just ensure that whatever you do will honour Jesus and bring praise to God.

## 2. THE COMMUNITY WITH YOU

The third Scripture that anchors The Year of Engagement is Jesus' final words before His ascension,

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.  
(Acts 1:8 NIV)

The Community Without is our Judea and Samaria. There are similarities and differences between you and the people in the Community Without. Some of you even live in this community. The Community With You is your Jerusalem. The Community With You is the community in your sphere of influence.

For many in our church family, this community comprises the people in their families, workplaces or schools. The young adults are already being challenged to love and good deeds as kingdom professionals in their workplaces. The children and youth likewise are being challenged to be bold to live as disciples of Jesus at home and in their schools.

If living as kingdom professionals and students where they are is to be an experienced habitual reality, the older adults in our church family must set the example. The example required of us is not merely about telling people how they can be saved but the example of a life lived under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Put another way, set the example by making disciples of the people in your spheres of influence, the Community With You.

One major opportunity that is being explored to engage the Community With You is a Christmas Musical. Please pray for the people who are working on this, to discern whether this is what the Lord want us to do. By the way, if we do have a Christmas Musical, the musical is not for you, nor is it targeted at the Community Without. It is for the people in your spheres of influence. And if we are to reap a harvest at the musical, the work of making disciples of the Community With You must begin now. The two best steps you can take in making disciples of the Community With You is to pray for them and build bridges of relationships with them.

## 3. THE COMMUNITY WITHIN

Making disciples of the Community Without and With You demands the making of disciples of the Community Within. As you engaged with the Community Without and With You, a corresponding engagement of the Community Within must take place. This is not a case of 'either or' but 'both and'. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:11–13 (NIV),



<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Among the many things these verses tell us, Paul is also expressing the symbiotic interaction of serving and maturing in Christ. As the church is being built up, she goes forth to fulfil her calling to be a blessing to the community. As she blesses the community, she is being built up. So, engagement of the community would include the blessing of the Community Within.

Besides our continuing focus on growing deeper in Word and Spirit, we will place special attention in 2024 in blessing the Community Within in the following areas.

### **3.1. A Safe Place for All**

None of us will deny that though we desire to be a safe place for all, we are not there yet. So our efforts to grow to be a safe place for all will continue. Our growth in understanding and ministering to those who are struggling with their sexuality must intensify in the coming days. We will roll out resources for cells to learn how to be a safe place for persons with special needs. Our care for persons with disabilities must move beyond platitudes to real action. In every one of these initiatives, we will need a dedicated group of people to form a leadership team to bring the initiatives to life. If you feel called to serve in one of these areas, would you please let your pastors know?

### **3.2. Families**

Families are a very important part of the life of the church. Hence, the Family Life Ministry has begun putting in place the various components that will make up the Family Journey, an initiative that was mooted last year. The pre-marital and marital programmes are very helpful means to enable couples to experience what God intended for marriages. Likewise, good resources through the family life programmes are available to those who need them to raise their children. These resources will have limited impact until the church becomes a safe place where families in PLMC are willing to be open about the challenges they face as married couples or in parenting their children.

When we become a safe place for families, we will need many more lay counsellors to help these families navigate through the difficult times in their lives. In the coming year, the Counselling Ministry will seek to equip our existing lay counsellors to acquire more advanced skills to handle more complex cases. There will also be wider engagement to raise the level

of care such that persons going through temporary or less severe struggles will find help and a safe place in the church family.

### **3.3. Singles**

When we speak of families, one group of people who are often forgotten are the singles in our midst. As their friends get married or are promoted to glory, loneliness is often an unwelcome companion to these singles. Though most of the programmes and activities in the church are available to all including singles, they may not ease the desire for community that singles often face alone.

In PLMC, we have a structure that should address this very real need. I know and thank God that there are cells that have embraced singles into their community, seeing them as part of their family. Though we hope to see more of this happening in our cells, we may need to intentionally invite older singles to come together to form cells where they can age gracefully together. I hope that when we try to do that, the singles in our church family will be willing to embrace other singles into their lives. Notwithstanding that this may be challenging for some, this is what is meant by being a community gathered around the person Jesus.

### **3.4. Seniors**

Another group of people that we must begin to focus our attention on are the seniors in our Community Within. As pointed out by our Prime Minister, by 2030, one in four persons in Singapore will be seniors. In PLMC, the percentage of seniors today is already much higher. In our church of more than 3,000 members, about 1,000 of them will be 65 years old and older on 1 January 2024: about one-third of our church membership.

We thank God for GYM, the ministry of our seniors, in activities like line dancing, senior connect and others. Through their ministry, we have seen people coming to faith in Christ. Praise the Lord! I pray that more will be engaged through these and other activities of our senior ministry.

Notwithstanding these activities, one group of people that I have particular concern for are the seniors who live alone. Thankfully, some of them have family who are very engaged in their lives. Sadly, some of them are either literally or figuratively alone. Truth be told, they feel lonely. As they are part of our church family, we must do something about that. In the Early Church that is described in Acts 4:34–35 (NRSV),

<sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. <sup>35</sup> They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

There was not a needy person among them. These words trouble me as I reflect on us as a church family. There are needy persons among us and that includes our seniors who are alone. I would like to see every one of these seniors contacted by someone from our church family. Our senior ministry is fully committed to what they do. If they are to take on this challenge, to contact every senior in our church family, they will need lots of help. If they are to connect and keep connecting with seniors who are alone, they will need help that is committed to engage the seniors in the Community Within. Will you step forward to serve our seniors?

Do not misunderstand me. Though I am encouraging seniors to reach out to seniors, this is a call to all of us, regardless of age. Recently, a young person asked me how they could connect with the seniors in our church. One answer is for you and your cell group to embrace a senior into your community. My desire is to have every senior who is alone to be adopted by a cell group in our church family. The senior may never join the cell group. But if the cell group is committed to love that senior, they are already part of the cell group whether they know it or not. I have not broached this possibility with our cell ministry primarily because we don't have enough cell leaders and cell groups at this time. This should not stop any of you and your cell to adopt a senior from our church family today.

### **3.5. The Church Camp**

In the coming year, there is one occasion for us to experience the coming together of the families, the singles, the seniors, the different generations and even people from the Community With You and the Community Without. This opportunity will be our Church Camp from 9 to 12 June 2024. May I urge every leader here to be there and also inspire everyone in your cell or ministry to be there. If led by the Holy Spirit, invite the people in the Community With You and the Community Without to also come for the camp. Both the English and Mandarin key speakers for the camp are anointed servants of God and whatever age you are, you will be blessed. The children will have their own programme to encounter God.

## **4. EMPOWERMENT CONTINUES**

Engaging the community is about engaging the Community Without, the Community With You, and the Community Within. As we emphasise this in the coming year, we must continue to be empowered for the work of ministry. That means we must continue to grow in the areas I shared in last year's PIC Address. Let me briefly revisit these areas.

#### **4.1. Prayer**

Prayer is one of the hardest activities to mobilise the church in. One reason is the hiddenness of prayer. Other than when we gather for prayer, our prayers are often done in secret. Moreover, when we pray, we do not always see the answer immediately. Prayer requires faith. Prayer requires trust that God hears and answers. As challenging as it may be, we must remember that without prayer, everything I have shared thus far is just merely beating the wind.

So, once again, I urge all of us, especially leaders to commit to a lifestyle of prayer, and to the Corporate Prayer Meeting. Let us come together to seek God's face. Let us come together to praise God, to cry out to God, to wait upon the Lord.

My vision for us is that we will become a prayer movement that permeates our church family, moving into the community and the nations. Engagement with the community and expansion to the nations is first and foremost done on our knees. So, let us come together to have the Holy Spirit teach us how to pray.

#### **4.2. The Word**

In every church I have pastored, there will be that person who says that they are not being fed. My response is always the same. My primary role as the pastor is not to feed you but to teach you to feed yourself. And the best way to learn how to feed yourself is to try feeding yourself.

One way to feed yourself is by following the two-year *ROAD through the Bible* Reading Plan and using ROAD (Read, Observe, Apply, Do) format in reading the Bible. Through this habitual practice, you will learn to feed yourself and also read through the entire Bible in two years.

#### **4.3. Spiritual Formation**

Prayer and the Word are two grace gifts that place us in the pathway of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. There are other spiritual formation habits that enable us to receive healing and restoration in our inner being. One resource that have helped some of you to develop spiritual habits is the Companions in Christ course. Let me encourage as many of you and as many of your cells to take the course and embrace the spiritual formation practices into your life. Developing these spiritual formation practices is crucial to you going deeper in your life with Christ. There are too many Christians who know God's Word intellectually, participate in church ministries actively, and yet have not experienced God's soul work in their lives, transforming them from the inside out.

#### **4.4. Cells**

Every healthy organism will grow. Likewise, every healthy cell will grow and multiply. Every cell has an increased potential to be healthy when they have a healthy cell leader. That was one reason why we trained our cluster leaders with life coaching skills; that they may coach our cell leaders to health and wholeness.

One expression of health and wholeness is the identification and appointment of Apprentice Cell Leaders, W Champions and Apprentice Cluster Leaders. I hope to see many such appointments taking place in the coming year. One exciting development that will happen soon is the appointment of not-yet-young-seniors and young seniors to be Clusters Leaders of the cells made up of young adults. This is an intentional expression of the tapestry of our church family that is woven together in generations unbroken.

#### **4.5. Leadership**

The need to increase the capacity and capability of our leadership community is urgent and critical if we are to see the church fulfil her calling to bless the community and the nations. Let me remind you of the asynchronous online training programme by the International Leadership Institute (ILI), that will inculcate in our community the Eight Core Values of the most effective leaders (Intimacy with God, Passion for the Harvest, Visionary Leadership, Culturally Relevant Evangelism, Multiplication of Leaders, Family Priority, Faithful Stewardship, and Integrity). If you have yet to take this training, commit to do so before the end of 2024. The link to the training is <https://training.iliteam.org/courses/3921922/content> or you may go to <https://iliteam.org/> to explore what ILI is about.

In the coming months, we will also be exploring other leadership formation programmes to increase the capability and capacity of our leadership community. Watch out for them and enrol in these opportunities of leadership formation.

#### **4.6. Ministry by the People for the People**

For two consecutive years, I have reminded us of the biblical pattern of ministry that we find in Ephesians 4:11–13 (NIV),

<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

According to the apostle Paul, the job of equipping the people for ministry is assigned to *the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers*. And the job of ministry belongs to the people of God.

We praise God for the wonderful staff that He has sent into PLMC. Notwithstanding their impact on the ministry, PLMC will never have enough staff for all the ministry that needs to be done. God's will has always been that ministry to the people is done by the people of God. In other words, more people in our church must be called into serving the community. According to the records we have, there are about 1,000 people serving in PLMC. Praise God for each and every one of you who is serving. That also means that more than 2,000 church members are not serving in ministry. To help them experience the joy of serving, will you invite them to serve with you?

Often this is how many people begin their journey in serving in ministry. We thank God for that. However, as we grow in maturity, we need a discernible shift in our approach in calling people to ministry. We may begin with a person serving because of a relational invitation. But we must move on to helping the person serve according to their God-given passion, spiritual gifts, and life experiences. Only in that way will all that God wants to do in and through the church get done. We must shift from filling the need we see to calling people to serve according to how God has created them.

You will note that I have not referred to those serving as volunteers. In God's family, there are no volunteers. Everyone is called to be a disciple and a disciple is one who is a servant. We have used the term 'co-worker' to emphasise the partnership in ministry of PLMC members and worshippers with the pastors and staff. Whether we call those in ministry servants or co-workers, let us move away from the idea that a Christian is to volunteer their services. Every Christian is called to serve. A non-serving Christian is not a disciple of Christ. After all, Christ said that He came to serve. If we follow Christ, we can do no less.

Recently, I had a conversation with our young adults. And I learned of the challenges they faced in serving in the ministries of the church led by older adults. May I encourage those of you who are older to welcome these younger adults into your ministry. In fact, intentionally invite them to serve with you. When they respond positively, don't relegate them to tasks that require little of them. Take time to understand them. Pay particular attention to the posture of their heart. If their heart is in the right place, take some risk to entrust them with greater responsibilities. Those of you who are younger adults, please also take time to understand those who have gone ahead of you in ministry. There is a pervasive thinking in society that what is old is not as good as what is new. That may or may not be true. Seek to understand the ministry and the reasons for why things are done in certain ways. Demonstrate by your words and actions the heart of a servant. At the appropriate time of the Spirit's leading, share your perspective that will enhance the ministry and hence advance the kingdom of God to His

glory. In other words, serving together is not just about the pastors, staff and congregation in ministry together. It is also the coming together of the generations to serve God by serving others and one another. I long for the day when I see young people serving with our seniors, and I see seniors being welcomed into the lives of our youths and younger adults. May I challenge you to take the bold step towards this reality, to weave the tapestry of our church family into generations unbroken.

#### **4.7. Digital Strategy**

Though we are not making great strides in the development of a digital strategy to extend the kingdom of God in an increasingly digital world, I thank God for those who stepped forward to help us take baby steps in this area of ministry. May these baby steps mature and see PLMC develop a cogent and congruent digital strategy to fulfill our calling to bless the community and the nations.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

The dream for us in 2024 is not merely to engage the community. If that were so, when we reach the end of 2024, we will say, 'Been there, done that' and we will stop pursuing our calling to bless the community. The dream is encapsulated by the Scripture that we have kept returning to, Ezekiel 47:1–5 (NIV),

<sup>1</sup> The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. <sup>2</sup> He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side. <sup>3</sup> As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. <sup>4</sup> He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. <sup>5</sup> He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross.

The dream is that we will cultivate the habit of blessing the community. We want to grow a culture of blessing in every PLMC worshipper and cell group. When everyone in PLMC has embraced our calling to bless the community, God will unleash a blessing movement,

gushing forth from PLMC, bringing the life of the kingdom of God into every nook and corner of Singapore. That is when we will be in water that is deep enough to swim in. That is when PLMC will be described with the closing words of Ezekiel 47:9c (NLT),

Life will flourish wherever this water flows. Life

will flourish wherever PLMC goes. Amen.

***Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam!***  
For the Greater Glory of God!

~ END ~