


Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church [PSPC]


founded in 1843

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*The following pages offer you
a glimpse into the history of
Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church (PSPC)
from 1843, when it was founded.*

*Interspersed between the timelines are stories of
some of the people who had made great contributions
to PSPC through their lives, as well as the story of
the Boys' Brigade 1st Singapore Company.*





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An overview of the history of PSPC

Proclaiming Salvation to the Malays

The Gospel was brought to Singapore by missionaries in the 1800s. One such missionary was Benjamin Keasberry, who came to Singapore in 1837. Keasberry had spent his childhood and young adulthood in Java, and was able to speak Malay. He had a burden to reach out to the Malay people, and when the missionaries left Singapore for China in the 1830s and 1840s, he elected to stay on as an independent missionary so that he could continue his work among the Malays. He preached in Malay at the Mission Chapel of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and in 1839, started a boarding school for Malay boys in Rochore.

The Malay Chapel, 1843

In 1843, Keasberry was able to raise sufficient funds to build a small chapel in Kampong Bencoolen, the Malay Chapel. More than 60 Malays and others were present at the opening service. Services were carried out in Malay. In addition to the Malays, there were other groups of people who also worshipped at the Malay Chapel. These were the Straits Chinese, who also spoke the Malay language, and the girls from the Chinese Girls' School nearby, led by Miss Sophia Cooke.

Rev Keasberry passed away in 1875, in the very chapel that he built. Rev William Young, an Elder of Orchard Road Presbyterian Church ministered in the church from 1875 until he retired to England in 1885, due to ill health. He was assisted by three other Elders from the Presbyterian Church – Colonel Samuel Dunlop, Inspector-General of Police, William Pickering, the first Protector of Chinese, and Charles Phillips, the Superintendent of the Sailors' Home.

Proclaiming Salvation to the Straits Chinese

When Rev JAB Cook of the English Presbyterian Mission took over the Malay Chapel from Rev Young, most of the Malays had returned to their old religion, and many of the Straits Chinese had moved to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Mission. There were only 16 members of the Malay Chapel, who placed themselves under the care of the English Presbyterian Mission at Rev Young's request. In 1886, the

English Presbyterian Mission purchased the Malay Chapel from the LMS.

The Straits Chinese Church

The name of the church was changed from the Malay Chapel to the Straits Chinese Church. The congregation, which was now predominantly Straits Chinese, slowly grew, and by 1895, it reached 45 members, sufficient to be organised into a congregation. On 8 August, the first meeting of the Deacons' Court was held, and the first Session meeting was convened the next day. The church members were divided into 3 districts under each of the three Elders – Song Hoot Kiam, Charles Phillips and Tan Boon Chin.

As Rev JAB Cook was responsible not only for the Straits Chinese Church but also other Chinese Presbyterian congregations that he had started, lay people played an important role in the church. All three Elders were regular preachers, preaching in both Malay and English. Song Hoot Kiam led the singing at chapel services. Charles Phillips translated many English hymns into Malay and he, together with Tan Boon Chin and Song Hoot Kiam's son, Song Ong Siang, compiled the Malay hymn book Puji-pujian for the church.

The Straits Chinese Presbyterian Church - 1931

In 1930, the original chapel was demolished, and in its place, the current sanctuary was built. The building was completed in 1931, and was the venue for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church and 30th anniversary of the Synod in that year. It was at around this time that the church added the word "Presbyterian" to its name.

Proclaiming Salvation to all - Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church - 1955

By the 1950s, the name Straits Chinese Presbyterian Church had become an anachronism. Most of the new members in the church were not Straits Chinese, and the babas themselves were losing their distinct identity as they assimilated with other dialect groups through marriage. The church no longer conducted services in Malay. The name Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church was adopted in 1955 by referendum. This was a natural choice, as even in the 1800s, the church had been referred to as the Prinsep Street Church. The foundation stone for the current sanctuary which was laid in 1930 reads "Prinsep Street Church (Straits Chinese)".

Dr Jou Bienming, a Deacon in the church, gave the church a Chinese name, 基督教长老会磐石堂 (jī dū jiào zhǎng lǎo huì pán shí táng) or "Christian Presbyterian Church of the Rock". Dr Jou, formerly a professor in Amoy University, had come to Singapore to lecture in the Chinese Studies Department of the then University of Malaya. The characters 磐石 were chosen because they sounded like "Prinsep" and yet their meaning of a rock is significant as its long history has made it a rock indeed, for personal and Christian community growth in Singapore.

[Sources: extracted from Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church: 150 Years of Faithfulness, 1843-1993, and In His Good Time, Bobby EK Sng (2003, 3rd edition), pg 84]

77 Prinsep Street

As one walks into the church today, it is startling to realise that less than 20 years ago, the sanctuary looked quite different. The doors opened on to verandahs on either side, and the tall windows along the walls of the sanctuary could be tilted for ventilation. Behind the sanctuary, the four-storey annexe that comprises the rest of the church building is only about 25 years old.

Over the years, the building in the church grounds have changed to meet the different needs of the time. These changes also reflect the different phases of the church and its ministries. One way to follow the history of the church is to trace the changing landscape at 77 Prinsep Street.

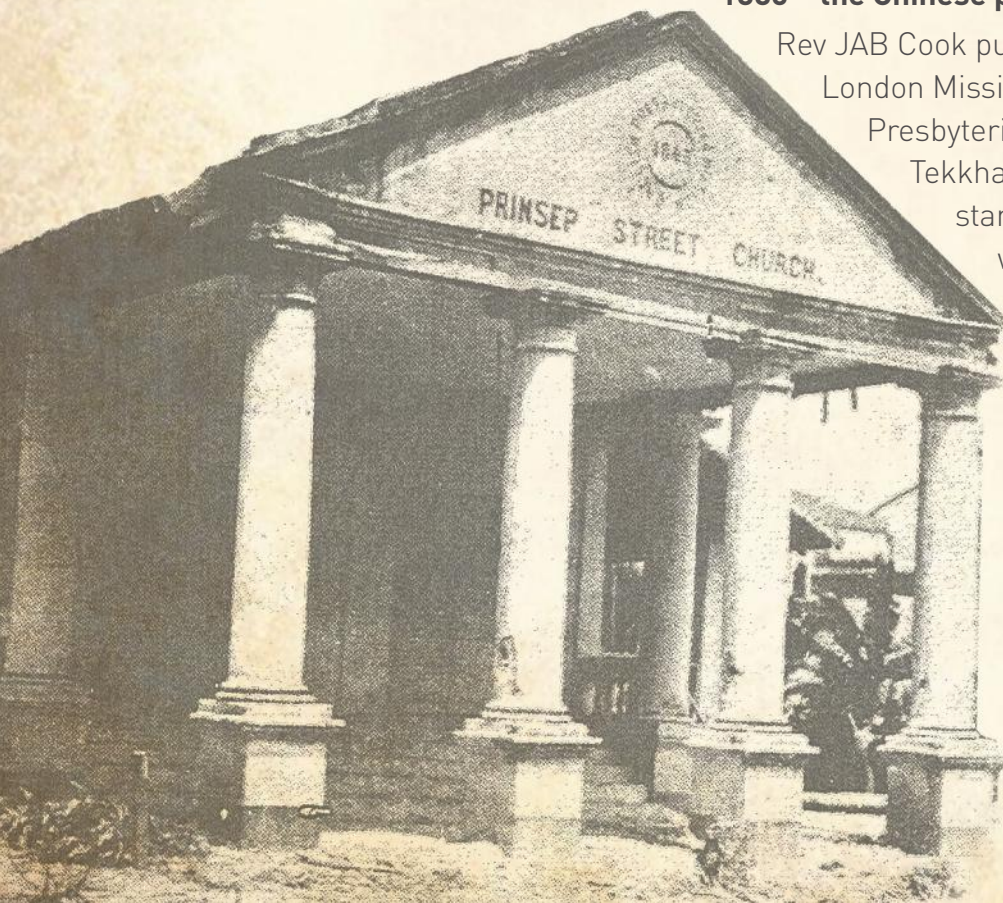
1843 – the Malay Chapel

Benjamin Keasberry built the Malay Chapel in 1843, with subscriptions raised from the residents of Singapore. It was also known informally as Greja Keasberry (Keasberry's church).

1886 – the Chinese preacher's quarters

Rev JAB Cook purchased the property from the London Missionary Society for the English Presbyterian Mission. The Teochew Tekkha congregation which had been started by Cook shared the premises with the Straits Chinese worshippers, holding Teochew services in the chapel.

A home was built on the church grounds for the Chinese preacher, and a Widows' House for the Chinese Tekkha church was also built next to it.





1904 – The Widows’ and Orphans’ Home

Men in the few families that existed in Singapore were ravaged by disease because of the lack of public health and passed away at an early age leaving their wives and children destitute. This led the Straits Chinese Church to build a Widows’ and Orphans’ Home in 1904. The home occupied the upper floor of a two-storey building.

The ground floor, known as the CCA Hall, was used for the Chinese Christian Association (CCA). Victorian bookcases which lined the Hall had Christian books as well as the writings of well-known English writers such as Charles Dickens. It was used as the meeting place of the Straits Chinese Reading Club, as well as the Friendly Band and the Sunday School Bible class.

1930 – The new sanctuary

The Malay Chapel, which was almost 90 years old, was torn down and replaced by the present sanctuary. The foundation stone for the new sanctuary was laid in 1930 by Song Ong Siang. However, the church had already established a building fund for this purpose 30 years earlier in 1901.

The building was designed by CJ Stephens, from the firm Swan & Maclaren. Distinctive features included the use of red brick and the raised brickwork which formed a tower and belfry along the centre of the gable wall. Along the axis was a simple altar transfixed at the lower middle part of the façade. It comprised a cross and a canopy.

The rebuilding cost \$55,000, and when it was completed in 1931, there was still a debt of \$10,000 outstanding. The debt was finally paid off in 1937.

1947 – The Institute Hall



After the war, the Chinese pastor of the Tekkha Church moved to new premises at 142 Prinsep Street. The pastor’s house was replaced with an Institute Hall, to serve the needs of the Boys’ Brigade (BB) and the Sunday School, and later the Girls’ Brigade (GB). It was a two-storeyed building, with one large hall upstairs for activities and three rooms downstairs for classes.

1959 – The Manse and Social Hall

In the 1950s, the church expanded, due in no small part to the BB and GB ministries as well as the youth ministries. More space was needed. Under the leadership of Rev Henry Poppen, the Institute Hall was pulled

down in 1958, and in its place a three-storey building with a Manse and Social Hall was erected. This also provided more rooms for the kindergarten and Sunday School, as well as the BB and GB.



1989 – The rebuilding of the manse and Social Hall

In the eighties, the Tamil Methodist Church wanted to purchase the state land between their church and PSPC for its expansion. The Land Office asked if PSPC wanted to contest this purchase. The church did so successfully, and bought half of the land from the government. This was timely, as it enabled the church to accommodate the needs of the growing congregation and the many ministry activities that had sprung up.



In 1986, at the Annual Congregational Meeting (ACM), approval was given to construct a larger building. Rev Joe Mock drove the first pile into the ground in June 1988, and in 1989, a new four-

storey building was completed, with a multi-purpose hall, rooms for the kindergarten and Sunday School classes, a library, manse, office and a roomy kitchen. Services were held at the multi-purpose hall in addition to those at the sanctuary.

1996 – A larger, air-conditioned sanctuary



The sanctuary had been built at a time when air-conditioning did not exist. For some time, the leadership had considered installing air-conditioning

in the sanctuary, but held back because of the possibility that the sanctuary could be gazetted as a national monument. A motion to install air-conditioning in the sanctuary was put forward at the 1995 ACM. This generated vigorous debate, with discussion on whether it was a wise use of money, versus the comfort of the congregation. In the end, the proposal was rejected.

The following year, the matter was again discussed at the ACM. Considerations included the need for more space as the sanctuary was at its capacity, the comfort of the members, and the failure of applications for the sanctuary to be gazetted as a national monument. The motion to renovate and air-condition the sanctuary was carried with a vote of 206 for the proposal, 47 against and 7 spoilt votes.

The sanctuary was expanded to the verandah, with the pillars forming the boundary. Glass

panels were placed between the pillars to act as new walls so that air conditioning could be installed. The number of people that could be accommodated in the sanctuary was increased.



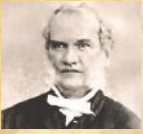
2000 – A historic site and national monument

On 12 January 2000, PSPC was declared Singapore's 41st historic site, as the birthplace of the Boys' Brigade Movement in Singapore. PSPC was also gazetted as a national monument. Thus, the church has been preserved for future generations.

The sanctuary has been built in such a way that it does not have piled foundations (rest assured, the four-storey building behind the sanctuary definitely has foundations!). As people come and go and buildings change, we look to our Lord Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of the Church, as the Church's true foundation.

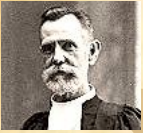


Moderators, Ministers



1843 – 1875
Rev Benjamin Peach
Keasberry

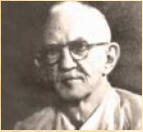
1875 – 1885
Rev William Young



1885 – 1902
Rev John A Bethune
Cook



1902 – 1935
Rev William Murray



1925 – 1926 | 1931 – 1932
Rev AS Moore Anderson



1936 – 1942 | 1947 – 1951
Rev Thomas Campbell
Gibson



1939 – 1942 | 1945 – 1946
Rev RL Richards



1942 – 1945
Rev Cheng Sen Chu

1946
Rev John Nelson



1951 – 1952
Rev Harry K Johnston



1952 – 1955
Rev John JK Lu



1956 | 1966 | 1972
1973 – 1977
Rev Peter PK Hsieh



1956 – 1959 | 1960 – 1962
Rev Henry A Poppen



1962 – 1966
Rev Gilbert Lum



1966 – 1969
Rev Vernon Hoffs



1969 – 1972
Rev Douglas Anderson



1972 – 1977
Rev James Seah



1977 – 1983
Rev Carl E Blanford



1979 – 1981
Pastor Eugene Kwa



1983 – 1986
Rev John Ting

& Pastors (1843-2013)



1981 – 1984
Pastor Peter Quek



1982 – 1991
Rev Richard Ng



1983 – 1987
Pastor Wan Kum Yen



1984 – 1987
Pastor Grace Ng



1983 – 1992
Rev Joe Mock



1988 – 1997
Rev Peter Poon



1991 – 1997
Pastor Christopher Chia
1998 – 1999



1993 – 1996
Pastor Willie Chien



1994 – 1997
Rev Stuart Imbach



1998 – 1999
Pastor Andrew Wee



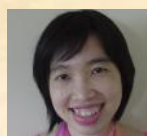
1998 – 2002
Pastor Edwin Lam



2000
Rev Thomas Harvey



2000 – 2001
Rev David Chan



2000 – 2003
Pastor Leona Boey



1993 – 1997
Pastor Peter Chan
2000 – 2012
Rev Peter Chan



2001 – 2003
Rev Donald Brookes



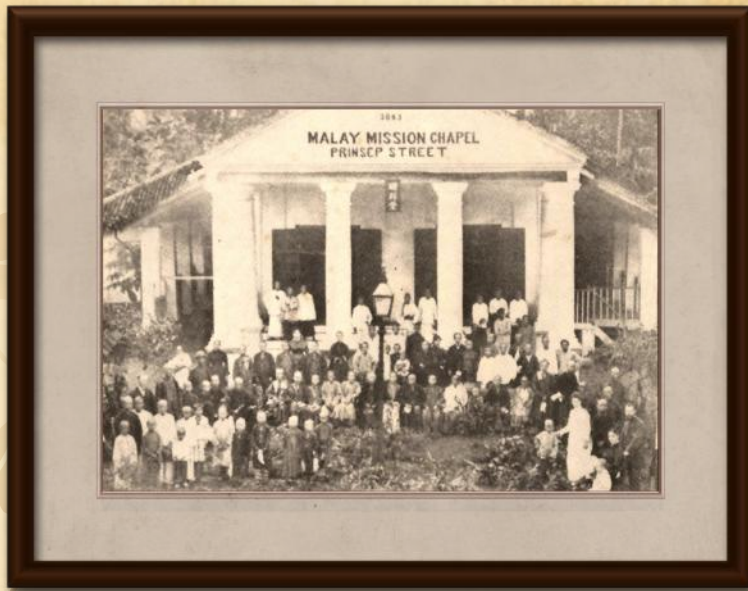
2003 – 2011
Rev Ridge Orr



2007 – present
Rev Chiam Cheng Kiat



2007 – present
Rev Darryl Chan



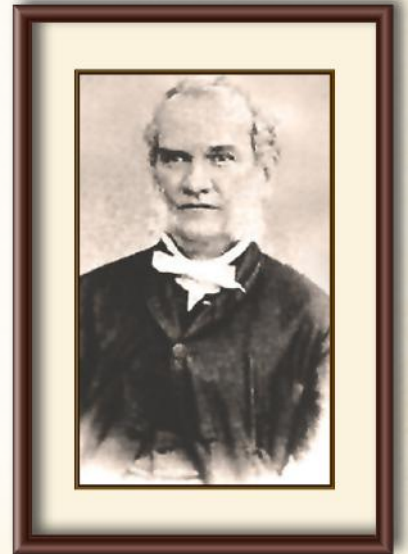
The Malay Chapel

Timeline

1843-1875

- **1843** – Rev Benjamin Keasberry of the London Missionary Society (LMS) builds the Malay Chapel for outreach to the Malays.
- **1847** – LMS directs their Singapore-based missionaries to China. Keasberry resigns from LMS and stays on as an independent missionary. He supports himself by running a printing press, the Mission Press, donated by LMS.
- **1848** – Rev Keasberry opens a boarding school for Malay boys at Mount Zion in River Valley Road. This is in addition to another school opened in Rochore in 1839. Later a girls' school is also opened, taught by his wife and daughters.
- **1853** – Rev Keasberry publishes the New Testament in Romanised Malay and compiles a Malay hymnal.
- **1856** – Rev Keasberry publishes the New Testament in Arabic.
- **1857** – Rev Keasberry starts a preaching station at Bukit Timah together with Tan See Boo, a Presbyterian, to reach out to migrant Chinese.
- **1862** – Rev Keasberry, supported by the congregation of the Malay Chapel, collects sufficient funds to build a church at Bukit Timah, now known as Glory Presbyterian Church.
- **1875** – Rev Keasberry collapses during a missionary meeting at the Chapel and is called home to the Lord.

*The story of Prinsep Street
Presbyterian Church
began with
Rev Benjamin Peach
Keasberry in 1843.*



Benjamin Keasberry was born in Hyderabad, India in 1811, the son of a colonel in the British Army. He spent his early years in Java as his father was appointed the resident of Tegal, Java in 1814. Colonel Keasberry died soon after, and his widow later married a merchant in Surabaya. After his education in Mauritius and Madras, Keasberry opened a store in Singapore, but his business failed and he returned to Java.

During this time, a close friend, who was an atheist, died of cholera. This affected Keasberry greatly, and he decided to devote his life to missions. He applied to work under William Medhurst, who was with the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Batavia (Jakarta). Medhurst carried on his original trade as a printer; from him Keasberry learnt the art of printing, bookbinding and lithography. He distributed Malay tracts and conversed in Malay with the local people.

In 1834, with a legacy from his father's estate, he went to the United States for theological studies. There he met and married Charlotte Parker. When they came to Singapore in 1837, he met some LMS missionaries and joined them. Keasberry started a boarding school for Malay boys in Rochore in 1839, and a second school in River Valley Road in 1848. His students included the sons of the Sultan of Muar and the Rajah of Kedah. Also among them were the two sons of Temenggong Ibrahim of Johore, one of whom became Sultan Abu Bakar of Johore. The Sultan always spoke of his old teacher with respect and gratitude. The Sultan contributed a yacht, which enabled Keasberry to preach the Good News in neighbouring islands. In 1858, a Malay girls' school was started, taught by his second wife, Ellen (his first wife had passed away in 1845 and he remarried in 1846), and his daughters.

With the opening of China for missions, the LMS withdrew its missionaries from Singapore in 1847. Keasberry decided to stay on and continue his work among the Malays. He resigned from the LMS and supported himself through commercial printing done at the printing press generously left behind by the LMS. The Mission Press became a major publisher in the 19th century.

In 1853, with the help of his Malay teacher, Munshi Abdullah, he published the New Testament in Romanised Malay, followed by the Arabic text three years later. He also compiled a Malay hymnal, which remained as the standard hymnal for Malay-speaking Christians for many years, as well as many tracts in Malay. In 1870, he became the president of the Auxiliary (Singapore branch) of the British and Foreign Bible Society, now known as the Bible Society of Singapore.

Rev William Murray wrote of Rev Keasberry: "For thirty-eight years he carried on manifold operations – preached on Sundays, translated the Scriptures, tracts, and hymns, managed a printing-press, conducted a day and boarding school. He helped the poor, sometimes beyond the limit of his means, and his name became a household word with all sections of the community."

Although Keasberry was burdened to see Malays converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, his most abiding work was to be among the Chinese. Together with Tan See Boo, he established a preaching station in Bukit Timah, which was to become Glory Presbyterian Church, the first Chinese

Presbyterian Church in Singapore. He also helped to raise money to build the church, and supported Tan See Boo's successor. The respect in which he was held by the Johore Sultan, who had been his student, no doubt also eased the way for the establishment of the Chinese Presbyterian churches in Johore in later years.

Rev Keasberry died from a heart attack while conducting a missionary meeting at the chapel.

[Key sources: Sunny Singapore, JAB Cook (1902), pg 26-28; The Presbyterian Church in Singapore and Malaysia, 90th Anniversary of the Church and 70th Anniversary of the Synod Commemoration Volume (1970), pg 11-13; In His Good Time, Bobby EK Sng (2003, 3rd edition), pg 50-55, One Hundred Years of Singapore, W. Makepeace, (1921), pg 238]

Hailing originally from Malacca, Song Hoot Kiam was one of the first six converts of modern Protestant missions from among the Chinese.



Song Hoot Kiam was born in Malacca in 1830. At 11 years of age, he became a student of the Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca. When the principal, Rev James Legge, left for Hong Kong, Hoot Kiam and another boy followed

suit. When Rev Legge returned to his native Scotland in 1845, he brought along Hoot Kiam and two other boys with him to learn the English language. The boys became Christians and were baptised in 1847. They were also presented to Queen Victoria.

When he returned from Scotland to Singapore, where his family now lived, his parents arranged for him to be married; however, the prospective bride was not a Christian. This put Hoot Kiam in a difficult position, pitting his filial piety against his newfound faith, as marrying a non-Christian would be contrary to Biblical teaching. He requested that the matter be put off until a Christian bride could be found. His father was very angry. Nonetheless, Hoot Kiam did marry a Christian woman, Yeo Choon Neo, a former pupil of the Chinese Girls' School. In time, his parents also came to know Christ. Hoot Kiam is said to be the founder of the

oldest Christian Straits Chinese family in Singapore.

He worshipped at the Malay Chapel, working with Keasberry. He was a constant and ready preacher, and led the singing at chapel services. He also served as the church treasurer and was one of the first three Elders of the Straits Chinese Church when it had its first Elders' meeting in 1895. Under his influence a number of young men joined the church and served with great faithfulness, including Tan Kong Wee, Tan Boon Chin and Foo Teng Quee.

In a eulogy, the Straits Chinese Magazine described Song Hoot Kim as "...neither rich nor great, but he was a specimen of the best type of Chinese character. Sober, persevering and conservative, he was a mighty rock to his family...He toiled on quietly and in hope and faith, raised up sons and daughters to worship God, and to work for the kingdom of Heaven."

Hoot Kiam was thrice married and twice widowed, and he was survived by nine daughters and five sons. Today, some of his descendants continue to worship and serve actively in PSPC.

[Key sources: Sunny Singapore, JAB Cook (1902), pg 19-20; One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore, Song Ong Siang (1923), pg 76-79, Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church: 150 Years of Faithfulness, 1843-1993]

*An Elder of the Straits Chinese Church,
Charles Phillips translated a large number
of English hymns into Malay which
was used by the congregation.*

Charles Phillips was sent to Singapore in 1864 when he joined the army. He had a great desire to spread the Gospel, having been influenced by the teachings of John Wesley. He joined the Malay Chapel as he was attracted to its outreach activities. Phillips was one of the Elders of the church, and preached in both English and Malay. He helped Keasberry to produce the Malay hymnal, and translated a large number of English hymns into Malay. He also took a deep interest in the work of the Chinese Christian Association from the time of its inception.

Charles Phillips' work extended far beyond the Malay Chapel/Straits Chinese Church. He helped another layman, Philip Robinson (the founder of the Brethren church in Singapore as well as Robinson & Co) to run a Sunday School, and encouraged other churches to do the same, leading eventually to the formation of the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist schools. The sight of many young men wandering around aimlessly also prompted him to start a Christian Institute, organising wholesome activities and talks on the Christian faith. In 1872, he was appointed the Superintendent of the Sailor's Home. Besides his work with sailors, he also visited prisons and hospitals. Though a quiet, unassuming man, of a gentle, kindly disposition, he was courageous when fighting for any person or

cause he thought it his duty to champion.

Phillips, a Wesleyan, was also responsible for bringing the Methodist Church to Singapore. He wrote to Archbishop Thoburn, a Methodist missionary in India in 1883, explaining the opportunities for Christian outreach. Two years later, on 7 February 1885, Phillips had a dream that Thoburn and a group of missionaries were on a steamer approaching Singapore. Although he had no word of any impending arrival, the dream was so vivid that he rushed down to Tanjong Pagar Dock. According to one member of the party, William Oldham, "On reaching Singapore this strange episode occurred: There had been no opportunity to notify Mr Phillips of the Bishop's coming, nor did he know anything of the others of the party. But when the steamer reached the dock he was there. Dr Thoburn was perplexed and said, 'How did you happen to be here, and how did you know us?' Mr Phillips replied: 'I saw you last night in my sleep. I saw this steamer coming into dock, and on it were you and your party, just these who are with you. I was therefore on the dock waiting to welcome you. Now come along: you are all four to stay with me ...'".

[Key sources: One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore, Song Ong Siang (1923), pg 59; Sunny Singapore, JAB Cook (1902), pg 28-29; In His Good Time, Bobby EK Sng (2003, 3rd edition), pg 84-85,105]

One of the heads of the Hainanese community, Foo Teng Quee served the church as Deacon and Treasurer for many years.



Foo Teng Quee was a Hylam boy who was sent to Singapore when he was eight years old. This was a common practice for those who had older brothers or relatives already in Singapore, who would be able to find employment for

them. He was employed by Song Hoot Kiam. As he showed himself a steady and intelligent lad, it was arranged for him to accompany Hoot Kiam's son, Ong Boo to school as his companion. He showed himself to be a good scholar.

Due to Hoot Kiam's teaching about Christianity and his wife's influence, Teng Quee became a Christian and was baptised. He entered the service of the P&O Company, and later joined John Little & Co as a salesman. With the knowledge and experience that he gained, Teng Quee started his own business as a shopkeeper and later as a merchant. Through hard work and perseverance, he became wealthy. In his book, "One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore", Song Ong Siang wrote of him: "His most amiable disposition and obliging nature made for him countless friends. A man unassuming and

unpretentious, he nevertheless did not allow a single opportunity in life to pass unchallenged, but made the most of his chances – which generally proved successful, more by reason of his arduous work and zealous attention than by virtue of any good luck."

One of the heads of the Hainanese community, Teng Quee served the church as Deacon and treasurer for many years. Teng Quee was a loyal supporter of Christian missions and he was known as the Poor Man's Friend as well as a public benefactor. He was always ready to help the work of the church with his extensive business experience. His most enduring monument was his service at the Widows' and Orphans' Home, which was then adjoining the Malay Chapel. It was an institution that helped many struggling widows and orphans who would otherwise have been left destitute and friendless.

Teng Quee married an ex-pupil of the Chinese Girls' School and they adopted a daughter. When he died in 1906, his funeral was attended by people representing all classes of the community.

[Key source: One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore, Song Ong Siang (1923), pg 96-98]



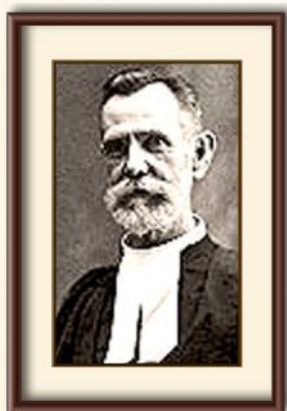
Chinese Christian Association, 1922

Timeline

1875-1903

- **1886** – The English Presbyterian Mission purchases the Malay Chapel from the London Missionary Society. Rev JAB Cook, who has been sent to reach out to the Chinese, also ministers to the Malay Chapel.
- The Malay Chapel is renamed the Straits Chinese Church, as its members are now predominantly Straits Chinese. Services are carried out in Malay and English.
- Rev Cook forms the Teochew-speaking Tekkha congregation, which meets at the Straits Chinese Church. Quarters are built on the premises to house the Chinese pastor.
- **1889** – The Chinese Christian Association is formed. The Association meets at the Straits Chinese Church.
- **1895** – Church membership stands at 45, sufficient to be organised into a congregation. The first meeting of the Deacons' Court is held, followed by a meeting of the Session.
- **1901** – Rev Cook holds the first meeting of the Singapore Synod. A building fund is started to raise funds to replace the Chapel with a new sanctuary.

Under the leadership of Rev Cook, the English Presbyterian Mission purchased the Malay Chapel from LMS in 1886. Thereafter, the Malay Chapel became the Straits Chinese Church in recognition of its growing ministry to the Straits Chinese population.



Rev John Angus Bethune (JAB) Cook was sent to Singapore by the English Presbyterian Mission for work among the Chinese. He pioneered the Chinese Presbyterian Churches in Singapore and Johore. Arriving in Singapore in

1881, he organised the Chinese congregation in Bukit Timah. He spent 1881-82 in Swatow (now called Shantou) studying the Teochew dialect. When he returned in 1883, under his leadership, the Presbyterian Mission expanded its outreach to the Chinese emigrating from China, setting up Chinese-speaking preaching stations in Paya Lebar, Serangoon Road, Tanjong Pagar and Seletar. Gospel work also spread to Johore Bahru and Muar, towns to the north of Singapore. In 1885, when Rev William Young retired from his ministry in the Malay Chapel, the work came under Rev Cook and the English Presbyterian Mission.

Rev Cook also formed a congregation of

Teochew Christians in the Tekkha district. For 43 years, this congregation worshipped in the premises of the Straits Chinese Church. It erected its own building at 142 Prinsep Street in 1929, and is known today as the Singapore Life Church. These Chinese-speaking congregations and the Malay Chapel formed the Singapore Presbyterian Synod in 1901. Later on, the name was changed to the Singapore and Johore Presbyterian Synod when churches in Johore joined. When he retired in 1925, there were 16 stations in the Chinese presbytery. A kindergarten and girls' school were also erected in the Tanjong Pagar district.

Rev William Murray said of him, "Such work as has been accomplished requires gifts of organising ability, foresight, perseverance and resolution which not everyone possesses to the same extent as Mr Cook did. It is no easy task to secure sites, draw up plans, arrange building contracts and gather funds: and at the same time to carry on regular evangelistic and pastoral work in a scattered district."

Singapore was not where Rev Cook wished to

go initially. His heart had been set on China, but he heeded his own words uttered during his student days at Cambridge: "Every man looking forward to the ministry should be prepared to go anywhere God should indicate as his sphere of service" and when called to Singapore, felt bound to act upon his own words. After 25 years, he wrote, "I at least am happy that I obeyed the call and came to Singapore."



Mrs JAB Cook (1850-1923)

Mrs Cook is one of the many wives of missionaries who gave of themselves unselfishly and without fanfare. Her main role was among the women

and children. In the early years, she was assisted by Mrs Charles Phillips, and later on, by Bible-women from China, but when the Cooks returned from furlough in 1913, she carried on the ministry single-handed.

Rev JAB Cook wrote this about his wife in a report of the English Presbyterian Mission, which was published in the Weekly Sun, 21 November 1913: "During the absence of Mrs Cook there was no one to care for the women and children. The two old Bible-women were not equal for much – one has just recently died and the other has retired. We hope to secure trained Bible-women from China to succeed them. Mrs Cook at once resumed her classes in the homes of the people and at the stations, with daily visitation. But no one

woman, however willing, can care for and train our own women – now 144 in full communion, besides the 282 baptised children and young people not yet admitted to the Lord's Table. Then there are crowds of women everywhere needing and willing to be taught. I wonder if the friends at home realise that Mrs Cook has been quietly and with unremitting toil giving herself, without fee or reward, for over thirty years in loving and devoted service for the welfare of the Chinese. She will never cease to do all that she can, but it is more than full-time for other lady workers to be in the mission here."

This is the testimony of one of the church members: "Mrs Cook went in and out among the homes of our people like a ministering angel, teaching with untiring industry and patience, sharing the joys and sorrows of others, and leading many to the knowledge of Christ by word and deed."

Mrs Cook retired in 1921 due to ill-health, and went to be with the Lord in 1923.

[Key sources: The Presbyterian Church in Singapore and Malaysia, 90th Anniversary of the Church and 70th Anniversary of the Synod Commemoration Volume (1970), pg 14; Sunny Singapore, JAB Cook (1902), pg 56-57; Weekly Sun, 21 November 1913, Page 6; personal papers of Elder Tan Kek Tiam]

Tan Boon Chin served the Straits Chinese Church for 54 years and left behind him a model of dedication and selfless service.



Tan Boon Chin was a Straits Chinese born in Malacca in 1857. He came to Singapore when he was 12 years old, to study at Raffles Institution. However, due to the death of his father, he had to leave school to work at the

age of 16. He joined the firm of Guthrie & Company in 1873 and remained there for 43 years until his retirement in 1916.

Tan Boon Chin was baptised in 1879 by Rev William Young. He became a voluntary preacher in 1886. In addition to conducting services at the Straits Chinese Church, he also helped Charles Phillips at prison services. He became an Elder of the church in 1895, and held the office of Session Clerk for almost 40 years. Along with Charles Phillips and Song Ong Siang, Boon Chin compiled the Malay hymn book Puji-Pujian for the church. Song Ong Siang wrote of him: "He is a man of great personal charm, and, in many quiet ways, has worked hard and steadily for the welfare of the Straits Chinese community, of which he himself has always been universally regarded as a most

highly respected, valued and outstanding member."

In 1880, he married a daughter of Song Hoot Kiam, and they had four sons and seven daughters. He ensured that his family and extended family always attended church services. His descendants are still actively serving in the church.

[Key source: One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore, Song Ong Siang (1923), pg 268-270]



1st Coy Boys' Brigade, 1930

Timeline 1903-1933

- **1903** – A children's service is introduced.
- **1904** – A Widows' and Orphans' Home is built, with the ground floor being used as the headquarters of the Chinese Christian Association.
- **1908** – The Prinsep Street Church Messenger, edited by Song Ong Siang is launched. The content is in both Malay and English.
- **1919** – The Friendly Band is formed to nurture the character of younger members through Bible studies, prayer meetings and recreational activities.
- **1923** – The Girls' Friendly Band is formed with Mrs J Aitken as president.
- **1924** – The first Children's Day service is held.
- **1930** – Song Ong Siang lays the foundation stone for a new sanctuary. James Milner Fraser starts the 1st Company of the Boys' Brigade.
- **1931** – The new sanctuary is completed. It is the venue for the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the English Presbyterian Mission and the 30th anniversary of the Synod. John McNeish directs the combined choirs of Prinsep Street and Life Church.
- The denomination 'Presbyterian' is added to the name of the church. However, it is popularly known as the 'Baba church'.
- **1933** – The church holds its first election of four deacons for a one-year term at the Annual General Meeting to join the existing Elders and Deacons, to introduce a more democratic form of church government.

*During Rev Murray's ministry,
membership at the Straits Chinese Church
expanded and youth work commenced.*



Born in Glasgow, Rev Murray's first encounter with Malaya and Singapore was in 1893, when he was sent to minister in St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Penang for six years. During this

time, he became proficient in the Malay language, and had the joy of baptising his language teacher.

After this period, Rev Murray offered his services to the Foreign Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England to return to Malaya and Singapore as a missionary. Thus in 1902, he was sent to the Straits Chinese Church in Singapore, succeeding Rev JAB Cook as minister. He became Prinsep's longest-serving minister, serving for a total of 34 years from 1902 to 1936. During this time, the congregation grew from 38 to 119. There was active work among young people. A children's service was started, and the Friendly Band was formed. He encouraged the formation of the first Singapore Company of the Boys' Brigade. Together with Song Ong

Siang, he carried on the work of the Straits Chinese Reading Club, holding weekly meetings for the study of English literature, for about 26 years. The current church sanctuary which replaced the Malay Chapel was built under his leadership.

Although Rev Murray had limited command of the Chinese language, he still played an active part in the Chinese Presbyterian Church. His links with the church in Penang also helped him to foster mutual understanding and concern between the Presbyterian churches. In 1935, His Majesty King George V of Great Britain conferred on Rev William Murray the Order of the British Empire (OBE), in recognition of his devotion and faithfulness in religious and social work for 30 years in Singapore. He retired in 1936 and passed away in 1946 at the age of 82.

[Key source: The Presbyterian Church in Singapore and Malaysia, 90th Anniversary of the Church and 70th Anniversary of the Synod Commemoration Volume (1970), pg 15]

Song Ong Siang was a devout Christian who laboured untiringly for God's honour and glory.



Song Ong Siang was the eldest son of Song Hoot Kiam and Phan Fung Lean, Hoot Kiam's second wife. Ong Siang won the Guthrie Scholarship for five consecutive years when he was in Raffles Institution. In

1886 and 1887, he obtained the first place in the Queen's Scholarship examinations, but was disqualified because he had not attained the minimum age of 16. In 1888, he was again the top student and was awarded the Queen's Scholarship to read law in England. After returning from his studies in England in 1893, he played an active role in community service, seeking to uplift the welfare of the Straits Chinese. A strong advocate for educational reform, together with Lim Boon Keng and Khoo Seok Wan, he campaigned for the Singapore Chinese Girls' School to be set up and became one of the members on the board of governors and its vice-president.

Ong Siang was a devout Christian and served as an Elder of PSPC for many years. He sang in the choir, edited the church magazine, and occasionally preached from the pulpit. While helping out in the Straits Chinese Reading Club, he influenced hundreds of young men who attended the club, such as former President Wee Kim Wee.

When he was the president of the Chinese Christian Association, he constantly encouraged its members to take on a Christian view of life and service. Through its fortnightly lectures, Bible classes, debates, and music and drama presentations, many young Christians were helped and a number came to the faith.

Song Ong Siang served in the Legislative Council, and was the first Chinese Captain in the Volunteer Corps. He was conferred the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1927, and the Knight of the British Empire (KBE) in 1936, which was the first knighthood awarded to a Chinese in Malaya.

He married Helen Yeo in the first military wedding for a Chinese in Singapore. They did not have any children of their own, but adopted three daughters.

His monumental 600-page book, "One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore", covers the period 1819-1919 and was published in 1923. It remains an invaluable work of reference. The proceeds from the book were donated to the church building fund to help pay the outstanding debt for the new sanctuary.

[Key sources: Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church: 150 Years of Faithfulness, 1843-1993 (1993), pg 25, 28-29, One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore, Song Ong Siang, (1923, reprinted in 1984), Introduction by Edwin Lee, pg v-xii]

The Boys' Brigade - 1st Singapore Company



The story goes that when a young Scotsman, James Milner Fraser, was walking down a street in Singapore one day, he spotted two Chinese youths wearing the Boys' Brigade badge. Fraser, who had been a Brigade boy in the 23rd Aberdeen Company and an officer in the 23rd London Company, spoke to the boys. It turned out that they were from Swatow, and were members of the 1st Swatow Company, the first Boys' Brigade Company in Asia. (According to other sources, it was the Swatow boys who spotted the badge worn by Fraser.)

Fraser had promised his Brigade commander that he would start a Company in Singapore. This encounter galvanised him into action. In his own church, the Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, boys from Europe between the ages of 12 and 18 were sent home for studies. Fraser thus chose to start the 1st Singapore Company in the Straits Chinese Church, which was in a densely populated area with many neighbourhood boys.

In 1930, with the encouragement of Rev William Murray who became the first chaplain, the Company started with 12 boys from the Friendly Band. Fraser was assisted by Staff Sargeant Quek Eng Moh, formerly from the 1st Swatow Company, and John McNeish. He went on to form a Council of captains and officers of the movement, there being five other Companies by the end of the decade.





The war years and beyond

One of the pioneer boys was Chua Siak Phuang (SP Chua). He was 15 then, but though over age, he turned out to be of such promise that he became an officer in the same Company and took over the captaincy of the Company in 1940. What is worthy of note is that SP Chua, as he was more commonly known, acted courageously during the Japanese occupation in hiding the colours of the Company in his home. The colours meant the British flag or Union Jack which if discovered, would have got him into a lot of trouble with the Japanese. SP Chua went on to become a Deacon and later an Elder of the church.

After the war, SP Chua quickly revived the 1st Company and the BB Battalion. James Fraser joined him upon his return to Singapore. Within three months of his return, Fraser led a Battalion Church Parade at St Andrew's Cathedral. New members and officers were recruited.

During the 1950s, the 1st Company was the largest and best in Singapore. At its height, the 1st Company had 200 boys. This certainly had an impact on the church, which had a capacity of 100, as the pews had separated seats. Many of the boys became Christians

through this ministry. Some stayed and are actively serving the church to this day, with their children and grandchildren continuing to worship at PSPC.

Challenging times

In the early 1960s, a six-day week was implemented in schools. The BB consequently suffered as parades could not be held on Saturday afternoons but only on Saturday evenings. Numbers in the BB shrank rapidly and there was a time when the numbers in the 1st Singapore Company went down to what could be counted on one hand. Neighbourhood children were now staying in new towns and no longer in the Prinsep Street neighbourhood.

At one point, only two boys turned up for the parade on Saturday. Elder Lee Soo Ann, the captain of the 1st Company, was tempted to close down the Company, but seeing the faces of the two young boys, Richard Ng and Ho Hong Hwa, dissuaded him from that move. The Company continued, and one of the Boys, Richard Ng, went on to start the 34th BB Company in Si Ling Secondary School, under the Woodlands ministry which would eventually become Adam Road Presbyterian Church. Truly the Lord is faithful when we are faithful.

In the late 1960s, a new group of boys came from Gan Eng Seng school, forming the backbone of the Company for the next 30 years. Later, another group of boys came from Kim Seng Technical School. The Company enjoyed very good years in the 1980s with a Company strength of 70, and 20 boys for the Junior section.

Becoming school-based

From 1991 - 1995, the 1st Company adopted Kong Hwa Primary School as its base. However, being a primary school, there was only a Junior section, and the boys did not continue in the BB when they went on to secondary school. In 1996, the 1st Company was based in Pioneer Secondary School, a new school in Jurong West.

On 12 January 2000, PSPC was named as a historic site of Singapore by the National Heritage Board, as the birthplace of the Boys' Brigade movement in Singapore.



Several of the members of the 1st Company have served as the Singapore Brigade President. These include Elder SP Chua (1958-1964), Fok Tai Loy (1976-1978), and Elder Lee Soo Ann (1979-1982). Winston Choo became the Honorary President of the Brigade in 2012. In 2013, Elder Ho Yew Kee became the President of the Boys' Brigade in Singapore.



At the helm, as the Brigade President and Honorary President, are two former Boys of the 1st Company, one of whom, Ho Yew Kee, is an Elder still actively serving in PSPC as well as at the Synod.

The BB story is a story of perseverance in difficult times and of God's faithfulness. Through the Boys' Brigade in PSPC, the Lord has transformed many lives.



The legacy of the late Elder SP Chua

by Elder Ho Yew Kee



In 1930, two significant foundation stones were laid at 77 Prinsep Street. On 5 March 1930, Sir Song Ong Siang laid the foundation stone for the rebuilding of the current sanctuary building to replace the original building. However, slightly less than two months earlier on 12 January 1930, the late JM Fraser, founder of the BB in Singapore, laid a spiritual foundation with 12 Boys who formed the Boys' Brigade 1st Singapore Company. The late Elder SP Chua (fondly known as SP) was one of those 12 boys. He was 15 years old when he joined the Company. He would one day become the successor to JM Fraser, taking over his captainship in 1940 and holding that captaincy till 1958.



SP was one of the first few non-commissioned officers (NCOs) of the 1st Company and was awarded the King's badge, the highest award in the BB at the time. SP served God and His kingdom first as a Boy in the 1st Singapore Company, then an NCO, an officer, the Captain, the President of the BB Battalion, the first and only President of the Boys' Brigade in Malaysia and Singapore, President of the Pacific Regional Fellowship of The Boys' Brigade, and he completed his service as the Honorary President of the Boys' Brigade in Singapore before he was called home to the Lord on 24 April 2010.

SP was always focused on the BB ministry and he treated every BB Boy like his son. Many years later, all these Boys would always call themselves "Chua's Boys" and when they were in SP's presence, they would fondly call him "Captain Chua" even when they were in their 60s, 70s and 80s. This is a testimony of the impact that SP made on the lives of his Boys.

As the Captain of the 1st Singapore Company, President of the Battalion and Brigade, he walked with kings, governors and presidents for the BB. SP was always a worthy representative of the BB ministry.

SP was ordained as an Elder at PSPC in the 1950s and he became the first of generations of BB Boys who would go on to become Elders at PSPC arising from the ministry of the BB. The legacy of SP includes the late Elder Dr Chiam Joon Tong, Elder Lau Teck, Elder Dr Lee Soo Ann, Elder Arnold Tan, Elder Dr Lawrence Chia, Elder Dr Lee Chiang Tee, amongst others and in recent years, the younger Elders, Elder Dr Aaron Tan, Elder Jack Lum and myself.

In SP's archive, there is a letter from JM Fraser to his protégé dated 28 December 1959. The founding Captain wrote a letter of commendation to the man who had been his Boy since 1930 and was then 44 years old - 28 long years of friendship and partnership in God's kingdom amongst Boys. This was also his farewell to his beloved Boy and he wrote:

"I have the pleasure of testifying to the character and ability of Mr Chua Siak Phuang (SP Chua) whom I have known since he joined the 1st Singapore Company of the Boys' Brigade in 1930. Mr Chua was one of the original boys and one of the first NCOs of the Company. He served through the ranks with enthusiasm and

efficiency and in due course, became an officer in the Company... he was largely responsible for the revival of the Company after the Japanese Occupation, when his enthusiasm and hard work did much to revive not only the Company, but the Battalion in 1946. At the beginning of 1958, he became the Battalion President... Mr Chua has a unique record of service and loyalty to the Boys' Brigade and the Singapore Battalion. He had worked tremendously hard for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom amongst the Boys of Singapore and is a trusted and acknowledged leader in youth work, respected by the members of his own and other organisations alike... His service was characterised by hard work and intense loyalty and application to duty. His conscientiousness and reliability brought him many difficult tasks, and if there was a hard job to be done, Chua was usually selected for it. He undertook these duties cheerfully and carried them out with great acceptance... As I have to leave Singapore, I have asked Chua to look after the BB in Singapore on my behalf. May God grant him strength doing it."

The legacy of SP lives on in the ministry of the BB in Singapore which now has 6,500 Boys and 1,000 officers in 113 Companies in 2013. The life of one man invested in God's Kingdom has become a cornucopia of blessings for generations. May the life of SP inspire many more individuals who will give of themselves freely and fully to the LORD and His work.





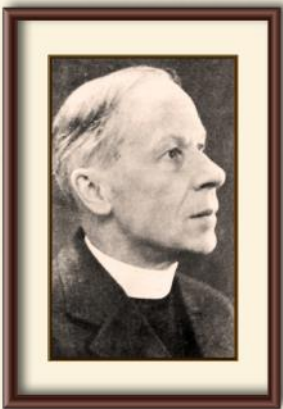
Girls' Life Brigade, 1952

Timeline

1933-1958

- **1935** – Rev William Murray is conferred the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by King George V.
- **1936** – Song Ong Siang becomes the first Chinese Malayan honoured by a knighthood by His Majesty King George V.
- **1937** – The debt for the new sanctuary is paid off. The church starts a Minister's Stipend Fund for the church to call its own minister in the future.
- **1938** – Margaret Dryburgh modernises the Sunday School.
- **1942** – Japanese Occupation – Rev Gibson and Rev Richards are interned as prisoners-of-war in Changi Prison until 1945. Rev Cheng Chu Sen of Life Church steps in as interim moderator.
- **1945-1947** – Church activities which were suspended during the war resume – the Friendly Band, Boys' Brigade, Sunday School, and the Messenger.
- **1947** – Rev Gibson starts a Church Rehabilitation Fund for the repairs to the church building which was damaged by bomb splinters and mortar shell.
- **1948** – Trinity Theological College (TTC) is started, with Rev Gibson as a founding member.
- **1949** – TTC starts a kindergarten on the premises of the Straits Chinese Presbyterian Church.
- **1950** – The 7th Girls' Life Brigade is formed under the leadership of Mrs Quek Khye Kee and Mrs Lily Chiam.
- **1952** – Rev John Lu is called to be the church's first full-time minister in its 110-year history.
- **1954** – The management of the TTC kindergarten is transferred to the Straits Chinese Presbyterian Church.
- **1957** – the name of the church is changed to Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church by referendum.

Under the wise and able leadership of Rev Gibson, the spiritual life of the congregation revived and the spirit of loyalty developed.



Thomas Campbell Gibson was born in Swatow (Shantou), China in 1887, the son of a pioneering Presbyterian missionary. After his education at Glasgow University in Scotland and theological training

at Trinity College, the Presbyterian Church of England appointed Gibson to Swatow in 1912. He became the principal of Bue-li Theological College in Swatow. His main work was to prepare people to become ministers for the Swatow Presbytery.

After 20 years of ministry in Swatow, he moved to Singapore in 1932. For the next 20 years, Singapore was to become his home. He was appointed to work in Singapore and Malaya by the Presbyterian English Mission and in 1936, upon the retirement of Rev William Murray, he became minister of the Straits Chinese Church. Under his wise and able leadership, the spiritual life of the congregation revived. In 1937, a minister's stipend fund was started for the church to be able to eventually call its own minister, and in 1938, the church building debt for the sanctuary was finally paid off.

During the Japanese occupation of 1942-45, Gibson was interned in Changi Prison. In his three-and-a-half years of internment, where he endured physical, mental, emotional and spiritual agony, he had a vision of a revitalised church at Prinsep Street and the establishment of a theological college in Singapore for the training of pastors for local churches. There in the company of the leaders of the Anglican and Methodist Churches who were also imprisoned, the idea of Trinity Theological College (TTC) took root, this seminary to be a union effort by these two denominations and the Presbyterian Church. TTC was formed in 1947 and has since produced many of the pastors in these three denominations in Singapore as well as in Malaysia.

After he retired in April 1951, aged 64, Rev Gibson continued to serve the Lord in a small Presbyterian church on the English border with Scotland until shortly before his death in 1967.

[Key source: The Presbyterian Church in Singapore and Malaysia, 90th Anniversary of the Church and 70th Anniversary of the Synod Commemoration Volume (1970), pg 16]

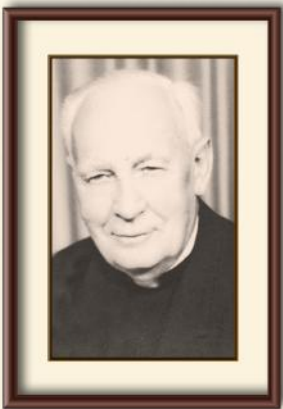


Deacon's Court, 1966

Timeline **1958-1983**

- **1959** – A Minister's Training Scholarship Scheme is announced. The only recipient is Yeow Choo Lak from Katong Presbyterian Church. He eventually becomes a lecturer at TTC.
- **1973** – Pastor James Seah leads the Youth Fellowship from seven members to over a hundred; the Fellowship is subdivided into Senior Youth Fellowship and Youth Fellowship.
- **1978** – There is a great spiritual awakening during the Billy Graham Crusade. Church membership increases and the spiritual life of the church revives.
- **1979** – PSPC purchases a property at 25 Adam Road.
- **Early 1980s** – PSPC starts having annual Missions Conventions.
- **1983** – PSPC stages Joseph the Dreamer, a large-scale musical, at Victoria Theatre.

Although Rev Poppen was already in his late 60s when he came to PSPC, having served many years as a missionary in China, he had a deep influence on the congregation.



Henry A Poppen, born to adventure and hardship, began his life on September 29, 1889 in a little sod hut on the wind-swept prairies of Kansas. Shortly after, his father moved his family of eight children to the more generous

farmlands near Sioux City, Iowa. Henry attended Northwestern Classical Academy in nearby Orange, Iowa, then continued his studies at Hope College in Holland, Michigan where he met Dorothy Trompen. Together they planned their future of service to Christ, choosing China as their area of endeavour.

Upon graduation from Hope College, Henry spent a year at Princeton Theological Seminary, and graduated from Western Theological Seminary in 1917. At this time he and Dorothy were appointed to China, but before leaving, he spent one year as an Army YMCA Secretary with the Michigan and Wisconsin troops stationed in Waco, Texas. In 1925 he received his Th.M. degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. Hope College conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1941. During 1952-1953 he served as President of the General Synod

of the Reformed Church in America and was enrolled in the 1954 edition of Who's Who in America.

On 12 June 1918 Dorothy and Henry were married and set sail for China. Upon arrival in China, together with Dr Henry De Pree and Dr Clarence C Holleman, the inland mission station was opened in the City of the Dragon's Cave at Longyan, Fukien (Fujian). In those early years as an itinerant missionary, he was responsible for the work in five counties where he traveled on foot more than 300 miles each year over the mountain ranges in this large area. In the city of Longyan, the work also involved building three missionary residences, a hospital (the Fagg Memorial Hospital), and a boys' school.

This pioneer missionary work in the inland region was temporarily interrupted in 1929 by the coming of Mao Zedong, who made his long trek from the south of China to the north. Mao, who was the President of the People's Government, often made raiding forays into the various cities and villages. On one of these raids, he went into Longyan where the Poppens and the Hollemans lived. Mrs Poppen, Mrs Holleman and their children barely escaped with their lives.

The years of his service, from 1918 to 1951,

were characterized by violence, revolution, civil and international war, world chaos and internal strife. In spite of this he and his colleagues kept up the work. Dr Poppen was interested in the production and distribution of Christian literature. He also did a considerable amount of translation, serving as Secretary of the South Fukien Tract Society where he served for seven years. He was the pioneer in newspaper evangelism in China and served as war-time Secretary of the Amoy (original name of Xiamen) City YMCA in 1938 to 1940. He was also engaged in educational work in Talmage College and served as an instructor in the South Fukien Theological Seminary from 1946 to 1951.

The outbreak of hostilities between Japan and China brought a new and difficult challenge to Henry. During the attack on Amoy by the Japanese, thousands of Chinese fled in panic to Kulangsu, the international settlement opposite Amoy City. 60,000 refugees from Japanese militarism settled there. At the request of the Kulangsu Municipal Council and the local Chinese community, he served as Executive Chairman of the International Relief Committee. He distinguished himself by organising and administering relief to these needy and harassed people.

Following the disaster at Pearl Harbor in 1941, Henry was interned by the Japanese. Henry's reward for two years of service to his Chinese friends was two years in Japanese concentration camps in Kulangsu, Amoy and in Shanghai.

Dr Poppen was repatriated in 1943. From 1944 to 1945 he taught the Amoy Vernacular in the United States Navy School of Oriental

Languages in the University of Colorado at Boulder. In late 1945 he again left his family and returned to China, this time inspired with high hopes that a new era full of promise lay ahead, now that peace had come. He was located in Changchow, an interior city 30 miles from the coast and directly opposite Formosa (current day Taiwan). There he undertook a large programme of operations. Upon the completion of his work there, the Communists overran China and all missionary work was soon forced to stop. Because of his leadership in the Christian movement in South Fukien, he was singled out for a target of special attack. Insult and calumny resulted in a public trial before a People's Court composed of 10,000 Chinese. He was falsely accused, convicted and condemned to deportation. After spending several days in prison, where he languished in solitary confinement, he was sent to Hong Kong by ship.

In 1955 the Malaya Synod of the Chinese Christian Church invited the Poppens to Singapore. There Henry served as Chairman of the Mission Council, and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Trinity Union Theological College. Both Dr and Mrs Poppen spoke fluent Mandarin and Hokkien. His particular responsibility was as overseer of the oldest Presbyterian Church in Singapore, now known as Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church and the establishing of a chapel in the area of the South China Sea under the aegis of the Chinese Synod of the Church of Christ in Malaysia.

Ministry in PSPC

Despite his age he was full of vitality. He worked zealously and expected others to do

so too. During his tenure, an Adult Fellowship was formed, and cottage prayer meetings were held in the homes of members. A group called the Bereans, who took their name from the new testament Christians who were keen on studying the scriptures (Acts 16:11) met weekly for Bible study. He also increased the number of Elders from four to eight. Rev Poppen oversaw the replacement of the Widows' and Orphans' Home with a Manse and Social Hall in 1958-1959.

The Poppens returned to the USA in 1959 but came back to Singapore a year later. Their decision to return to PSPC was "made not with their heads but with their hearts. Through the letters they received from Prinsep they could feel strongly the love Prinsep had for them." This time however, the Poppens were in their 70s and by late 1961 it was evident that ill health especially on the part of Mrs Dorothy Poppen would make their stay a short one.

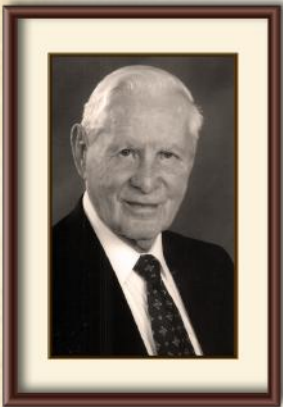
In 1962, the Poppens returned to America and Henry took on the role of the Minister of Visitation and Senior Citizens activities at the Garden Grove Community Church in California, USA. Rev Poppen continued to be involved in the life of PSPC and recommended the next two ministers, Rev Gilbert Lum and Rev Vernon Hoff, both also from the Reformed Church in America.

On November 29, 1972, Rev Henry Poppen went home to be with the Lord and was buried in Crystal Cathedral Memorial Gardens.

[Text extracted from the order of service for Rev Poppen's memorial service and the book: Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church: 150 Years of Faithfulness, 1843 – 1993.]



Rev Blanford initiated annual missions conventions in PSPC, resulting in several members being involved in missions.



I was born on June 17, 1922, at Newport, Idaho, the oldest child of David A Blanford and Agnes Keck Blanford. At the time, my father was working as a sawyer (a person who saws wood) in the logging industry. He

later worked in a lead and silver mine in Kellogg, Idaho, and after that was a furnace operator in an aluminum mill in Trentwood, Washington. I had four younger brothers and a younger sister.

I attended grade school and middle school in Kellogg, Idaho, then attended high school in Post Falls, Idaho. During my high school years, I worked after school and on Saturdays at the local weekly newspaper office, The Post Falls Advance. I graduated from Post Falls High School as the valedictorian of my class in May 1939.

Through the introduction of a friend, I was accepted at Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington, and given the opportunity to work my way through college, in the college print shop. I began with a business administration major, but changed to a social science major

after deciding to go into Christian ministry. I received a BA degree in 1943.

I entered Princeton Theological Seminary in the fall of 1943, and graduated in 1946 with an M.Div. degree.

At Whitworth College, I met Muriel Ausink, from Selah, Washington, and we were married in Yakima, Washington on June 14, 1946.

We applied to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church USA for service in China, and were appointed for China in January 1947. From July 1946 to June 1947, we served at the Calvary Presbyterian Church in Stockton, California, a Japanese congregation. I was associate pastor, ministering to the Nisei section of the church.



After six months of Chinese language study at Yale University, we sailed to China in January 1948. Our assignment was to Hainan Island, but the mission decided that we should

continue our Mandarin language study first in Peking (now Beijing), so we went directly to Peking and studied Chinese there until November 1948. It became evident that the Communist Army would soon take Peking, so we left and went to Hainan Island.

We spent the next two years on Hainan Island, continuing our study of Mandarin and beginning to learn the Hainanese dialect. The Communists took Hainan in April of 1950, but we remained there until January of 1951, when we requested permission to leave China. Our oldest son Bill was born in Hoihow, Hainan, on November 20, 1950.

We proceeded to Hong Kong, where we waited for a transfer to Thailand. We arrived in Bangkok in May 1951, and were assigned to work with the Seventh District (Chinese) of the Church of Christ in Thailand. Our first assignment was to Hatyai, in south Thailand, to work with a Chinese church that had been started by a Chinese pastor from Malaysia in 1945, working with the Chinese Presbyterian Churches of Singapore and Malaysia. That pastor moved to Bangkok in 1947, and the church became part of the Chinese Presbytery of the Church of Christ in Thailand. At that time the population of the town was predominantly Chinese, and Mandarin was the common language. So I could immediately begin working in Mandarin.

I stayed in Hatyai until May 1963 (with furloughs in 1953 and 1959). Notable in those years was the number of Chinese young people who felt called to Christian ministry. About 20 of them attended Bible Schools and seminaries in Bangkok, Chiangmai, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan. Many are still in active ministry at this time (1999).

Our second son Ron was born on furlough in Yakima, Washington on September 20, 1953. Our third son Mark was born in Hatyai on 7 January, 1956, and our daughter Miriam was born in Hatyai on 9 September, 1957.

In May 1963, I was asked to move to Bangkok as a temporary replacement for Rev Clifford Chaffee who was leaving for furlough in the US. This included being the interim pastor of the Sapan Luang Chinese Church and interim principal of the Bangkok Institute of Theology. Upon Chaffee's return to Thailand in May 1964, he continued as principal of the Institute of Theology, and I was assigned to pastoral work with the Sapan Luang Church.



Muriel was diagnosed with breast cancer in August 1962, and had a radical mastectomy that year, followed by radiation treatment. There was a recurrence of cancer in 1965 and she died in August that year. We had four children, three sons and a daughter. Muriel's mother, Mrs Tracy Ausink, went to Thailand in March 1965, and lived with us during Muriel's illness. After Muriel's death, I asked Mrs Ausink to stay in Bangkok and help me manage the household and care for the children, which she did until April 1968.

The Hatyai Church built a new sanctuary and Christian education unit in 1966. The Sapan

Luang Church built a new middle school, which opened in May 1967. So those few years were a time of growth for the two churches I was connected with. I personally did much of the fund-raising for those two construction projects. A third major construction project that I undertook with the Sapan Lung Church was a three-story addition at the front of the church property. This was completed in July 1972.

Through the introduction of the Rev Peter Hsieh, Secretary of the Bible Society in Singapore, I became acquainted with Miss Lily Chia, of Malaysia, and we were married on April 25, 1968, at the Sapan Lung Church in Bangkok. Rev Clifford Chaffee was the officiating pastor, and Mrs Mary Chaffee sang at our wedding. Lily came from a Teochew Chinese family, speaking the same language as the people of the Sapan Lung Church. She was English-educated, but also knew Malay and several Chinese dialects. We have two daughters, Carol, born in Bangkok on October 11, 1969, and Lois, born in Bangkok on October 28, 1971.

In January 1977, I received a call to become Senior Pastor of PSPC. We accepted, even though it meant leaving the Presbyterian Mission organisation, and going on local church support in Singapore. But the opportunity for ministry among English educated young people in Singapore was great, and the six years we had in Singapore were the most fruitful of my life.

In November 1982, the First Presbyterian Church of Seattle extended a call to me to become an Associate Pastor on the staff there. So I resigned from PSPC, and began ministry in Seattle in March 1983. I officially retired in March 31, 1990, but continued in a part-time relationship as Pastor Emeritus until June 1999.

We moved to Westminster Gardens in December 1999, where we are enjoying life in the company of many friends and former colleagues.



Epilogue by Lily Blanford, 2013



We moved to Duarte, California in 1999 to live at Westminster Gardens. After a few months of worshipping in different churches, Carl was asked by the Executive Presbyter of San Gabriel to serve as liaison to the Capstone Chinese Church and the Village Presbyterian Church. Carl's duties were to preach once a month in Chinese and act as their advisor. It was very satisfying for him to encourage and walk with Rev Bob Huang as he successfully completed his M.Div. degree, became ordained, and was called as Pastor of the Capstone Church. For the last eleven years of Carl's life, he had the privilege to baptise many converts into the family of God, the oldest being a 90-year old woman from Taiwan.

Our beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, pastor, teacher, guide, friend, and faithful servant of Jesus Christ went to be with his Lord and heavenly reward April 13, 2012 at 3:14 am. We will miss you so very much. You have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, and you have kept the faith.

"Like a farmer who sees his fruits well ripened and prudently hastens to gather them that they might not be the least bit spoiled, so dost Thou also, O Saviour, gather Thy chosen ones who have laboured righteously."

Grant rest, O Lord, to the soul of thy faithful servant, Rev Carl Blanford.



[The article is also found in the website of the Capstone Chinese Presbyterian Church, California, USA.]



PSPC, 2013

Timeline

1983-2013

- **1983** – Rev Richard Ng leads a group to start an outreach ministry in Woodlands - the Woodlands Ministry.
- **1984** – A group of PSPC members start a tuition outreach ministry at 25 Adam Road.
- **1989** – The church purchases a strip of land at the back of the property; a four-storey annexe is built to replace the Manse and Social Hall.
- **1990** – The Lighthouse Ministry, originally the Senior Sunday School, is started for youths aged 13-18.
- **1992** – PSPC sends out its first full-time missionary. The Woodlands and Adam Road ministries merge to form the Woodlands-Adam Road Ministry (WARM).
- **1993** – The Adam Road property is redeveloped. The 7th GB Company goes into recess.
- **1996** – The 1st BB and 7th GB Companies are attached to Pioneer Secondary School. The PSPC sanctuary is renovated to enlarge its capacity and to install air-conditioning.
- **1997** – Adam Road Presbyterian Centre (ARPC) is granted the status of an independent congregation.
- **2000** – PSPC is gazetted as a National Monument and declared a historic site, as the birthplace of the Boys' Brigade movement in Singapore. Whampoa ElderCare Centre is started with PSPC as one of the anchor churches.
- **2013** – PSPC is registered as a society. Rev Darryl Chan is the first member of PSPC to be called as the Senior Minister. PSPC receives in-principle approval for the extension of the lease beyond 2022.

Rev Richard Ng was PSPC's first home-grown pastor who played a key role in planting a daughter church, now Adam Road Presbyterian Church.



Rev Richard Ng Kin Chye was born in March 1954. The eldest son of a family of traditional Chinese idol and ancestor worshippers, Richard first came in contact with Christianity when his sisters brought him to PSPC

to join the Boys' Brigade (BB) when he was 10 years old.

At 14, Richard heard Dr GD James at a Gospel Picnic organised by the Youth Fellowship of Faith Methodist Church and accepted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. He continued serving in the BB (eventually assuming the captaincy

of the 1st Company) and was also actively involved in the church especially in the area of youth work. It was also in PSPC that Richard met two good friends, Rev James Seah and Rev Carl Blanford, who were his spiritual advisors and mentors.

Richard had been trained at the Singapore Polytechnic for a career in civil engineering. However, after his National Service, he responded to the Lord's calling of full-time ministry. It was with great difficulty that Richard approached his father for permission to go this path. In the words of Elder Koh Eng Soo of PSPC, "His (Richard's) carefully rehearsed speech failed him; it just could not come out of his mouth. His father saw the tears rolling down the corners of his eyes



and (he) was touched and gave Richard his blessing.”

Richard became the first member of PSPC to go to Bible college (Singapore Bible College). Upon graduation in 1982 with a Bachelor’s degree in divinity, he became the first-ever home-grown pastor in PSPC.

In 1983, PSPC received an invitation from the Presbyterian Welfare Services (now called Presbyterian Community Services) to start a church planting work in Woodlands. With a pioneering spirit, Richard took on this challenge with a team of 16 church members.



Under his charge, a Youth Action Group (YAG) was formed, The Children’s Club, followed by a BB company in two schools and a GB company. Richard married Florence in 1987 and Sapphire was born in 1989.

In 1989, Richard, Florence and Sapphire took a year’s sabbatical in Canada. (During this period, Chris Chia graduated from Bible College, returned to Singapore and together with Rev and Mrs Stuart Imbach, continued the pulpit ministry in Woodlands, in Richard’s absence.) While on sabbatical, Richard wrote this to his Woodlands congregation:

As the year 1989 and the 80s decade draws to a close, and as a new year and the 90s decade dawns, let us be mindful of the priceless gift

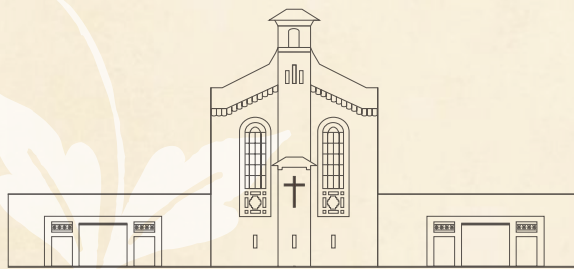
of life. ‘For me, to live is Christ. To die is gain,’ says Paul. ‘My will is to do the will of Him who sent me,’ says Jesus. What would you say is your life’s destiny? It is not how long you live that matters, it is how well! With the understanding of the brevity of life and suddenness of our departure from the planet, let us learn to live well. Live daily! Live in spontaneous response to our God who loves us so much and so deeply that He has made us, out of the whole universe, to be the object of His love.

In June 1991, Richard was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. His first operation was in late June 1991 and the doctors said he had perhaps two to five years to live. Richard passed away on 23 August 1991.

Richard’s favourite Bible verse was “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.” Hebrews 2:3.

We thank God for Richard’s missionary and evangelistic zeal that grew the Woodlands Ministry from 16 to over 60 in 1991. It was his passion for the Gospel that manifested itself in his tireless loving, discipling, nurturing and encouraging of his flock, bearing fruits in the lives of countless many who continue to live out their lives faithfully to the glory of God even today, and beyond. To God Be The Glory!

[This article written by Ruth Lau, first appeared in the ARPC 25th anniversary commemorative book, 25 years at 25 Adam Road and reprinted in PSPC 170th anniversary commemorative book.]



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