



A home for every child v

Vivienne Ng

is Chief Psychologist in the Ministry of Social and Family Development. She co-wrote this article with Audrey Koh, Art Producer at Beautiful/Banal and fellow volunteer with Home for Good-SG.

“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families...”

Psalm 68:5-6a



Dr Viv Thomas, Associate International Director of OM International, sharing about his experiences as a foster child.



A special consultation with Dr Krish Kandiah, President of the London School of Theology and Founder and Director of Home for Good UK.



A sharing session by Ms Alexandra Jagelman who has lived in Southwest China since 1998, started a home for abandoned children with disabilities, and ministers to children who have been abused.

Foster parents Li Ping and Joseph from Aldersgate Methodist Church recently welcomed an eight-year-old boy, L, into their home.

“I believe our foster son has flourished because he knows that every day he has a family to come home to, one that loves and accepts him. Early on, it broke my heart to learn how much L cherished eating together with us as a family – something so mundane that most of us take for granted, but for L was what he had desired for a long time,” said Li Ping.

She continued, “God uses ordinary, fallible families to do His divine work of healing in the lives of these vulnerable children. In fact, it can be in our failures that He does His work of deepest healing. I have lost my temper and behaved less than loving many times towards L. Each time, by God’s grace, I have worked to repair the relationship and to continue loving L. I believe that this is a powerful testimony to L of how a normal, healthy family functions. We fail each other, but by God’s grace we pick ourselves up, make amends and carry on loving and being there for each other.”

Li Ping and Joseph belong to Home for Good-SG, an informal Christian network that believes every child deserves a loving home.

In Singapore, about 800 children receive protection and shelter in 22 Voluntary Children’s Homes (VCHs). These children have been abused or neglected, or their families are undergoing a crisis (e.g. a single parent in prison).

Ms Lim Hui Min, a former magistrate, reflected in an article in *The Straits Times* (25 Feb 2014) that her posting in the Family and Juvenile Court brought her into close contact with a “different world”; she recounted cases where an eight-year-old was still wearing diapers, a six-year-old was sexually abused by his own father, and a 15-year-old was covered with bruise marks, burns and scars.

She observed that “Often, what determined whether [the child] was a juvenile arrest case [or] a care and protection case ... would be a question of **timing**” (emphasis added). When children desperate for a defender, a safe dwelling, or a loving family are turned away by the community, they may give up on themselves and on society, perpetuating a vicious circle.

Hence the need for the disruptive measure of separating them from their birth families and placing them in another’s care. In line with studies showing that it is in the best interests of low-risk children-in-need to be in family-based care options rather than institutional ones, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) has stepped up efforts to recruit more foster families.

who needs one

Home for Good-SG believes that the Church is well-placed, and is called, to meet this urgent need. It was conceived in August 2013, when several foster families came together to support one another and to pray for God's equipping of the ministry. It has since grown ten-fold, from four families to more than 40 families and individuals.

Presently, almost half the families in the network are actively fostering children through the MSF, with a handful fostering babies via Dayspring New Life Centre or providing informal fostering for older children through links with churches. A number of families are waiting for approval to foster, or for placements.

Also within the network are non-fostering families who provide respite care (temporary care for children whose foster parents are away or need a break), support foster families (e.g. through running errands), befriend children in VCHs or champion the cause in their spheres of influence.

Although passionate about fostering, Home for Good-SG's primary interest is that of the child. Whenever possible, we hope foster children can be reunited with their birth families. Hence, we intend to develop a group of befrienders who can wrap around birth families, so that more children can return home or fewer children need to be removed from their birth families in the first place.

There are currently about 370 children in 370 foster families in Singapore. There is great need, with 800 children still living in VCHs. And while every new foster family may be able to take in only one child, it will make a world of difference to the foster child. Our vision is to raise up 500 Christian foster families. If every church in Singapore would foster just one child, we can do it! ■

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress ...”

James 1:27a



Home for Good-SG

Our vision:

- Making fostering and adoption a core ministry of our local churches by:
 - ✓ being a support and resource group for Christian foster parents
 - ✓ praying for the needs of our foster children
 - ✓ being “champions” for fostering and adoption in our own churches and other churches in Singapore
- Raising up a pool of 500 foster parents to meet the needs of vulnerable children
- Providing support to families so that children in out-of-home care can be reunited with their families.

To find out more:

- Visit www.homeforgood.sg for testimonies and FAQs on fostering, and our Facebook page “Home for Good-SG” for news
- Join our introduction tea sessions, when foster families share experiences, happening four to six times a year
- Email info@homeforgood.sg

Photos courtesy of Home for Good-SG