



# **HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

## **TESTIMONIES OF CANDIDATES FOR BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION OF FAITH AND TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP**

**16 DECEMBER 2018**

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# **BAPTISM**

## GOH JIE-REN

Growing up like most children born to a Christian family, I saw Christianity as cultural, not personal. Like friends that went to the mosque or temple, church was just my version of a mosque or temple. The bible, to me, was just a fancy storybook. Even when I graduated from kindergarten and moved on to Praise House and “My First Book of Bible Stories” became the “The New Adventure Bible,” Jesus was a storybook character. I hadn’t yet realised that Jesus was THE storybook character, but that was much later on. Christianity soon became a chore in primary school; on early Sunday mornings, I was always dragging my feet to Sunday school. I remember hiding around church with my elder brother to avoid it. Christianity was also a burden to me. There was the guilt for forgetting to bring the bible study book or bible to Sunday school, but more “importantly,” not being able to watch my favourite Sunday morning cartoons.

Looking back, I see that it really is by God’s grace that I eventually took ownership of my faith, because the attitude I had about church continued even as I moved to Powerhouse. At that time, I was still attending Powerhouse regularly, but more to meet friends rather than to meet God. Then, as my parents gave me more freedom, I realised that church wasn’t necessary to hang out with friends and began questioning why I bothered with church in the first place. I thank God that he put good Christian role models in Powerhouse for me and kept me going to church to find out more rather than abandoning Christianity altogether. I’m sure we all know a friend or family member whom we are still praying for that left the church when they had questions about the faith. Thankfully, God urged me to take CG more seriously and I slowly began to be convicted of my sinfulness. God led me

to see how Christ's sacrifice was necessary for my salvation.

Growing up, I was never a particularly bad child, but usually obedient out of duty or obligation. Behaviour-wise, I don't think that there was much change. But the attitude with which I approach people and things is now vastly different. Fully understanding God's love for me, I did the same thing as before, but now out of love for God and His people rather than seeing it as an obligation. I think serving in ministry helped me realise the difference between the two. When I was initially forced into doing sound/PA for service (thanks, Pa), it was always an obligation because I signed up for it, kind of like piano classes for those of us forced to do it when we were younger (thanks, Ma). But then, I began to understand that doing sound/PA was not just an action to be carried out, but to help lead the congregation to praise God and, ultimately, my act of worship to God as well. So now with the assurance that I have in Christ, I can live with confidence that God is on my side, so long as I look to Him and that His spirit is with me, even when I don't always obey Him. God has allowed me to see things from an eternal perspective, and I pray that I may continue to keep it till Christ comes again.

## **TAN JIA XING, BELLE**

### My Background

I grew up with a Christian background, my parents are both Christian and I regularly attended church every Sunday morning when I was young. Since young, my parents taught me the principles and basis of being a

Christian. For me, it was something I was familiar with, prayer before meal was a daily habit, attending morning service was a weekly ritual. Reflecting upon it now, it does show my sense of immaturity towards Church, God, and Christianity in general. I merely treated it as a formality, practices that I did because of my family.

### My Trial in the Journey of Christianity

It was only after Primary 6 that challenged my faith. We left my current church, due to conflicting doctrines, and started looking for a new church. It was hard for me to adapt into those new churches; I stuck close to my parents, attending adult services with them rather than Sunday School. Since then, I dreaded going to church because, to me, it was a place that I was uncomfortable and lonely. It was then that I had a realisation, for what purpose was I attending church? Did I truly believe and have faith or was it because I was used to following my parents? The question made me ponder for a long time, which was the reason I fell out of church and Christian faith. I did not attend church at all, neglected reading the bible, and my life revolved around school and secular friends; yet ironically, I still call myself a Christian to anyone else who asked. During this time, I lived happily, but never satisfied. I suffered from a lack of self-confidence, yet to everyone else, I put on a façade of uncaring to hide my insecurities. Worse, seeing all my Christian friends finding their path and being so confident, maturing in ways that I'm lacking, made me feel so lost as to where I was heading.

### Coming back to God

After living like a nomad for at least 7 years, I had an awakening of some sort. I was in London when I attended a Sunday service with a friend. There I met other youths and they asked me what religion I believed in. I felt

ashamed in proclaiming I'm a Christian when I obviously don't live as one. Yet, I told them I was a Christian "technically". It was then they ask what it means that I'm "technically" a Christian. I was slightly stumped; my first thought was that being a Christian means that you've gone through the baptism. However, I have yet to take that step. Hence, I couldn't be called one. Yet, why did I insist on being a Christian?

That night, I read the bible for the first time in a long while. It was in Ephesians Chapter 4 that I found an answer. I called myself a Christian because, since young, I have been taught "*in him in accordance with the truth that is Jesus.*" In a way, I was blessed because I grew up in a Christian family. Even when I did not acknowledge it, God is always with me, guiding me and protecting me. The values and beliefs that I held to my heart, all stem from God and the Bible. Hence, when I came back to Singapore, I decided to attend church again. However, this time, not for the sake of people, but because of God. It was the first step to know Him again and accept Him into my life, becoming more serious in committing to Him. After that awakening, certain aspect has begun to change gradually. Every time I'm worried, I find myself praying for God to ease my anxieties; whenever I feel angry or upset, I ask God for patience and gratefulness. Although I still have insecurities and many flaws, I am slowly understanding why all my Christian friends seem so mature and confident. It is because of God, not because of any individual man that I can feel at peace.

During this baptism class, one question revolves around my mind. Do I truly believe and not just simply knowing? In Hebrews 11:1 "*Faith is the confidence in what we hope for, and the assurance about what we cannot see.*" Ever since praying and reading the Bible, I understood and

believed that God works in my life, it just came to the point of accepting Him. I used to think that being a Christian means you'll have to jump through a lot of hoops, regardless of what I was taught that God still loves everyone equally. However, now I understand that it is not a requirement for one to travel through fire to prove he/she is a Christian, but rather because of God, I am willing to travel through fire, knowing He will keep me safe. For me, that is more than enough to establish my faith and commit myself to Him.

# **CONFIRMATION OF FAITH**

## **RENEE TAN**

I have, in a way, “known” Christ all my life since I am a second-generation Christian. Attending Sunday school classes since young, I always assumed that I knew Christ, until I started going to Powerhouse.

When I first started going to Powerhouse, I started to realise that my understanding of Christ, and Christianity itself, was very limited and barely scratched the surface. However, from Secondary 1 to Secondary 2, there was a long period of time I rarely attended Powerhouse on Saturdays due to other external commitments. I felt rather detached from my religion outside of Church, although I would verbally claim to be a Christian.

Fortunately, my parents took the opportunity to sign me up for Powerhouse Youth Camp in 2016 and I initially unwillingly attended it. God really opened my heart to Him and touched me during the camp through the love and warmth the other youth gave me. I realised I had been blindly following this faith without truly understanding it and had not been acting the way a faithful Christian should, especially one who supposedly has known Christ her whole life. I started attending Powerhouse much more often and started to see my life slowly changed as I grew closer to God.

I became much happier and was less easily swayed under bad influences from my peers. Before the youth camp and before I started to regularly attend Powerhouse, I was insecure and felt that I had to “blend in” with my clique of friends in my new class. I chose to seek assurance in my friends by always yearning to please them, whether it meant I was behaving in a manner God would consider right or not. On the other hand, after getting to know Christ

better, I decided to devote myself more to this faith and be more mindful of the way I behaved with my peers outside of Church. I learned to be my own person, by behaving more like a Child of God and considering what my actions may portray myself as a Christian to others. I felt more genuine and managed to find more time for God. God helped me to discover my strengths which helped me boost my confidence in myself, and this helped me to make close friends. I have since then always been actively trying to show God's love and mercy through my actions to hopefully bring more of my non-Christian friends to Christ.

Christianity started to play a vital role in my life ever since I found Christ "for real" in 2016 in helping me make both big and small decisions. I have found it much easier to stand by my morals and beliefs because I want to honour God and stay true to Him.

I feel that going through a confirmation of my faith will give me a boost of confidence in taking the next step in my journey as a Christian, and help me to proudly pronounce my faith even when I may face any sort of persecution.

# **TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP**

## **CHANG WEN JIE, JAMES**

I grew up in a Christian household, steeped in bible stories with Sundays spent in Sunday school. Tradition does not automatically equate to a realized faith, however, and reflecting on my own walk has shown me it is really a journey of sanctification, one that has to be together with the Christian community.

It was in the in-between of primary and secondary school that I began to understand my faith better. Sunday school had given me a good foundation to understand the gospel message, but it was only after joining Powerhouse that I started asking questions about my faith and understanding what it really meant to be saved. Still, the road was a rocky one as I was still growing as a person and social standing in school was a huge influence on my life. I pursued social recognition and security in my friends much more vigorously than the gospel-centered life. My community in church was helpful, however, and in Secondary 3, I was able to put those social wants behind me and become more confident in my identity as a Christian.

The story doesn't end here, though (does it ever) - at the end of Secondary 3, my family decided to move to the US for the next three years. The next three years would be a trying time for my faith. I was confronted again with the same insecurities as before. To make matters worse, I found it hard to find a community in our new church. The three years were without motivation and growth.

Thankfully, the Lord had graciously laid a season of growth. When I came back, the community at HPC welcomed me, and my friends roped me along for a

season of growth. It's truly in the Lord's wisdom that He says to gather together as one body, for we really do need the encouragement of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. In NS, the Lord had also laid plans for my growth as a person; there were many times that the path seemed too intentional to have been given by chance. The experiences in NS and early university helped me grow and be convicted of my faith again. Through short-term mission trips and times of service in the Church, I saw the Lord's leading and direction and I can only give Him all the glory for what He has done.

When my family moved back to Singapore, my dad was called to serve at Bukit Batok Presbyterian Church. As it was where my parents were worshipping, I decided to be confirmed there. I have, however, always been committed to the community at HPC, and I foresee myself continuing to serve and contribute to the community, even though I am based in Indonesia for now. I have therefore decided to transfer my membership here, and look forward to walking together with my brothers and sisters in Christ as we spur each other on in this journey of faith.

## **KOH CHIN GAY**

I have been a Christian for 29 years and, until about eight years ago, a convinced dispensationalist. It might have been a little surprising that I became a member of the Presbyterian Church more than five years ago, after being won over by Covenant Theology. What is more surprising, however, is that my family and I should leave a congregation that we had become familiar with since becoming Presbyterian and to now become a part of another Presbyterian congregation that I had only learned about this year itself and unfamiliar with before.

Faith, the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen, is precisely what my Christian journey and that of my family has been about. The faith of the Bible promises God's people true blessings both now and forever but, at the same time, it also demands a huge cost from disciples of Jesus. For instance, the Bible tells us that if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? And so the voice of God's Word from passages like this had beckoned my wife and I to respond in our own personal ways before, one of which was deciding to homeschool our children when we saw that that was the best thing we could do to prepare them for life. It was a risk. The risk that faith entails. Yet the certainty of God's blessings came in ways that defy our imaginations as our children continue in primary school in a state that we feel was best for their spiritual formation. Even so, God's voice continues to beckon us to have faith in Him.

This year, as the voice of God continues to urge me not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed, I was to experience how it is like to have my faith stretched beyond its breaking point. To follow Jesus and to be like him is not difficult; it is sheer impossibility. Just having to be meek and humble, counting others more significant and looking out for the interests of others would have made it way easier, humanly speaking, to live as a nominal Christian.

Yet God does not leave that option open for me. He sent kind Christians, one after another, to direct my life to become more useful than it ever was as I become part of a community that seeks to better understand the Christian faith. God's voice had showed me clearly how I ought to respond as I embarked on the next stage of my life, but at the start, the path ahead looked anything but certain. Now,

the outcome is indeed a pleasant surprise as I transfer my membership over to Hope Presbyterian Church.

I do not look forward to having my faith stretched anywhere near breaking point, but the undeniable fact remains that testing out the life of a living sacrifice has caused me in some ways to discern the good, acceptable and perfect will of the Lord, and I can only say that it was all worth it.

## **LAU MUN FAI, JOEL**

### Christian Background

My great grand-aunt brought my father to church when he was a little boy. Although my grandfather passed on when he was 6 years old, my dad was taught to sing “God Will Take Care of You.” When I was much younger, I did not understand how privileged I was to have the older generation try their best to live their lives based on the Bible’s precepts. I now understand that discipleship should start at home, and that the discipleship in my own home started 64 years ago. If my *Tai-po* hadn’t brought my dad to church, my grandmother would definitely not have done so; to those of us today who are still bringing our unbelieving nephews and nieces to church, thank you for doing so. Someone else brought my dad 50 years ago, and by God’s grace, his children are still trying to be Christ’s disciples.

Growing up in a Christian family meant that there were Sunday school friends to meet every weekend, pages of colouring to do, and that I could play catching in church after service. I guess the same still happens, only now we are catching-up.

Despite the many activities and Bible stories told to me, I began to be clearly aware of the hollowness I felt inside under what I did not realise was a “Christian Veneer,” as if something was missing in the Christian life; I could not put a finger down on it. Some have noted that adolescence is when people start to look for identity markers, and I felt a deep emptiness, as if something was missing.

### Jesus found me when I was around Secondary 2

My parents used to bring me to Christian Ekklesia which, from my understanding, was also born out of Bartley Christian Church as well. It had a great pulpit ministry for adults, but did see it necessary to disciple the youth. In Secondary 2, I decided to join my friends at Fort Canning Methodist Church. At 14 years old, I thought I would want to meet God in an Emmaus road experience. In hindsight, I would probably have freaked out if I did.

Wesley Methodist was terribly exciting. When my best friend broke out in Spanish during Church Camp, another friend started translating the Spanish into prophesy real-time, both without asking God for the gift. I told God it was the coolest thing and I wanted to speak Spanish too.

It was much later that I learnt that the yearning for identity markers like recognition, power and success do not disappear during the Christian walk. What I found myself doing instead is re-direct my yearning for a source of identity from worldly things to “Christian-sounding” ones. It was really the same thing. When my friend could speak in tongues, I wanted to speak in tongues too, so that I would be recognised, so I would have a (misplaced) source of identity.

The strange thing in hindsight is that the friend who was given the gift of Tongues isn't attending Church at the

moment – he’s busy making lots of money at a bank. But I suppose the doctrine of Unconditional Election reminds us that God isn’t done with him, or with me, or with any of us – and that surely He will lead us through the Seasons in our Lives to his green pastures and still waters.

### Very Happy to be a part of Hope Family

Writing out this reflection 16 years on after meeting Jesus has been a good opportunity to remember how Christ’s grace is sufficient – regardless of our motives and intentions, my foolish ambitions and yearning, his work of Sanctification is faithfully constant, and as his Church, he will present us blameless before God. I am privileged to be a part of our congregation to journey together as members of his body.

### **LOH EE WEN, LISA**

Being born into a family of believers, I’ve had the privilege of hearing about the gospel since young. I remember accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour at a tender age of six.

Many have that one dramatic, life-changing event that turns them from death to Christ. As amazing as those testimonies are, I do not recall such an event in my own walk. However, God is just as real to me as He is to them.

The journey of being a child of God is not an easy road and it is truly by God’s grace that I am saved. Over the years of getting to know Jesus as my personal Lord, there were numerous times that I failed Him, be it in thoughts, words or actions. But through it all, He walks with me patiently.

In moments of discontentment, he reminds me gently of his unwavering love for me. In moments of wrong, he disciplines or sends apt warning to me. In moments of worry or sadness, he sends comfort specifically through His Word. For me, it's in these 'mundane' day-to-day occasions, especially when I forget where God is or who He is, that he reminds me again and again. It is in these little assurances that I am reminded of the reality and love of our God, and how amazing it is that the God who created this world and universe would want to reach down to someone like me.

Knowing Jesus in this temporary life gives it so much more fulfilment and meaning. I am still learning everyday and experiencing all the ups and downs of this journey, but it is wonderful to walk with Him. I look forward to the future He has in store, both here on this earth and the earth to come.

## **SEOW WEI XUN**

I had the privilege of growing up in a Christian family, with parents and Sunday School teachers who built a great Christian foundation in my life. I knew God was real from a young age, and I could recall having conversations with Him. I would talk to Him, and His response would echo in my mind.

In my teenage years, that voice suddenly fell silent. I found myself speaking to the empty air and was discouraged that no response followed. I persevered in the faith, knowing that yes, the Almighty God is silent at times, and who was I anyway that I should expect the Creator of the Universe to talk to me?

But weeks of waiting stretched agonizingly into years. Throughout this time, a couple of other voices crept into my mind; the first of which suggested that perhaps the God of the Universe was too busy for me, and that His love for me wasn't quite as deep and wide as the Sunday School songs used to proclaim. Later on, another subtle voice planted another cruel thought: that perhaps, the love of God wasn't deep and wide simply because God's love didn't exist. What was worse was the deadly thought that followed. Perhaps, just perhaps, God Himself didn't exist.

At the age of 21, I was in Melbourne living a lie: I was going to church and singing praises to a God who, in my mind, was quite possibly a mere social construct -- an invention of man devised to sustain order among the ignorant, uneducated masses. I would attend cell group and serve in ministry, enjoying the friendships that came as a benefit of being in a church community, while being fairly convinced that all of us had been deceived by an imagined idea.

One Easter, the church youth group journeyed to a campsite in the middle of nowhere. During one particularly compelling evening worship session, tears streamed unceasingly from my eyes. A voice, familiar and powerful, rang out in my mind, "tonight, I will show you who I am".

An hour later, the tears had gone but the words still lingered. We went out for a walk into the pitch black Australian bush, torchlights in our hands, until we reached a clearing. The command was given for us to switch off our torchlights and look up, and as the last light went out, my eyes beheld millions upon millions of stars -- a sight so magnificent that it took my breath away.

In that moment, as I stood humbled with the heavens declaring the majesty of its Creator, the voice returned to my

mind's ear, saying loud and clear, such that I am certain I could not have imagined it: "Here I Am". Before I could even stop myself, words left my lips, loud enough for all around me to hear, "how can there not be a God?"

Today, there is no doubt in my mind that there exists a grand Creator of the Universe whose love is as deep and wide as the songs say; a King whose majesty does not prevent Him from reaching out to His lowly subjects, though we are but specks of dust in comparison to Him. This God is whom I serve, and His voice remains real in my life today. I live my life conscious of His presence and sovereign rule over this world, and I endeavour to submit to His will daily.

I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.