

# Keep Calm and Carry on Serving Others

## A Life Gifted to Serve

+ By Jackie Teo

**"To serve others is to share Christ's love,"** shared Henry Chan. His active and lively enthusiasm to serve the lonely, poor and elderly in our church belies his age.

Though just three years shy of 90, Henry, together with his 70-year-old wife, Mary, continues to work tirelessly for the Lord in his twilight years.

### A LIFE INSPIRED BY PAUL

Henry and Mary have been serving with the Wesley Committee of Christian Outreach and Social Concerns (COSC) since 2004, for 17 years. Initially, they helped out at Wesley Bethany Home for five years, reaching out to no less than 30 beneficiaries.

Henry is particularly inspired by Paul. "I admire the Apostle Paul for his transformation, sacrifice, love for God and people, humility and the reach of his evangelism. In all my voluntary work, I want to show Christ's love to the people we serve and share the gospel."

### YOUNGER DAYS

Henry, a Singaporean, and Mary, a Malaysian, fell in love and married in Singapore in 1995.



Henry and Mary celebrating her 70th birthday

An ex-Boys' Brigade Boy with Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church where he heard the gospel, and a prestigious Colombo Plan scholar which led him to Adelaide for his engineering studies, Henry had successfully built up a business that spanned Australia and Singapore. He went on to have an illustrious and lucrative career in prefabricating houses in Sydney for mining towns in central Australia.

"As a student, I was an active member in the Students Christian movement, organising meetings and campfires," recalled Henry.

Henry was also appointed an Honorary Representative to advise businessmen from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia who were interested in buying Australian goods and investing in the Northern Territories.

As the saying goes, 'Behind every successful man is a strong woman', Mary has been quietly supporting Henry through the years while working hard to build her own career. "I come from a large, close-knit family in Kuala Lumpur. I worked as a company secretary for the same employer until he died in 1991, and I confidently took over the business," said Mary when asked about her younger days. "About six years later, a massive flood destroyed my business. The whole office was flooded up to its roof and the business was irrecoverable." It was literally a storm in Mary's life. "But I accepted it as a silver lining in my life as God's will and purpose for me to marry Henry and move to Singapore."

A true-blue Singaporean-Malaysian couple, the Chans were offered but declined Australian citizenship. Instead, they decided to retire and move back to Singapore in 1998.

## COMING BACK TO THE LORD

Amid his heady days of setting up and growing his business, Henry had back-slidden from his Christian faith.

The busyness and success of his businesses got to Henry. "I fell by the wayside and stopped going to church."

But God was working behind the scenes and a friend invited Henry and Mary to a beautiful church on Fort Canning.

In 2003, Mary and Henry joined the Baptism and Membership Class (BMC) at Wesley Methodist Church. The BMC ministry encouraged the newly-minted members to join the Befrienders' Outreach Programme (BOP). The Chans readily agreed. And so began their amazing journey to serve the Lord in 2004.



Henry (front, 3rd from right) and Mary (back, 5th from right) with Rev Philip Lim (front, middle) at a DISCIPLE class

## MINISTRY JOURNEY

As volunteers with BOP, they visited Bethany Hall, a home for the elderly, monthly. They mingled with the residents and helped to serve meals.

In addition, when COSC was looking for volunteers to serve at the MWS Wesley Senior Activity Centre in Jalan Berseh to distribute food to residents on a monthly basis, the Chans availed themselves.

Wherever there were activities organised by the community centre and COSC was involved, the Chans would be there. "We helped to pick up and accompany one or more residents. We were happy to do whatever we could to lend a hand."

Then the Prison Ministry came calling. It needed volunteers to have regular meetings and Bible study with men who have been released from prison. Once again, the Chans readily responded.



Henry and Mary (front row, extreme left)

The Chans are also active members of Wesley GYM. Besides organising trips for the seniors to local places of interest, Henry also organised trips to Kota Kinabalu in Sabah and other places in Malaysia, with visits to local churches, old folks' homes and sightseeing. They helped out in a missions trip to Guangzhou, China. They also assisted in Happy Hour in church and trips for wheelchair bound Wesleyans.



Henry and Mary (extreme right, standing) at the Wheels D'Way outing in Changi Airport Terminal 4 in April 2018



Henry and Mary with Wesley seniors at Gardens by the Bay

One of the beneficiaries of the Chans' act of kindness is Uncle Ang Kok Tong, a former teacher, who had a stroke and lives alone in Jalan Berseh. The Chans befriended him through COSC. They would pick him up regularly for a meal or a movie before Covid-19 struck. Uncle Tong has difficulty walking on his own, but this did not faze them.

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Henry and Mary (both in purple) with Uncle Tong on Henry's right

The ministry of Henry and Mary has no doubt reflected the plethora of ways and means to be God's hands and feet.

### TRIALS, TESTS AND TROUBLE

As a line from a popular song goes, trouble is a part of our lives.

In October 2011, Henry suffered a fall and doctors later found that his brain was half clotted with blood.

After his discharge from the hospital, Henry was bedridden for most of the time for eight months on doctor's orders and he had medical check-ups every fortnight. Mary was Henry's sole caregiver. But less than six months later, in March 2012, Mary herself was diagnosed with cancer. "It was the darkest hour in our life," said Mary. "Nothing could have prepared us for it."

The side effects of each round of treatment were terrible and Mary suffered tremendously. "The effects started for one week, subsided somewhat the following week, and then the cycle began all over again for the next round of chemotherapy."

But God is good and He provides. "A kind Indian Muslim neighbour sent her helper with food to our house every afternoon. Three Wesleyans visited us separately and gave us prayer support. Once I was in hospital the whole day for diagnosis but I felt great peace. When I went home, Psalm 121 came to my mind and these words stayed with me: The Lord will keep you from all harm, He will watch over your life. The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more."

Mary has since been cancer-free.

Instead of accepting his doctor's prescription of rest for the full eight months, Henry sought a second opinion from another neurologist. A CT scan convinced the specialist that it was time Henry resumed an active life. He did.

### FAITH OVER FEAR, COMPASSION OVER CHALLENGES

Today, Henry and Mary continue to live a life of faith over fear, a life of compassion over challenges.

The ability to serve together for many years means a lot to Henry and Mary. They are grateful to God for each other and giving them time, means and grace to serve.

"Though Henry's knees are weak, we continue to serve," declared Mary.

"It is our joy to see the joy we bring to people we serve. Their joy is a gift to us." 🙏

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