







INTRODUCING  
**PENNY LAI**

**CERC'S GENERAL MANAGER**

*Our new GM,  
and why church operations matter*

Church operations facilitate and support the work of word ministry. From cleaning to finance to music to social media content, an immense amount of activity and effort are centered around the heartbeat of the church -- God's word; and making sure it is presented as best and faithful as we can.

With around 400 members and regulars, CERC has 40 departments that all take care of different aspects of the church. The goal? To have a community working together to build up the body of Christ to the glory of God. To do this well takes time and energy, and with almost all heads of departments being voluntary staff, this means that there is always room for improvement.

That's where Penny comes in -- our first ever General Manager. Penny's suitability for the role comes from her experience in

CERC's Church Ministers' Apprenticeship (CMA) programme. During this time, as an apprentice under our Lead Elder, Pr Robin's mentorship and training, she led a range of ministries, camps, and conferences for 3.5 years. As a member of CERC since 2012, Penny has also had the privilege to serve in various church departments as a member such as Youth ministry.

Having worked as a product executive in a medical instrumentation company prior to this as well, her experiences and her gifts in organisation, leadership, and interpersonal skills largely developed during CMA was what qualified her for her current role as GM for the church. To understand what she does, and why it's important for the church, we managed to get some time from her busy schedule and sat down with her for a brief interview.

Q:

HI PENNY, TO START OFF, WHY

DOES CERC NEED A GENERAL MANAGER?

A:

Over the past 13 years, CERC has been bootstrapping and prioritising how we spend our money in ministries which will bring the most impact for God's kingdom -- training apprentices, supporting seminarians, and hiring pastors. We want to make sure we do not compromise on the work of preaching, teaching, discipling, and evangelism. We were able to do this because we made the decision of not hiring any full-time or administrative staff.

If anything, we brought on Basic Ministry Trainees (BMT) on short term contracts (up to 6 months) to expose them to word ministry and have them help out with some administrative duties. Without any full-time support staff, the strain on the church became increasingly apparent as we grew from 12 to 400 over the years.

As a result, some key projects don't get implemented or some minor but important tasks slip through the cracks. My role as GM, therefore, is to help the heads of all 40+ departments in this church to serve the church better.



Q:

AND HOW DOES THAT LOOK, HELPING ALL

THESE DEPARTMENTS SERVE THE CHURCH BETTER?

A:

At the moment, my big goal is to improve the coordination and communication between departments. For me to do that, I provide support, make sure the heads have the resources they need and provide input where needed. I also ensure plans have proper follow up and contingencies are put into place in case something goes wrong.

A lot of my current work revolves around ensuring the nitty gritty details of department work don't get overlooked and someone actually is assigned to that task. In the long run though, my role really is to provide leadership for the heads of departments so that all the work done is aligned towards what CERC is all about -- cultivating Christ-centered, God-glorifying ministries that build up the church.

That would look like proper oversight over all departments, giving them goals, implementing these goals with helpful strategies, and helping each department grow in both work quality and culture. And in turn, the Heads of Departments will lead and manage their teams in a way that Christians can exercise loving service to one another.

**Q:** YOU MENTIONED HAVING THESE OPERATIONS ALIGNED WITH CERC'S VISION AND MISSION. COULD YOU ELABORATE ON HOW OPERATIONAL DEPARTMENTS IN CHURCH SUPPORT WORD MINISTRY AND BUILD TOWARDS THE GOAL OF GROWING A FAITHFUL CHURCH FOR JESUS?

**A:** Instead of merely getting the job done, each department should really always be thinking about how to continually improve in order to grow the church. This kind of thinking facilitates what we stand for in CERC, and it shows the strength and importance of ecclesiology.

So right now in the pandemic, for example, the church is relying heavily on the Technical Services & Support (TSS) department and a newly created Virtual Ministry department. While it's easy for them to do the bare minimum, it's not good enough to grow ministry.

That's why together with the TSS department, we are constantly working on various ways to improve the entire virtual experience for anyone attending our virtual gatherings, so that they have good quality avenues for listening and receiving God's word from the safety of their homes. The restrictions from this pandemic have pushed us to think of ways to help people stay connected with the church online, and continue growing together through the work of the word.

**Q:** PRAISE GOD FOR MANY WILLING AND PASSIONATE HEARTS TO SERVE HIM FAITHFULLY LIKE THIS. WHAT THEN ARE YOUR HOPES AND PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH NOW AS GM?

**A:** Moving forward, I hope that CERC will eventually be able to hire a team of full-time administrative staff with whom I can work with to achieve some of the bigger goals we have as a church. With that additional support, I hope to focus more on departmental goals and setting forth plans to achieve them.

I believe that God deserves our wholehearted devotion to His church and His ministries in every aspect and this means planning well and working hard to keep on facilitating faithful word ministry so that the church will grow both physically and spiritually. Do pray for me that I myself will persevere and be able to do my job well for many years to come, to the glory of our great God!



# NEW TESTAMENT GOD'S STORY SERIES

*Reflections on last year's series, and looking forward to part 2*

God's Story is a two-part sermon series that explores the gospel and glory of God which is revealed by the entire Bible through the lens of biblical theology.

In 2020, CERC preached through the Old Testament. Sunday after Sunday, our church witnessed God's work in carrying out His plan through generations of kings and nations, peoples and promises; imbuing us with awe and reverence with mounting anticipation for the coming Saviour King.



“ **Biblical theology taught me to see how all 66 books in the Bible fit together as one key message.**

*It has helped me find the missing links and fill in the gaps in my understanding of the message of God's story, giving me a deeper appreciation of the Old Testament (OT), and helping me see how crucial every book of Scripture is to understanding and interpreting the big picture.*

*The Bible is one whole coherent message about Christ and each book points to Him.*

**Jeremy Cheong**

[His testimony here](#)

“ **Biblical theology shows me what God is doing at each point of redemptive history, where I stand in God's timeline, and what will happen at the end of the age.**

*Through a biblical-theological lens, I have come to appreciate God more and I have found assurance in Him, seeing that God is a God who is faithful to His promises and committed to His plan of redeeming a people for Himself.*

*I can no longer pretend that my life is my own to live, for God has shown us that His plan is for man to live for him, and this has been such ever since before time.*

**Ghai Yein**

[Her testimony here](#)



Suffice to say, we as a church have been deeply moved and have garnered a greater appreciation for the work of our Lord through the preaching of His Word in 2020. So in 2021, we're excited to be able to see

how God's story fully unfolds in the New Testament, beginning with the gospels, and culminating in the Kingdom of God being fully realised in the church!

# CALLED TO CHINESE MINISTRY

*Insights from our latest Mandarin-speaking CMA*



Around 93% of Malaysian Chinese families speak variants of the Mandarin language, including Mandarin itself. With this also being the language of instruction in Chinese vernacular schools and remains to be widely used both in business and daily life, the need for faithful Chinese word ministry has long outweighed the supply of Chinese word ministers. Meeting this need has always been a part of CERC's ministry plans.

Our latest apprentice, **Ruth Voon Yan Wen**, is among our first few mandarin-speaking apprentices. Although Ruth was a pious Christian since young, it wasn't until her university days that she truly encountered the God of the Bible -- through reading and studying Scripture. Convicted of her sins and moved by the gospel to proclaim it to the world, Ruth began serving actively in university Christian Fellowships, evangelizing and discipling others, and committed to CERC as a member.

Fast forward 7 years, Ruth has now taken up the call to be trained and tested through our CMA programme. CMA is a 2-year programme run in CERC that aims to test and train individuals to assess their suitability for full-time paid ministry. In the long run, Ruth's desire is to be a full-time paid minister serving our Mandarin-speaking friends, brothers, and sisters, through CERC's Chinese ministry.



*CMA evaluates an apprentice's suitability for full-time paid ministry, while training and teaching them to lead and serve in Christ-centred, God-glorifying ministries.*

*The programme's ultimate goal is to raise a generation of faithful pastor-teachers for the health of Malaysian churches.*



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“ It was in 2014 when I first heard CERC’s sermon series on Romans -- that’s when I saw how God was working through salvation history, and that was also where I understood His plan to call people to His Son.

*Since then, I have been fully convicted and committed to being on mission; to be a labourer for Jesus in a plentiful harvest. CERC’s faithful preaching has prepared me for CMA by growing my faith in Christ, my hope in the face of suffering, and my love for the church.*

*This has taught me to read the Bible and has provided opportunities for me to serve in word ministries. Therefore, I see CMA as part of God’s calling -- to be tested and trained before heading to theological college -- all this in order to minister faithfully.*

*Do pray that I will persevere through challenges ahead, to grow in my understanding of Scripture, and to learn well in this period of ministry training.*

Find out more about Ruth’s testimony of how she came to Christ and her conviction to be trained and tested as an apprentice at her [blog](#).

You can support Ruth by contributing to CERC’s General Fund & keeping her in your prayers. Our prayer as a church is that she will persevere through CMA & use her talents wisely to build God’s kingdom here in Malaysia.

### PRAY



For the work of CERC and her ministries.

### GET INVOLVED



To receive more information about our ministried and how you can get involved, visit our [Support-Us Page](#)!

### GIVE



Here at CERC, we desire nothing less than to give God what He deserves.

With new staff onboard and the ever-increasing needs that come with ministry growth, your gifts and pledges will help us continue God’s work faithfully.



SUPPORT YOUR CMAs FINANCIALLY [HERE](#)