

FOUNDATION DAY

TO BUILD A





Have you ever yearned for a home?

A place where you belong, are nurtured, discipled, and loved.

CERC's story too, began with the search for a home. Where good bible preaching would thrive, fueled by a deep yearning for a real Christ-centered, God-glorifying ministry. This dream wasn't Pr Robin Gan's alone, but that of a group of brothers and sisters in Christ who first started gathering in a house in Bandar Sunway every Sunday to hear God's Word preached faithfully. So we built that home, through the labour of love that we have come to know today as Christ Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC).

Today, more than 400 of us call CERC home. 12 years on, we speak to Founding Elder, Pr Robin on how far CERC has come, and how much further we have to go.

It is about 11pm on a Wednesday evening, and we've only just completed a short meeting on the fundraising calendar for the year and are squeezing in an interview with Pr Robin to get his thoughts for this year's Foundation Day. The goal? Help people understand what CERC is all about, and channel the incredible sense of passion and mission we have for Jesus and His kingdom that strives for an ambitious gospel tradition worthy of our Lord. 12 years on, we launch into our interview, and settle in for a treatise of wisdom from our dear pastor.

Here we are, celebrating CERC's 12th Foundation Day. So let's go back to the very beginning in 2008 -- why CERC? What led to her founding and what was the goal back then?

When we first began, our foundation was and has always been a faithfulness to God's Word. Good, solid bible preaching, which would flow into and be at the very center of the lives of those who would come under His Word. Just imagine -- a world fueled by a culture of gospel dedication, where people are truly living Christ-centered and God-glorifying lives -- that's our vision.

But to get there, especially in Malaysia, you need to develop a robust, evangelical gospel tradition. To do this, you need to have faithful Christian leadership. So CERC's goal, really is to raise up generations of faithful Christian ministers in Malaysia, the region

even, in order to bring the gospel to the masses. To someday have the strength and diversity to not just feed ourselves, but nurture those around us. To be able to send ministers to those who may need guidance, wherever they may be.

Now when CERC first started, we were meeting in the home of Joy's (Pr Robin's wife) parents to study the book of Joshua and frankly, with lots of blank looks. Yet the Spirit has led us to persevere and grow through lots of painful moments and the customary resistance -- and we're still here today - so I suppose, one can say the Spirit is alive indeed!

And thanks be to God! It was the clarity of the gospel preaching in CERC that first drew me to His church. As a newcomer, I still remember that day pretty fondly. It was a Sunday sermon, but the bible was being taken seriously, the reality of mankind's hypocrisy fully on display through John the Baptist, and I found myself being taught to understand God's message through the Scriptures - vipers and all! I sometimes take this for granted nowadays, but it's incredibly important to have faithful preaching.

How then does CERC go about doing this -- nurturing faithful leadership for God's church? And what does it take to do this?

Well, the reality is we're trying to build gospel tradition in a sinful world. Knowing this, once again, we must have faithful Christian leadership. CERC's work involves transforming the youth, by edifying students who are passionate for the Bible, encouraging their interest in and training for ministry, and replicating this passion for the gospel in schools, universities, homes, and our work with other churches. We look to build up men and women for God's kingdom.

Today, we've got a burgeoning women's ministry, an everincreasing list of people interested in pursuing full-time paid ministry, and more apprentices excited to head off to seminary every year. This is all extremely encouraging, but also financially challenging.

Right, and I hear we've spent about RM710k on theological education since our founding in 2008. We also spend a significant amount of time on theological training and apprenticeship. We even have a dedicated theological fund. Why put so much of our resources into this?

Well, if the goal is to raise up ministers for God's kingdom, that's what we're going to invest in. We invest in theological education because we know that for someone to lead a church well — as defined by the apostle Paul and our Lord Jesus — to oversee God's sheep through the Word, one needs to be built up. The truth is you're going to need management skills, word literacy, years of testing, and the experience of different ministerial environments.

Although apprenticeship is critical in CERC's training — we do it before AND after someone goes off to seminary, there is still the privilege and necessity of a good theological education. Sitting down for exams to study the bible, appreciating it as a literary product of the Holy Spirit, learning the original languages, understanding ethical complexities, and learning from specialists who are also pastorally experienced... It's not easy, but very necessary to raise up men and women who would pioneer generations of quality, faithful leadership in Malaysia and the region.

Admittedly, this is challenging work. Nevermind the exchange rate, one needs a stable and politically neutral environment for theological education to flourish. Yet, our context and reality is one of a pluralistic world filled with socio-cultural, economic, and geographical pressures. It's hard to get gospel clarity and continuity necessary to build a strong tradition. Now if a seminary is backed by good churches, it is able to transform culture through the nurturance of an ecosystem. In a gospel-centered ecosystem, you can see even the music changing, the skits changing, the city itself transforming. Kingdom change actually starts with kingdom building.

Today in 2020, we are trying to move into the second phase of our growth -- with many new campuses and projects in the works. But with every new campus we begin, we pretty much start from scratch all over again. This is why financial support is extremely crucial for the mission.

Kingdom building is serious business indeed, and every ounce of support goes a long way. So after 12 years, we're in 2020 and it's been a pretty challenging year, to say the least. Having said that, what's critical for CERC at this point in her growth today?

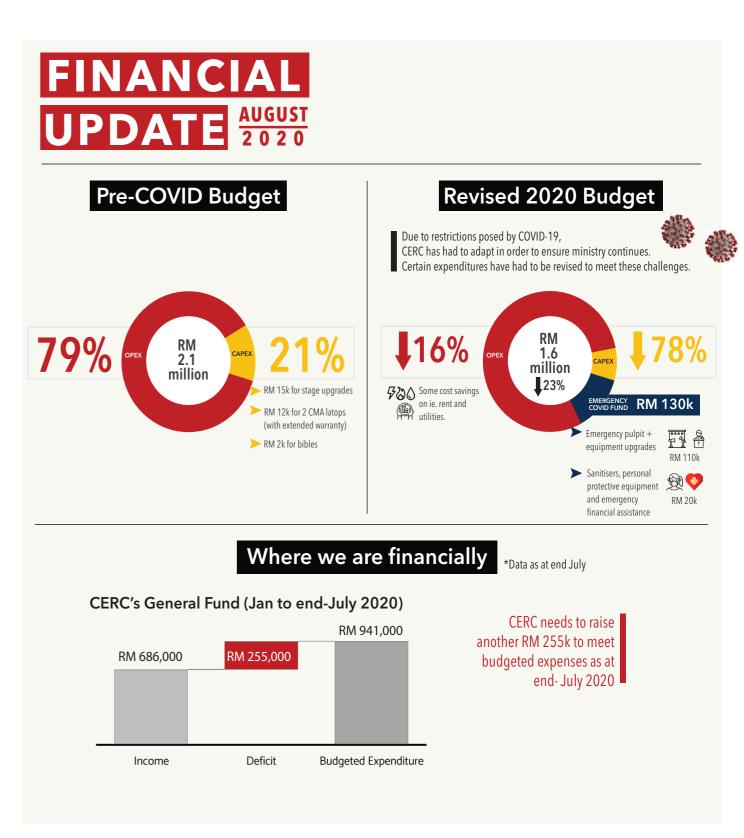
If I had it in one word - survival. This year, we're all expecting an economic recession. That comes with unemployment, an uncertain recovery, and an even worse exchange rate. We also have a young congregation, which is beautifully encouraging, but also financially challenging. We've got Elden going off to seminary next year, and more apprentices excited about pursuing full-time ministry, but are held-back by resources.

Also, operational support. In a church of 400, we do need crucial support that would go a long way towards the building fund and

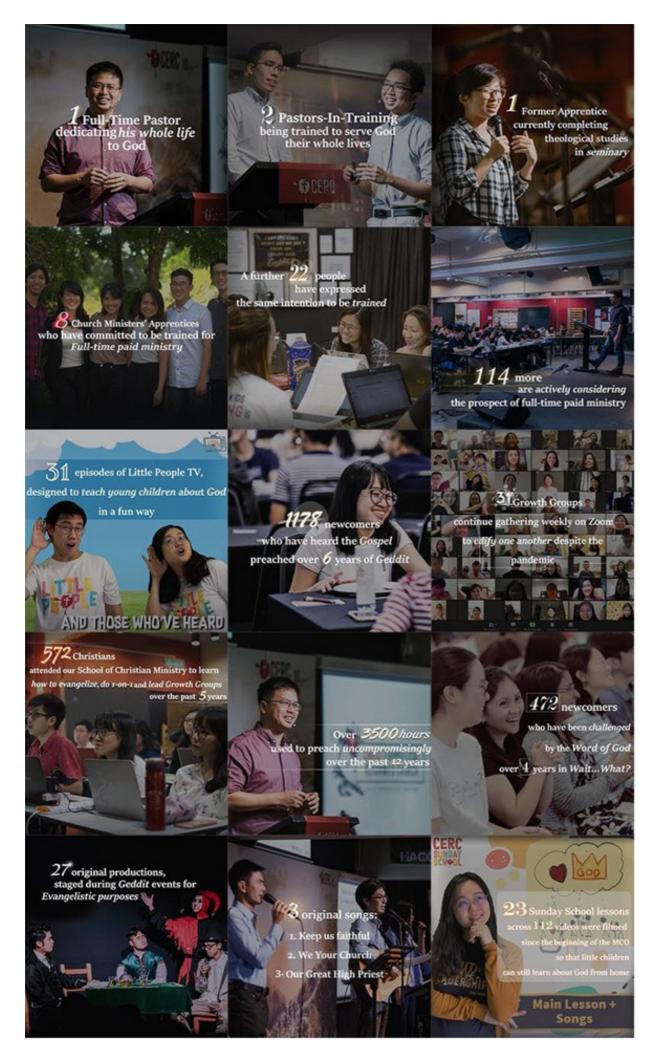
general expenses. Our supporters know that we are a pretty frugal church, and creatively so too. Every dime is maximized and we have a pretty large workforce. The church has grown and is still growing, we went up from 335 to 400 through the coronavirus lockdown alone. Our virtual ministry has provided what originally began as an alternative, a legitimate method of discipleship — even reaching our brothers and sisters in Sabah, Singapore, and the Philippines! Yet, although the future looks bright, the reality is the present will be a struggle.

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Our foundation **was**and **has always been**a faithfulness to God's Word



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Every year, our goals have been the same for the preaching -for God's people to be edified, the non-Christian to hear the gospel in our preaching, and be evangelized.

It's definitely bittersweet, but I suppose as God's people, we would expect nothing less than to persevere and to trust in His providence! Nevertheless, there's certainly been some pretty amazing teaching in CERC, I was especially struck by Matthew last year, and some of us still go back to sermons from years ago. Let's talk about what we're doing in 2020 and 2021 -- we're attempting a biblical theology series for the first time. What were you hoping to do with the God's Story series?

Every year, our goals have been the same for the preaching -- for God's people to be edified, the non-Christian to hear the gospel in our preaching, and be evangelized. At the heart of it is Christ-centered preaching, à la 1 Corinthians 2:2-5 -- we aim for people to learn how to be biblically literate, to understand how to appreciate the text from a literary perspective, and understand who Jesus is.

I hope that the church looks back at Adam, and is grieved by the hordes of people in hateful rebellion against our Father in heaven, such that we yearn for the King and see Him in His resplendent glory in heaven, ruling from above. I hope for us to live powerful, godly, spiritually anointed lives, as we live, work, learn to forgive each other, and demonstrate the realities of living as God's people.

Also, I'm excited about Ephesians -- it's life in one book of the gospel! Hopefully we learn not to see it as compartmentalized silos, but the transformation of the heart, as Christians, to being the light of the world.

Indeed... and we know these are hard times too. Any thoughts on how gospel growth may continue in these moments, and how we can steward well with our finances in times of need?

Certainly, we aren't out of the woods. We're humbled by the zeal, ethos, commitment, and raison d'etre of the people of CERC and our supporters who have been fully present and gracious throughout the years. We're humbled by God's providence. You, our brothers and sisters, also have your own churches to be responsible for and take care of. Nevertheless, it is out of your generosity, and your extra capacity to give, that we hope you will be able to spare a thought for us. If you have given us a pledge, we reaffirm that what you are doing is indeed vital for the health of Christianity in Malaysia, and the glory of God.

Finally, what's at the heart of all this? Why go through hours of sermons, ministry training, and keep trying to love and serve? Why do this at all?

We are a church who understands how glorious Jesus is, and understands that more importantly, above personal ambition, that God's glory is at stake.

You and I, as people ambitious for God's gospel -- let us not be satisfied in ourselves, but satisfied in the glory of God!

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Find out more about CERC's leadership team here

Learn all about CERC's growth story

OUR STORY

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

AND

HOW IT HAS BUILT UP THE CHURCH

In the past months, MCO has been a challenging period to maneuver through for all of us. Even so now, as life resumes at a new normal with caution and care. Our thoughts go out to all who have been deeply affected by this pandemic, and our prayer remains that Jesus' church continues to persevere in faith.

For us here at CERC, ministry goes on. We are thankful to God that our weekly Virtual Sundays and Growth Group (GG) gatherings have allowed for people to meet online despite geographical differences. Christian and Gloria, a visiting couple from Germany, have been able to attend our gatherings regularly from another state. We have been encouraged by how they have grown through our ministry. Check out their story here!



BT (biblical theology) corrected our way of reading the Bible. It helped us grow in the knowledge of the Word. It helped us see the heavy consequence of sin. As we know, it is impossible to know God and to know how to please Him without understanding His Word. Thus, knowing how to read and understand Scripture properly is a must for every Christian. This should be followed by submitting ourselves to God and killing sin in our everyday

lives to please God. We encourage you to raise the bar when it comes to investing your time and effort to faithfully understand God's Word. With God's grace and help from CERC, we have been able to do that.

Christian and Gloria Weidtke

It is truly a privilege to learn about God's story through His Word, and to see how God in His sovereignty and glory wrote salvation history. Since the start of the year, like Christian and Gloria, many of us have also been able to learn and grow in the knowledge of Christ through CERC's God's Story series.

From college students to working adults to full-time mothers -- we have seen the importance of biblical theology in understanding the Gospel with even more clarity. As part of the Mums Growth Group, Andrea shares her reflections on what she's learnt this year together with others. More on our blogs here and here!



We really need to know God for who He really is and we can start by reading the Bible with the right attitude, which is one that is not self-seeking and not for self-benefit. To do otherwise would be setting ourselves up for disappointment and disillusionment as it will result in an entirely false view of who God actually is.

Andrea David



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This series has also helped families like the Agapes to nurture and disciple their kids from home. Through CERC Sunday School Online for their children, Sunday sermons and Growth Groups, Alpha Agape shares how the Gospel defines their family in light of our God's Story series.



The Agapes -- and their new baby girl!



Who's the Serpent Crusher promised in Genesis? The promised Seed? The Servant King? The promised Messiah? The answer to all of this is, as my 5 and 2 year olds would say... "it's Jesus of course!" And they're right! But there's so much more to that answer which needs unpacking. The God's story series we are currently doing does just that!

Through this series, I have come to see that the books in the Bible are coherent and progressively reveal and teach people about God's salvation plan. It has always been God's plan to save a people for Himself, where His people will live a life of service fully devoted to Him -- enjoying and worshiping Him forever. But Scripture shows us time and time again, we are not able to achieve this on our own -- we've failed repeatedly and therefore need the Serpent Crusher, promised Seed, Servant King and Messiah! This framework is key to understanding Scripture and thus knowing God! This dictates how we live our lives in view of our calling as Christians.

CERC Sunday School Online also teaches this series, so we get questions from my daughters like "why are there so many languages? What would we do in heaven once we get there? What does it mean now that the curtain is torn?" I thank God for revealing Himself in the Bible, and for the faithful preaching of the Word in CERC. Our family is blessed to be able to grow together under the authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Christ.

Alpha Agape

senior lecturer at Monash University

Understanding biblical theology and how God gathers a holy people for Himself inevitably also leads to a clearer and better understanding of ecclesiology.

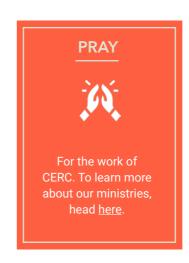
In this article from TGC (The Gospel Coalition), writer Brett McCracken points out how the world sees the church as "non-essential" today, and how the individualistic and consumeristic spirituality that exists in our Christian communities feed into that. We are reminded that contrary to that, the church is in fact God's idea and central to His plans.

May we press on together in building up the Body of Christ through faithful Word ministry and loving service to one another.

At CERC, we aim to worship God in our giving by covenanting together "to contribute cheerfully and regularly (2 Corinthians 9:6-7) to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, and the spread of the gospel through all nations," as we strive to honor the Lord with the "firstfruits" (Proverbs 3:9) of all our labor.

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Cor 9:6-7







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General Fund	CERC Trust	2-14062-0010148-8	
Theological Education Fund	CERC Theological Training Trust	2-14062-0010147-0	RHB Bank Berhad (Malaysia)
Building Fund	CERC Properties Trust	2-14062-0010145-3	
Overseas Contribution	c/o: Vivian Ming Wing Yang & Anna Hu	473245403	St George Bank (Australia)
	c/o: Foo Yuk Yee & Calvin Ow Yong	401-58913-9	POSB Savings (Singapore)

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