

TOGETHER

TRUE WAY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ENGLISH CONGREGATION

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From K, with love by Joyce Peh

I arrived in Central Asia on 23 August 2025. It is December now.

Please pardon me because I can't write freely about my experiences, or identify my new friends here. I've been told to be very discreet, so my article may feel a bit secretive. But there is still so much I can write about, and so much that I'm thankful for.

I'm in K. K is a Muslim-majority country in Central Asia. It is one of five republics in Central Asia that became independent in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is sprawling and mountainous.

Just a few months ago, I had thought that perhaps I would grow old and retire in the organisation I have worked in since I graduated from university in 1999. I have never changed jobs. That was before the Lord jolted me out of my comfort zone and started me thinking of exploring overseas missionary work.

But trust me, this was never in my game plan. I have been on many church mission trips. I served on the church's mission committee. But I have never thought (and to a certain degree, I still believe) that I'm not a missionary natural because I don't adjust well to new environments, and I'm highly dependent on my mother. I can't imagine how I would survive without her. Uproot and plant myself in a faraway land for a year,



The mountains before my window are covered with snow.

maybe longer? That would not be me. But I guess the Lord has other plans.

I spoke to some people, and they felt that if I wanted to know what living and working in the mission field is like, then going for short trips is not going to tell me much. Most church mission trips are four- or five-day expeditions that are jam-packed with exciting programs like an afternoon of games, a few classes teaching English, a concert night with a gospel message. Then you pack your bags and go home.

But short-term mission trips serve their purposes, especially if they open up opportunities for the long termers in the field. I guess I wanted more.

Through God's divine arrangements, I was given the opportunity to serve with an organisation in Central Asia that works with young people. It would be six months. After much deliberation and prayers, I signed up.

I will have time to learn the rhythm, the struggle. I will learn to pray.

It wasn't easy to go, but with six months, I knew I wouldn't have to rush through a barrage of fast-paced programs. I would get a chance to experience not just the work, but also talk to my heart. I will have time to learn the rhythm, the struggle. I will learn to pray.

It was the tail end of summer when I arrived in August and the temperature was about 30 degrees. So it was pretty much like Singapore, except that it's very dry here. Climate-wise, an easy start! But that soon changed when autumn came and the temperature dipped and it snowed.

Till today, I have no idea why that happened. I thought I would be quite excited seeing snow for the first time, and yes, I was excited. But only for the moment. I waited but the snow didn't go away. Very soon, I decided that I didn't like the cold very much. The strong winds that blew made it colder. I stopped going out and told everybody, "I will see you after winter."

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When autumn formally became winter, everyone laughed at me and said that this is already a very warm winter. I can only say God is gracious. I'm doing better now with a thick jacket, many layers of clothes and a good pair of winter boots that I got from the local bazaar.

The bazaar, which is half-an-hour's walk from our apartment, is an important part of the lives of the people here. It is where they get their fresh produce, stationery, clothes, toys, shoes, household items, noodles and bread. The stall owners and shopkeepers work very hard. Just don't for a moment think that they have everything we're used to in Singapore. I was looking to buy a mechanical pencil one day and discovered that they only sell wooden and stacking pencils. But these work well, too. It's just that coming from Singapore, I'm spoilt for choice.

Back home, I have never had to worry about cooking and home chores. I have mom. Therefore, I was worried that I would be a burden to the team. I arrived at the apartment with two heavy bags very late at night. This was the cosy space I would call home for the next six months. Though the flights and transfers were very smooth, I was hungry and tired. My housemates were very sweet. They welcomed me with big hugs and a nice, homecooked dinner. Their love really warmed my heart.

I soon got to know the two sisters in the team. They were very patient with me and through their coaching, I have now 'mastered' three dishes – fried rice, fried tomato-and-egg, and a japchae lookalike dish that was made using every thing in the fridge.

But living and working



The apartment I share with my housemates.

together definitely had their challenges. In September, I got very frustrated with one sister and spoke to her angrily. When we got home that evening, the three of us sat down and talked. We shared openly and honestly and took turns to apologise to one another. I thank God that despite our differences, we can be and are one in Christ. God is moulding us to make us aware of our weaknesses and to be more considerate about one another's needs. Perhaps you will not have this experience on a short-term trip of only a few days.

Despite our differences, we can be and are one in Christ.

Four or five days a week, I take a 25-minute walk to a university or a 20-minute walk to a technical college. Our ministry work is to reach their students. Being 15 to 21 years old, the youth here are really not very different from Singaporean youth. They enjoy hanging out, eating

with friends, they follow celebrities, take risks and are very into social media. Even though TikTok is banned in K, many of them are on TikTok.

Because of K's history, the official language here is Russian. Most of the country is rural, so there is farming and agriculture. Almost every student I have spoken to wants to get out of the country. Hence, they are very keen to learn English, and for some, Chinese. They hope that proficiency in these languages would help them go abroad for further studies or work.

As a young republic-in-transition, K has significant social problems like alcoholism, gambling and drug trafficking. I think K is considered a poor country, but it's developing. There are big malls and 5-star hotels in the capital city now. A student brought me out to see the impressive hotel she was working in. I snapped some photos. If some of my Singaporean friends are thinking of coming to this

country, they should have no reason to hesitate!

The Chinese have built many hotels here, and so has Russia. I also learned that the U.S. and Japan are not far behind. They too have strategic interests in Central Asia.

At the university and college, we run English and Chinese talking clubs for the students. These talking clubs are informal groups we have formed with students who are interested to practise the languages with us. The school authorities know about them and are glad we are helping their students.

With the schools' approval, we would go into the campuses and park ourselves in the school canteen or courtyard. We talk to some 10 to 15 students every time we're there. Some students are fairly proficient while some others can only manage, "Hello, my name is _____. How are you? Where are

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you from?" The funny thing is when I say that I'm from Singapore, most of them will nonchalantly say, "Oh, Singapore." I found out later that most of them did not know where Singapore was. They were just saying, "Oh, Singapore" without knowing anything about Singapore. I've since heard that many students think Singapore is part of China, India, Malaysia and the Philippines. I'm quite amused!

Two days after I arrived, my team mates brought me to the university. There I met a young girl who was a freshman in the university. She looked lost and anxious. She said she didn't know anybody or anything. My heart went out to her. I tried to reassure her. I told her to be patient since this was only her first day. She didn't know I felt as lost as she. I hope she understood what I was trying to say.

I asked two boys what they did during the summer. They said they sold water melon, petrol and sheep. One boy was worried that I didn't know what a sheep was, so he said "baa-baa!"

For my part, I've started to learn Russian. It has not been easy.

A was a girl who spoke only Russian. She enrolled in the university to learn Chinese. She speaks very little English. But we became friends. Eating lunch together in the noisy canteen, we resorted to "talking" using Google Translate. It was hilarious because we were typing away on our phones. But this would have to do until she learns her Chinese, and I, my Russian.

D is a fourth-year student in the university. He is a very friendly boy who would sit with us whenever he sees us



The dishes I learned to cook had first to be edible. Now they are quite delicious.

Eating lunch together in the noisy canteen, we resorted to "talking" using Google Translate... until she learns her Chinese, and I, my Russian.

at the canteen. Not too long ago, he had a disagreement with his father. While this was not the first time he and his dad had a misunderstanding, this was the first time D responded rudely, and it greatly affected him. My friend sensed this and asked if he would like us to pray for him, but he politely said "no".

On another occasion, when we were in his school library, I found a book of Job on the shelf and thinking that this



I soon got used to riding in K's shared taxis.

might be a good way to start a gospel conversation, I asked if he knew this was a book found in the Bible, and if he knew how this book ended up in the library. I could see he was not keen to discuss this when he simply told me that the school probably selected its books randomly. I realized

that the Lord was saying, "It's not the time yet." I need to be patient and pray for an open door with D.

Once, while hanging out with some college students I had made friends with,

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the topic of religion came up. Some boys told me that they don't listen to secular music because it's considered haram. Then they asked me about my religion. I'm a Christian, I said. One boy then very excitedly asked me if I knew who Martin Luther was. I was curious to know how he knew about Luther. He then replied that he liked to read history books. He said he learnt that Martin Luther pinned 95 statements on the church door. I asked if the boy knew why Luther had to do that. He replied, "For revolution!" I briefly explained why Luther "revolted" and left it at that because I wasn't sure if everyone in the group would be comfortable if I shared more. But here, God gave me a conversation starter to share a bit of the gospel with the students.

Someone whom I managed to share the gospel with was S. S's father had passed away about two months ago from cancer and when I heard the news, I met and texted her more often. Once at lunch, she asked me what I did on Sunday and I told her I went to church. She then asked if I could tell her more about my religion. I exclaimed, "Of course!" I shared the gospel with her using Google Translate. Like most of the students, S knows mainly Russian, but not English or Mandarin. Thank God for technology.

After hearing my gospel message, S agreed there is a Creator God and that we have sinned against Him. However, she disagreed that the punishment of sin is death. She said we can pay for our sins by praying five times a day and doing good. I replied that I don't believe good works could save us, and that we are saved only by believing in Jesus Christ. Again, she disagreed. I had

some difficulty explaining Good Friday. Maybe the Google translation was wrong. But she knew about Easter Sunday. So, I told her that Good Friday and Easter Sunday are a package, that Jesus died and Jesus rose. She nodded. I think she understood what I was trying to say.

Although K is a Muslim-majority country, there are Christian churches here. I remember my first Sunday inside a local Russian language church. I didn't understand the language, but the Christian liturgy comforted and touched me. It is important for a missionary to try to be part of a worshipping community, and not be a lone Christian. I was glad to participate in the holy communion. I recognized only one song—"God Is So Good," so I sang it in English.

My daily routine brings structure to my days. Every morning, I have my own time with the Lord. Then it's prayer and worship with my two housemates. After that, we head to the university canteen to meet students. Afternoons are spent planning activities. When the day is done, we go for a run or walk at the track near our apartment. Some evenings, we host students with dinner in our apartment.

When it rains or snows, I take a taxi if I need to go out. K has no metro. There are buses, but not in my area. Here, we only have shared taxis. Shared taxis ply fixed routes like buses. They pick up passengers along the way until the car is filled. It is a low-cost way of getting around. Each trip is less than 50 Singapore cents. A shared taxi seats four passengers

I hope I come back a different person. I pray I will see more clearly how I can fit into His plan.

and one driver. With my thick winter jacket and many layers, it can get very squeezey!

In seven weeks, I will come home. I hope I come back a different person. I have learned a bit about what God is doing in this part of His world. I pray I will see more clearly how I can fit into His plan.

At my interview, the organisation staff member asked if I cooked and drove, and I had to say no. He chuckled and said that my mom will be very proud of me when I'm back. Well, I have done no driving at all in K, but mom now knows I cook, even if it's only three dishes. Mom is patient with me. Without saying a word, she knows I have grown.

I have only taken a few steps. I know there are more things the Lord wants me to see about working with students in a foreign land. I am learning to be patient with myself.

Soon I will say "Paka paka," which is Russian for "goodbye" to my housemates and students. I will feel a great sadness. The students will ask when and if I'm coming to K again. Just like the four words that I write when I sign off on my online updates, "From K, with love," I know that saying goodbye and feeling sad tells me I have given love and received love. ■

Joyce Peh has been a full-time staff worker with Singapore Youth For Christ from 1999. She came to True Way in 1993, first joining the evening service. All photos were taken by her.



Even though I didn't understand Russian very well, I was very happy to be in church on Sundays.



At the bazaar near our apartment, I saw how local people lived.

Soccer for boys

by Lee Chung Horn and Yang Hai Kun

Why did two Zoom interviews with several people about a soccer tournament for kids in our church become so much more than gathering material for a news essay? How did our conversation change into a discussion about what young boys need? Yes, the interviews took us back to the excitement of the day. But looking back, they also made us realise that more than getting our Sunday school boys to lace their boots up, it was important for us to understand the complex world our boys enter, a world that does not necessarily welcome parents and teachers.

Here are the facts: U12 put together a mini soccer tournament on 8 November at The Cage Kallang, an indoor soccer stadium. This drew not only our Sunday school boys, but also dads, moms, other church adults, and children outside the church.

First question – why organise a mini soccer tournament for U12?

Stanley Soh: Toward the end of 2024, I was thinking up new programs for the new year. I wanted two programs that would help U12 children bond with their parents. So, this May, we got parents to build terrariums with their kids. I think the girls

...more than getting our Sunday school boys to lace their boots up, it was important for us to understand the complex world our boys enter, a world that does not necessarily welcome parents and teachers.



You could be coach, team manager or organiser but at heart, you're a role model to the boys: Lek Hui Meng, Ian Lee and Terry Chia.

enjoyed this. This was the 'artistic' program. For the second program which I felt should be a 'sports-based' one, I wondered, "How about getting the dads and the kids to have a kickabout?" I confess I wanted something simple. I didn't want our U12 parents to get too competitive about it.

Ian Lee: Well, football is competitive. In any match, one team wins, the other team loses.

William Yap: I think competitive sports can teach our boys many things.

Stanley: Not all our kids know how to play football. We need to remember this. So they're going to break rules, and the poor referee will be blowing his whistle and this may upset parents. So in the beginning my plan was to have something very simple.

But your plan got bigger.

Stanley: I'm part of a WhatsApp chat-group of children pastors. We come from several denominations. In June, we were invited to field a team of our Sunday school kids. So I asked Ian



Rev Stanley Soh with Elias Kuah, Daniel Lim and William Yap.

and Terry Chia and a few others. Well, we got a team up, practised a bit and ended up runners-up!

Ian: We were so excited. This was when the thing grew. We talked to church parents. Sharon joined, and Hui Meng and Davyd Lin were recruited to coach the boys. For the kids to enjoy the games, they have to know what to do with the ball.

Stanley: Our mini soccer tournament was scheduled for 8 November. As the day drew closer, we saw we were going to have four teams to fight it out. But when we started, we weren't sure we could form teams. We asked our U12 girls but nobody

joined. Our U12 teachers are mostly women. Because football is such a male sport, they didn't get involved. Looking back, having mixed teams would have been complicated things. So we asked YZ if they were keen to come in. And Pearce Low and Elias Kuah came.

Sharon Alfred: The U12 kids really looked up to them. When U12 kids join YZ, we hope they will recognise a few familiar faces.

Hui Meng, how did Terry recruit Davyd and you to be coaches?

Lek Hui Meng: Actually, I

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wasn't recruited. I went up to Uncle Terry after I heard the announcement in church and said, "Uncle Terry, can I be of any help? Can I be part of this in any capacity?"

Did Terry ask to see your credentials first?

Hui Meng: He knows. Because growing up in church we have been playing football. I have been playing with the uncles in the church.

Does soccer have a history in True Way?

William: We have soccer veterans who go back to the 1980s – Graham Ng, Chng Say Tiong, Liu Hann Fang. I think there were more. Jasper Lim and John Cheong were the second wave. Terry Chia, Wong Chee Seng, and I were in there somewhere. I think soccer will go on a long time.

Hui Meng, what was it like being a coach to the boys?

Hui Meng: I have never officially coached football before. I know young boys have short attention spans. But I have been trained by a coach. I know the drills. So I took it from there.

Stanley: I love playing football. When I was a kid, I played for my school. But in True Way, I'm a football newcomer!

William: You could be a coach, a manager, one of the organisers, but you're basically a role model. Tell us about some of the people who came together for the tournament.

Ian and Sharon: William joined later but he was very committed. Jude, Kyna and Eugene's son is only 9 years old. He was the youngest kid, but he was an absolutely fearless goalkeeper. Terry and Hui Meng took charge of forming the teams. They tried

to match the teams for skills and height and stamina. And yes, in the end we had four teams.

Sharon: William, tell everyone why you're wearing an arm-sling these days.

William: I got injured at one of our training sessions! This kid, I forget who, rammed a hard ball at me. I was goalie. The force fractured my wrist.

Sharon: But you didn't take MC. You stayed in the games.

William: I'm a team manager, I can't quit my boys! We had three other team managers – John, Jasper and Daniel Lim.

Ian: The interesting thing was we had quite a few 'outsider' boys. These boys heard about the tournament because they had joined some of our soccer clinics. We've been running these soccer clinics once every month for a while on Sunday afternoons. Pastor Stanley's original plan was to have a parents-and-kids game. We thought, "Since we're already running the monthly clinics, maybe we could see if there was enough interest to have a tournament. I thought my own two kids would like to play. Many of us thought maybe it'd be good for U12 kids to have a group activity other than just going for Sunday school. From eight or ten boys, our clinics grew to around 20 boys.

Daniel, your team won - they were the champion team in the tournament.

Daniel: Like William, I was also a team manager. My job was to train with my team, to encourage them, take care of them. In my team, there was Pearce from YZ. The other four kids were Jonah, John's son; Caius who's Ian's son; Jude, Eugene's son, and a boy from outside called Shunwei. My boys had discussions about strategy. They had a lot of ideas on how they want to go about the attack and how they can work together



Fearless goalkeeper, Jude Gee, 9, with his parents Eugene and Kyna.

My boys had discussions about strategy. They had a lot of ideas on how they want to go about the attack and how they can work together in defense. They understood teamwork. They made friends with each other and with Shunwei.

in defense. They understood teamwork. They made friends with each other and with Shunwei. I was amazed.

Ian: I really appreciated that the people who got involved came to every one of the sessions. I guess parents want to see that we had serious coaches who will be there waiting for their kids at the next session. But at the end of the day, the true judges are the children, and not their parents. Will the boys say they had fun, that they learned something?

Hui Meng: I mostly coached the stronger players, the boys who have played football before. Davyd coached the larger group of boys who were unfamiliar with, or new to football. Davyd is a fun guy, the kids loved him!

Sharon: In a very good way, the football became

something that allowed kids to meet kids and parents to meet parents.

Ian: I guess one way all children build friendships is when they meet at common activities like the monkey bar or basketball court or at netball. It's not just sitting in class and listening to their teachers. I think the football clinics were a fantastic outreach avenue. I met an Indian family who lives in Tiong Bahru. There was also an Italian family who was interested in football. They came to our clinics.

Tell us about the trophies and medals.

Ian: Thank God we had a budget. I went to a shop and told the owner we don't have a lot of money to spend. The owner said, "We have cheap medals but they are good quality. This guy said he would design, emboss and print, just a few dollars. We even had money to buy a prize trophy.

William: The medals were important. They will remind the boys of this time in their lives.

Sharon: To be honest, it's not easy to keep kids in church. We need something for them, and it's not going to be a sharp word from their parents, or exciting lessons about God or the Bible. For

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kids and teens, it's finding peers who will become their friends. If we lose our kids during this phase, they're not likely to stay in church very long. I don't know about everyone here but there was a point in my life when I didn't like going to church at all. I went because I didn't want to be scolded. But today's kids won't behave the same way, that's all.

William: I think I know what you mean, Sharon. I think girls find it easier to integrate into YZ compared to boys. They're more social. Boys can be loners, so having a big brother in YZ helps.

Will there be a second soccer tournament next year?

Stanley: That's a good question, we'll see! It will depend on how many volunteers and helpers we get. I know there's a lot of interest right now.

What do boys need? If you have boys and you've done some reading, psychologists today seem to say with some urgency that boys need structure and boundaries. Boys need goals and coaching in how to persist and not give up. Boys need to understand it's ok to receive care, there's no need to be macho all the time. Sadly, because boys, and I guess, girls too, spend so much time online, they often mistake sound bites for sound advice and believe influencers are trusted counselors. The solutions that social media offer sound like good solutions to kids when they're often poor answers.

Stanley: Boys today play computer games, many have never played football or sports. There's social media. For their part, parents and dads are busy themselves.

So the easy thing is let the kids do their own thing just so they can get a precious breather themselves. But the right and true answer to what boys need is Jesus. All of us need Jesus.

John: Boys need friends. Boys being boys, they're going to want to compete. Even if it were for one game. They're happy if they win, sad if they lose. This pretty much sums up the emotions. I can speak for my son Jonah who was a member in Daniel's team. Jonah is P6. He was initially reluctant because his main sport is basketball, not football. So Jonah's not very good at football. But I saw that once he joined his team, he was competing. He ran for the ball, he didn't stand on the side. Every boy that day was competing. They worked as a team. Everybody saw that. And everybody was screaming and cheering. I saw that Jonah became a better player. So yeah, I thought the tournament was very good. The kids really, really had a great time, and they grew. ■

Lee Chung Horn is a church elder and TOGETHER's chief editor. He works as a medical doctor. Yang Hai Yun came to True Way in 2021. He is a lawyer. The following persons spoke to TOGETHER for this interview: Stanley Soh, Ian Lee, Sharon Alfred, William Yap, Terry Chia, Daniel Lim, Lek Hui Meng, John Cheong. All photos by Lee Chung Horn.

In short

by Lee Chung Horn



Pastor Wei Liang (right) greeting worshippers at the door with Alvin Chia.

We welcome Mr Ho Wei Liang who joined TWPC English Congregation in Jan 2026 as our new preacher.

Pastor Wei Liang, 42, graduated in 2009 from NUS where he earned a major in psychology. He taught math, science and English with the National Institute of Education for five years and later studied at Trinity Theological College where he obtained his Master of Divinity degree. In 2019 he

was called into full-time pastoral ministry at Orchard Presbyterian Church as a youth pastor and missions pastor.

Pastor Wei Liang is married with three daughters.

Says Pastor Wei Liang: "My family and I are excited to join True Way and be part of the family of God worshipping and serving Him here. So many people have made us feel welcome!" ■



Front L to R: Caius Lee, Oliver Alfred, Ethan Tan, Caleb Lee, Zechariah Alfred. Back L to R: Sharon Alfred, Ian Lee, Terry Chia, Lek Hui Meng, David Alfred, Pearce Low.

Raising children: A grace-filled calling

by Joel Seah

"I wish I have time to watch Netflix," I quipped, as my colleague gave me a raving review about a Korean drama that he thought I would like. I quickly said that, given our family's current circumstances, I would have to seek my wife's concurrence on the show before I watched it.

As parents of a toddler called Noah and a six-month-old named Luca, my wife Gracia and I have had to keep our heads above a sea of diaper changes, feedings, bedtime rules, doctors' appointments, and all the unexpected situations that fill every hour of the lives of young parents. Like many young parents, we also have full-time jobs. So we have to be economical with whatever time we have left.

While we have domestic help at home, our decision has been to allow our helper to focus on the housework while we focus on taking care of our boys. We also have help from our parents a couple of days a week for a few hours each time, but the days are gone when I could do what I wanted with my time. Our priorities have shifted, and the arrival of two boys to our family has inevitably morphed "me-time" into "we-time".

What this means is even after the boys have gone to bed and I want to unwind, I now consider how to do that while also spending time with Gracia. Hence we have made Netflix a shared viewing, not a solo viewing, and hence the need for concurrence, and taking turns to choose what to watch.

Instead of insisting on the



Luca, Gracia, Joel and Noah. Photo by Lee Chung Horn

way of life as we used to know it, we have tried to find a new normal.

Bucking the Trend

It's not just Netflix. Being a young father has included other sacrifices.

When Noah was about six months old, I made the difficult decision to explore the job market for new opportunities. I'd been comfortable in my role as a litigator in a small law firm where I had worked for five years, but decided to look for a change.

Due to my background and training, I had wanted to continue doing litigation work. That was my aspiration. However, because of my young child, I decided not to explore roles that would

Our priorities have shifted, and the arrival of two boys to our family has inevitably morphed "me-time" into "we-time".

require me to be away from home for too long. During interviews, I made it a point to mention that I would like to have some flexibility in my work arrangements. This understandably did not go down well with some interviewers, one of whom kindly mentioned that maybe the role I was interviewing for was "not what I was looking for." But between aspiration and responsibility, I knew I wanted to be present at home in this season.

By God's grace, I landed a

back-end advisory role in the Ministry of Social and Family Development that allows me to work from home two to three days a week and help out with the kids. Even on days that I'm in office, I try to leave promptly to be home as soon as I can. This does not mean that I've become a clock-watcher or that I dodge my share of work responsibilities, I still do all my work as best I can. But it does mean working hard and maximising the use of my time in office to finish as much as possible while I'm there. In my new job, I am exposed to policy work, which I think will help me grow.

I have never regretted the decision to have children. I thoroughly enjoy spending time with the boys and

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watching them grow and develop. They bring much joy and laughter to our household. I love them.

Having children has also pushed Gracia and I to work better as a duo: covering for each other when we are sick or tired (or both), checking in on each other in the midst of the busyness, exchanging words of encouragement and recognition to make sure we know we're trying our best. In the midst of the daily grind, our marriage has grown stronger as we learn to support and rely on each other better.

But while I've never had a doubt about having children, I have wondered if the timing was right.

"The hard work is in raising the children."

In many societies today, young marrieds are often told that they should focus on their careers, or delay having babies, because they are still young. This is reflected in the year-on-year increase in the median age of when mothers have their first child. In Singapore, this age has become 31.9 years in 2024, where it had been 30.5 ten years earlier.

It is therefore no wonder that I often get surprised reactions when I tell someone I'd just met that I am a father of two. I take this as a compliment because it must mean I look youthful. But I would be lying if I said that these shocked reactions did not set me thinking: Did I make the right choice to have children this

early? Could I have worked on building my career?

The physical, intellectual and spiritual

These questions are hard ones, but really, the hard work is in actually raising the children. How do you ensure that your children grow up well, not just physically, intellectually, but also spiritually, while you're constantly trying to keep them out of harm's way?

Also the competitive schooling environment in Singapore brings pressure to send Noah, young as he is, to as many enrichment classes as possible. I experience FOMO, what we know as the fear of missing out, whenever I hear of a class that Noah's peers are attending and he is not. Am I depriving Noah of reaching his true potential? What if he never discovers his hidden talent because we do not send him for music classes? Shouldn't you help your child grow? In a world of so many choices and priorities, what are the real ones?

Ensuring spiritual well-being feels like an even more uphill task. Bringing an energetic toddler to Sunday service doesn't mean he learns anything. It means I don't always get to hear the sermon myself, much less pick out learning points for him. Our nightly devotion often descends into a staring contest; a battle of wills as to what gives first - Noah's refusal to pray, or our insistence on our nightly routine.

But there are also glimpses of truth getting into him, like when he's able to recognise that God created the dinosaurs, planets and construction vehicles that he enjoys, when he

unexpectedly tells Gracia and me "Jesus loves you!", or when he screams Jesus' name when I tickle him because we have told him that if he ever needs help, he just needs to call upon the name of Jesus. However, how am I to ensure that these flashes of understanding of who God is will translate into a firm faith when he is older?

We will never walk alone

In November, Gracia and I attended the membership class in preparation for Luca's baptism this Christmas. There, we were reminded that the Church also has a part to play in raising children to love and fear God. I am thankful that True Way provides Noah, and will soon provide Luca, a safe space to be himself. When Noah runs along the corridors with his partner-in-crime Azriel, Gracia and I know that there will always be uncles and aunties looking out for them if they fall.

Beyond that, I am comforted that the church community will also contribute to teaching the boys about God. I know this will happen, not just formally through catechism classes but because knowing God also comes from being with, and loving one another, and seeing Christ in each other.

I also feel heartened that the youths I once taught will one day likely lead the DGs that Noah and Luca will be part of. We have every reason to invest time and effort into all our children because one day they will be our missionaries, deacons, elders and even pastors.

Swapping Netflix for fishing nets

I'm just a young dad. It's only been two-and-a-half years. But I have come to

realise that being a father is a calling from God. It's not an easy calling, it's a calling marked by, and sustained only through God's grace. It's a long and messy calling that may not bear fruit quickly, yet it's one that God calls us to plug away at faithfully.

I don't always manage to keep my cool getting Noah to pray or pay attention during devotion time. But God promises to transform me, and, in His good and mysterious ways, my two boys into Christ-likeness.

Gracia and I have decided to baptise both our boys as infants. Some of our friends feel baptism is a choice they want their kids to make for themselves when they are old enough to profess their faith. That is not wrong, and we're not smarter, but we also realise that baptism is not only what we profess, what we're capable of saying to God and others, but what God says to us. In baptism, God is saying He is giving us His gift of grace. He is calling our boys into His family.

On Christmas Day, when we stand before our church family, Gracia and I, along with other young parents, will feel the tug in our hearts when we see the hands that the church will raise in support of every baby and every young dad and mom who have brought their children to receive God's blessing.

On that day, I will know again that the love I feel for Noah and Luca is infinitely outweighed by the love God has for them. And swapping Netflix for fishing nets to "fish" for Noah and Luca becomes an answer to a real calling. ■

Joel Seah, 33, grew up in True Way and enjoys serving with the youths. He is married to Gracia and they have two young boys, Noah and Luca.

