

SPECIAL



Special Parents Exalting Christ's Infinite Amazing Love

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SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY

TESTIMONIES VOL. 2

MAY 2008



城北華人基督教會

Richmond Hill Chinese Community Church
9670 Bayview Ave, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 9X9

RHCCC Special Needs Ministry

Purpose:

To welcome families with children with special needs to join our church and to share the joy of living a life of purpose in the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mission:

1. To help children and youth with special needs to reach their full potential in knowing and experiencing God and in fellowship with their teachers, caregivers and other people in our church.
2. To support these families when they face life challenges in the upbringing of their children by having a close personal relationship with God.
3. To foster a loving environment in our church by increasing the awareness of people with special needs and by providing ministry opportunities for brothers and sisters in Christ to show acceptance and care to these families.



2007 Christmas Celebration



2007 Retreat for Parents

Ministries:

1. Programs and services for children and youth with special needs:
 - i) Regular Early Childhood Sunday programs with one-on-one support
 - *Children's Church (9:00 - 10:15 am) or*
 - *Children Sunday School (11:00 am - 12:15 pm)*
 - ii) Special Sunday School with curriculum and activities based on students' level of understanding and needs,
Sundays, 11:00 am - 12:15 pm
 - iii) Activities concurrent to Parent Support Group
Meetings, 3rd Saturday, 4:00 to 6:00 pm
2. SPECIAL Parent Support Group
(Special Parents Exalting Christ's Infinite Amarzing Love)
3rd Saturday, 4:00 to 6:00 pm
 - to provide spiritual nourishment and encouragement
 - to allow parents to connect and build relationship with other families going through similar challenges
 - networking and sharing of resources
 - informational & educational activities related to special needs issues
3. Support Group for Siblings

Dr. Milton Wan

(Extract from RHCCC Special Needs Ministry 2005 May Testimonies)

My younger daughter, Aurora, is 24 years old. She suffers from serious mental challenges. Her intelligence is equivalent to a two or three years old child. Besides, she suffers a number of physical illnesses. For instance, she would have seizure for no apparent cause. The most incomprehensible thing is that when she drinks plenty of water, her blood will get diluted and she will lose her consciousness.

While ordinary people take medication when they are sick, and the medication will be gradually drained away from the body, Aurora's body handles medication in an opposite way. The medication stays in her blood and would not be drained away. As a result, she will be intoxicated by the medication. It is a huge challenge to our family to bring Aurora up. Since we cannot give her any medication when she is sick, the only thing we can do is to pray to God for the healing. Having conducted numerous researches and studies on her, even the specialists from Sick Kids Hospital could not find out the cause and the cure for her.

Aurora is always under great stress mentally. Other than autism, she was diagnosed as hyperactive and emotional disorder. She hits people when she is approached. She pushes and throws things around, including food and drinks on the table. As a result, she cannot communicate with others, and let alone of socialization. The biggest pity of all is that she really likes to play with other kids. Unfortunately she would start hitting them when they come close to her. How could it be possible for anybody who would want to play with her? This makes her, my wife and myself very sad. I believe that it is very hard for my brothers and sisters in Christ to understand the challenges we face continuously on even the basic daily routines. It is a very difficult task for families to raise children with special needs. It would have been a blessing from God, if there were one morning when there was no spill of

milk from the breakfast table. It would be beyond comprehension for an ordinary family to understand these challenges.

I do not mean to complain when I talk about all these. I look back for the past twenty years after Aurora was diagnosed when she was three. I have so many different experience, thoughts and feelings. Among them, I would like to share two things with you.

Firstly, I believe that a lot of parents with children with special needs would ask a religious question. If it is a blessing from God or a curse to have a child with special needs in a family? This is a realistic question. Honestly I do not want to simply say that it is a blessing. Because if I were asked to start my life all over again with choice would I want such a girl with special needs. I would say "no" and who wouldn't.

However having been through the last twenty years, I feel that it is not a curse but a "special blessing". How could it be? My older girl is very smart. She does well in school. This is a very extreme contrast in our family. Aurora cannot even hold a pencil or a pair of chopsticks steady. I have started to realize that the plan and the blueprint that God designed for each one of us, and the "success" each one of us achieves, is so different from the ones we, ordinary people, would think. We measure success by school report cards, by career and by wealth. However children like Aurora cannot go to school and they are considered "useless". Nonetheless God sees us from the perspective of the eternal horizon and His master plan. When God measures our "usefulness", He really finds no major deviation amongst us. It is because that no matter how well we do, we are so far from His glory and His wisdom anyways. Therefore the way we measure our intelligence humanly really means nothing to God.

On the other hand, God appreciates how thoroughly we live out His plan and how well we use unique opportunities that He gives us to bless others. Perhaps this concept is a bit abstract. Take

the pawn and the rook in a chess game as examples. The rook seems very powerful and capable because it can move swiftly and far. On the other hand, the pawn seems slow and dull because it can only move one step at a time. However you know that the pawn is often the determinant of the winner or the loser of the game. God does look at the world as the entire chess game. He does not look at the rook or the pawn individually.

I believe that Aurora brings to our family a tremendous change in our spiritual live. I was told that there are brothers and sisters in Christ who love to listen to my sermons during Services as it helps them to grow spiritually. In fact it is Aurora who gives me tremendous ideas for my sermons because I have experienced a great deal when I bring her up. Without her, I am lack of the experience and I cannot give such messages. The part in the sermons that really touches hearts is not the knowledge, nor the doctoral degrees. What doctoral degrees can do is only for people to brag about themselves and to earn respect from others. People's life will only be influenced by the encouragement brought by the tearful success in the struggle and in the searching for the way out of the pain.

The source of my pain comes from Aurora. Without her, the pawn, I would have no such experience. This is God's grace to let me have Aurora and she is the reason for the good chess game that I have been playing. As such my entire life and my service to God have been blessed. From this perspective, the presence of Aurora is very valuable and a treasure to us. She is a real blessing and not at all a curse. I have learned a lesson here. Do not look at what she cannot do. Rather, it is important to look at the plan that God designed for her life and look at her through the things that God has done through her.

The second thing that I would like to share with you is my life in the Christian community. In the past sixteen years, I have lived in Canada. I have been to several churches. In these communities, the children with special needs have received plenty

of encouragement and acceptance. I really appreciate the brothers and sisters who have offered their love to my family. Frankly speaking, Aurora is hardly loveable. Many people have approached her in the past and they got scared because she would suddenly hit people hard for absolutely no reason. However, I am touched by the love and acceptance shown to Aurora by brothers and sisters from different churches, including RHCCC.

There are some godly parents who would ask their children to play with Aurora. These poor innocent children would get hit by her and run to their parents crying. They would explain to their children that Aurora was sick and ask them to understand, to accept and to care for her. I am very touched and very thankful to them because they do not see this as a burden. Rather they feel that we are all parts of a body in Christ and we have the duty to help each other out whenever there is a need. As a pastor, I would like to emphasize that the weak ones in our church should always be the ones get care for and it is our responsibility, not our burden. This should be the rule of our church.

There have been a lot of brothers and sisters who have helped Aurora. Each one of them has been willing to join our family struggle and to care for her. There are a number of them from RHCCC and they have become our best friends. Now some of their children are in universities or are already doing well in their career. I treasure the memory of those who got hit by Aurora about 10 or more years ago but still stayed on as her friends and played with her. As for Aurora, it is unbelievable that she can also keep the memories of the old days by names when those friends played with her, such as “Rachael”, “Ruth”, “Terri”, “Connie” ... As a matter of fact, children with special needs understand and appreciate those love them dearly and realize those despise them like trash. They are very sensitive to this and remember well the names of those loving ones. It seems that they are holding a mirror to reflect the true love and sincere care from people in the world. I believe that God has given great blessing to my family. Having lived in Toronto for the past twenty years and having been in

various churches, I have met very loving brothers and sisters. I sincerely appreciate all of them. I also believe that if we can support these families with children with special needs, God knows and remembers our effort. The effect will be long lasting.



Postscript

This February (in 2008), Aurora got acute pneumonia and was admitted to the hospital. After twelve days, she passed away. She finished her life of 26 years. We did not anticipate her sudden departure. The grief that Renee and I experienced was much deeper and lasted longer than we thought. It was difficult for me to take it when people tried to comfort us saying (although I knew that they did not mean harm), "Now that Aurora is gone, perhaps it is a good thing, at least your burden will be lightened." Is it true? It may be true in terms of the daily routines in the days to come. However, emotionally Aurora has left us with a deep black hole. It is so deep that our emotion has fallen to a point so low that even surprises us.

Two months have gone by, however, whenever we hear her name or see her pictures, we start crying again. Finally Renee has figured out the reason for this emptiness in our hearts. Aurora was a 26 years old "big baby". Intellectually, she had never grown to be an adult. She did not have the ability to survive or to live independently. She was totally dependent on us emotionally and this also prevented us from helping her to be independent. She was different from a normal child, who started to become an independent individual at the age of three or four. When they grow older (especially during adolescence), they gradually keep their emotional dependence away from their parents, who have no choice but to let go. As for Aurora, we did not go through this process. The dependency of a normal three year old has lasted for 26 years

for us. Now if a three-year-old child passes away, it certainly means a lot of pain for the parents based on the loss of their close relationship developed within three years. But for us, we are talking about 26 years! The emotional interdependency and 26 years of bonding is now being cut off. Our hearts are broken! The face and the voice of this 26-year-old baby have been imprinted deep down in our lives. Up till now it seems that Aurora has not left us, she is still dear to our hearts.

On the second day after Aurora passed away, I looked out the window and saw the sun shining on the snow left from the storm the night before, I wrote a letter to my dear daughter. Here is what I wrote:

See You Again, Aurora! (1981-2008)

My beloved Aurora,

At age 26, you should have been full of youthful vitality, balancing romantic love and an exciting career. But in the midst of this festive season, the Lord called you back to our home in Heaven.

I remember the day when you, at two and a half years old, suddenly had a seizure and scared the living daylights out of me. All I could do was to hold your tiny body close to me. Then, yesterday, I sat by your bed and watched helplessly as you struggled to draw each breath. For the past 24 years, I have repeatedly asked this question: if some people were born to suffer all their life, what is the meaning of their living?

Then I thought of the life of Jesus Christ. Was He not born to suffer? Didn't He die in the most painful way imaginable? I decided to remain silent.

Once, at a meeting with some seminary students, I was asked to name three theologians who had had the greatest impact on my life. I listed Hudson Taylor, the great missionary who founded China Inland Mission; and then, the Chinese theologian, Watchman Nee. But to everyone's surprise, I concluded by saying, "The third person is my daughter, Aurora, who is severely mentally challenged." Yes, my Aurora, in the eyes of this world, you were a handicapped person who couldn't even pick up a pencil to draw a circle. Yet God deliberately chose you and brought you into my life to teach me valuable lessons that I could never have learned from all my doctorate studies.

In the ancient East, a wise man once told his students, "Today I'm going to introduce my teacher to you." Everyone was anxious to find out who was the great teacher of this bright and knowledgeable man, but the wise man only took a small piece of stone from his pocket and said, "This is my teacher." While all his students were puzzled, the wise man continued, "One day, when I was in a hurry on my way to deliver a lecture, I suddenly felt a sharp pain under my foot and found a pebble in my sandals. I stopped and got down on my knees in order to take it out. As I stopped and looked around, I suddenly discovered how beautiful the scenery around me was. A little white flower next to me caused me to realize how brilliant life could be. Previously, I had rushed along on this path, but this tiny pebble caused me to pause on my way, and gave me the opportunity to take a good look at life. Now you can see why this tiny stone turned out to be my teacher!"

My dear Aurora, you're the small pebble in my life. When I was searching for fame and status, the difficulties and challenges you brought to my life and your physical weakness compelled this ambitious father to stop and reflect on his life again and again. Only then could I learn to understand the hurts of people and appreciate human dignity. Thank you, my dear child! You brought me back from going astray in my pursuit of success and achievements. Your genuine smiles and your tears without pretense constantly encouraged me to live an authentic life. Whenever I

think of your pure and simple life, I remind myself: do we really need sophisticated entertainment in order to live a life of joy and contentment? Thank you, my child, you're my great teacher!

Aurora, I have always believed that you were an angel, a suffering angel, sent by God – though you suffered so much in this world, your beauty and purity never changed. Now that you have fulfilled your mission on earth and returned to the loving arms of our Heavenly Father. My girl, your daddy is very blessed – for he has had the honor to take in an angel!

I can't stop missing you. My heart is broken. But when I think of your smiling face in heaven, I can smile too!

Daddy

(2008.02.12)



Linda Chan

The scene of Erin screaming, yelling and throwing a huge temper tantrum the first time we took her to the SPECIAL gathering is still fresh in my mind. Erin even scratched Pastor Irene's hand while she was trying to calm her down. With my heart broken and my eyes filled with tears, I had no choice but took her home.

Back then I did not know God. I dreaded every day while I took care of this constantly screaming and yelling girl. Taking Erin to Sunday School was a very challenging task. Thank God that the brothers and sisters from the Special Class are loving, supportive and patient. I believe every teacher in the class has experienced Erin's tantrum and I am very sorry about this. However they have never given up in helping Erin. God's love has been revealed through their perseverance, never-ending love and continuous prayer.

Then I joined the Louis Program and was deeply touched by the faith and the determination of Yolanda Wong in training and supporting her son with Autism. At the end of the program, I accepted Jesus as my Savior and started to learn how to pray.

God also touched the life of my husband, Alan, and opened his eyes and his heart. He saw Erin's progress and found it so amazing. The way she longs to go to church every Sunday morning is unbelievable. He decided to return to God and let Jesus manage his life.

Now we are living every day full of God's grace. We are active in church activities, such as cell group and Bible study. We enjoy the sharing, the support and the care amongst the brothers and sisters in Christ. Erin can sit quietly during our Bible study and watch the other children play. This is something we could not even dare to imagine. This is definitely a miracle. We believe that God is and will always be with us wherever we go and whatever situation we have to face. He will not forsake us. He will carry us through.



Aline Chan

My Dear Son,

A few years has passed since you learn how to do mathematics, and understand what phonetics is all about. There are "hiccups" in schooling as we understand how the communities around you are also in the process of learning how to help you learn best together with us all.

Walking beside you in these few years - I have struggled to grow and learn how to support you and your sister's schooling needs. I know that our Lord is our refuge and strength, and He is always with us when we are in trouble.

As He takes care of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, He knows that I am too weak to go through it alone. He has sent wonderful angels such as the teachers who help to guide you in one-on-one learning settings. They also help you join with your friends in play and learn how to have fun in class. They always reassure us time after time that "you can do it!" just like the rest of your peers when we are having doubts. Their professional techniques coupled with their undivided love towards you made us humble to learn and focus on how to uncover your potential!

Our church caregivers and class teachers never stopped in believing you could remember all the Bible songs and verses. They dashed to tell us when you knew the Lord had parted the Red Sea for Moses. Your teachers are one in a million and they always demonstrate kindness and love towards you. They try to get to know you better even though many of them do not have children with similar challenges such as yours.

Our Lord has also sent us a wonderful cell group who models for us what "better together", growing in prayer, love and God's Word is all about! The aunties whom you name "marshmallows" and the uncles whom you name "mushrooms" are always there to

treat you as one of their sons. I could never stop giving praises for your little brothers and little sisters from our church communities who often share candy with you, a pat on your back or stopped to say "hi". That always brought a glow to your eyes and a smile on your face.

I have many areas of inadequacies - our Lord provided your father to complement my weakness. With the help of your father's family, your wonderful grandmother, your lovely aunts and uncles – there is always support to care for you and your radiant sister.

One day, I hope that you can thank our Lord in your own words, "...If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort." 2 Cor.1: 6-7.

With this strength in Him, our family will learn how to walk along side other families in the SPECIAL group. We hope that we will know how to model to others the wonderful things God has done in our lives. We want to help guide others to learn, give families comfort in distress. We want to build a wonderful and loving home for you to find refuge and strength. Our partnership is with the Lord!

There is always hope in the Name of the Lord...I cannot do it alone.. We are "Better Together"!

May God be glorified.

His love is everlasting.

Your Mom



Edward Chu

A Challenging Special Needs Ministry

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

Matthew 14:28-31 NIV

When I look at our ministry in the Sunday Special Needs Class, we just feel like the apostle Peter who walks on the water.

When Jesus says, "Walk," he walks on the water. When Jesus says, "Come toward me," he comes toward Him.



Praise the Lord; we have faithful brothers and sisters, just like Peter. They follow Jesus' calling to serve in the Special Needs Ministry.

With the loving hearts of the brothers and sisters in the Special Needs classes, parents can worship God whole-heartedly and know that their children are in safe hands.

Serving in the Special Needs Ministry is challenging; we do not know what the classroom will be like every Sunday. In the sunny good days, children can follow the routines such as singing, listening to the Bible stories and doing the crafts; but in the stormy bad days, the whole class can become chaotic simply because of a child's unstable behavior. Sometimes we may even have doubts about our program; does it really work? Can we bring these

children to God? Just like Peter, when he saw the wind blowing, he panic and began to sink.

God's faithfulness will never let us sink. The Bible says Jesus immediately reached out His hand and caught Peter, and didn't let him sink. Similarly, when any of us feels downhearted, God will use other team members to encourage him or her. Through the regular discussion, training, praying and sharing, God has built a very strong bonding in this ministry team. Praise the Lord, His grace is sufficient for us, for His power is made perfect in our weakness.

Is it possible that people can walk on the water? Yes, it is true. The Bible clearly tells us that Jesus did and Peter did. God calls and asks you to serve in this challenging Special Needs Ministry, get out from your little boat, follow Jesus and walk on the water. Start with your "little faith" like Peter; you may not be completely successful; but you will experience God's holding you through the wind in His almighty hands.



Peggy Kam

Time really flew by swiftly. My family has been coming to RHCCC for ten years. I am thankful that I could join both Phase II and Phase III expansion celebration and was able to witness God's great and wonderful work. I experienced His presence in my life. He walks with me and carries me through every tough moment that I have had. He cares for me and grants me the hope of eternal life. He also provides me with good church leaders, and brothers and sisters in Christ. They always pray for me earnestly. My God, I am thankful to you.

My three children have been growing in Christ as well. They are under the care and guidance of their Heavenly Father. I submit them totally to God and have the peace in my heart. I just do my part as a good mother in bringing them up.

My eldest daughter has graduated from university and is looking for a job. My second daughter is also growing up healthily. She always helps me take care of her little brother. She loves him dearly. She does everything wholeheartedly, including her study. Milton has also grown up a lot. He has improved in his behavior, academic study and other areas of learning. I thank Pastor Irene and the Sunday Special Class teachers and helpers. They always try their best to teach and care for these children with special needs. Regardless of the weather, they come every Sunday morning to lead the children to worship God, to study the Bible and learn the truth. I sincerely appreciate and thank them for their dedication and support.

THANK YOU!

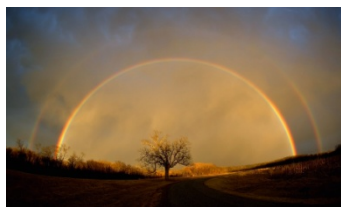
Thank You!

Thank You!

Thank You!

Andrew Lee

The Rainbow in the Valley of the shadow of Death



It was no ordinary winter for us in the year of 1998 when the doctors diagnosed that my younger daughter was autistic. I felt like falling into the valley of the shadow of death. I had not

accepted Jesus then, and at this time of sorrow, I blamed God and asked "why me?". In those days it was like living in hell. Then a brother in Christ spoke to me and touched my heart with God's good news, and I accepted Jesus as my Savior. It has now been a few years since I joined RHCCC and got baptized. In the process of conversion, I learnt from Bible studies and worship preaching about the meaning of "the way", "the truth" and "love".

Ever since the beginning of time, there is really nothing new under the sun. Changes are in matters of life, but "the truth" is unchanging. There is a time for everything, a time to be born, a time to die and a time for the four seasons. Whether it is human beings, birds, animals or plants and flowers, each has its own pattern of life that no one can change. Each individual life, no matter it is that of an ordinary man or an emperor, can both be fantastic and troublesome.

Even though I am saved, God has not answered my prayer for my "cup" to be taken away just as He did not take it away from Jesus. It is because He has His own plan for me. Nonetheless, He has given me three precious gifts. Love – I learn that He will send angels to help me at the appropriate time. Peace - He taught me to "let go" and not to worry about gaining or losing. Courage - I have the courage to live on and fearlessly face all kinds of difficulties. The outcome of success or failure does not matter now. With an obedient heart to God, I just have to try my best to face the challenges.

Through these extraordinary experiences, I learn to be strong and courageous. I am still weak at times. However by God's almighty hands, I can stand up from the fall and start all over again. This is how I can find the rainbow in the valley of the shadow of death. All of this is to fulfill God's purpose in my life.

Anthony Leung

I once heard from a very respectful Pastor speaking at the church that when our Lord Jesus told his disciples not to hinder the little children coming to Him, it was because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. The Pastor then explained to us that under normal assumption, the disciples of Jesus would not have stopped any children if they were cute, clean and well behaved. The disciples most likely had stopped those children from getting close to Jesus because they were dirty, noisy, not good looking, exhibiting weird, uncontrollable and even unpredictable behaviour, or generally perceived as ‘different’ from a ‘normal’ kid. From Luke 18: 15-17 we learned that Jesus continued to tell his disciples that ‘I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’

These children are ‘special’ because Jesus commanded us to be like them in order to enter His kingdom. Was it because of their weird appearances and behaviour or their unpredictable character?

I started to engage myself in the Special Needs Ministry six years ago. Looking after people with ‘special needs’ was not new to me because I have been doing a similar kind of job since my family migrated to Toronto 18 years ago. From this teaching of Jesus, I began to view my work as well as my ministry in the church from a different perspective. I am no longer seeing the people that I am helping or serving as ‘people in-need’, but I start to see them as the ones who will help me enter into the kingdom of God. I am seeing them as ‘Jesus’, the one who holds the key to His own kingdom, and not just treating them as my ‘clients’ or ‘students’.

I cannot claim that I have done much for these children and youth coming to our ‘Special Needs’ class. However, I can say that I have learned a lot from them through serving them every Sunday. I’ve learned from their ‘innocence’, ‘genuineness’, ‘straight-

forwardness', 'sincerity' & their 'sensitivity to God'. Only at this stage I finally realize why Jesus told us in the Bible that unless we were to become as one of these children, we could not enter into His kingdom and it is very, very true!!!

I do hope that you could join me to serve 'Him' in this 'Special Needs' class and be able to have this 'key' to enter into the kingdom of God.

God Bless!



Charlene Leung



My older brother Matthew Leung has Down Syndrome and he is one of the greatest influences in my life. He is loving, caring, talented in music, loves to swim and play basketball. Growing up with Matthew was not exactly easy but it helped to build my character. Through him, I can see God's work and love so clearly.

Ever since I was young I knew Matthew was "different" and that he required more attention. If things didn't go his way he would throw a tantrum and sometimes my parents were forced to give in. I thought it was completely unfair and I became very frustrated. It was hard for me to accept and cope with my brother's needs. I would always think, "Matthew thinks he's king of the

world! He always gets what he wants! That's not fair!" When I was upset I would blame God for "ruining" my life but by His grace I gradually understood the situation and learned to care for Matthew.

When I grew older I faced a different kind of challenge. My friends went out more often and sometimes I couldn't join them because I had to take care of Matthew while my parents weren't home. I was mad and upset that I had to miss out but God granted me the maturity I needed to put others before me. Now, when my friends ask me to go out and I have to take care of Matthew, it's become much easier to explain and accept why I can't. Sometimes I find it hard to tell my friends that my brother has Down Syndrome. Some people aren't sure how to respond or act around him. It can be awkward but generally, people are nice to Matthew. Although it's not always easy to have Matthew as my brother, I love him dearly.

It's amazing to see God's work and love for His children in RHCCC. Our family started coming to RHCCC when I was about 5 years old and Matthew wasn't very social in his Sunday School class. Many mornings, it was a struggle to get him into the classroom as he felt uncomfortable but in time it slowly got better. His helpers and teachers were very patient and caring which helped comfort Matthew in the unfamiliar surroundings. God worked through members of the church to create a Sunday School class for children with special needs in September of 1998. The Special Sunday School class became a place where my brother felt very comfortable. The helpers became his friends and today, he acts as a big brother to the younger children. Over the years I've seen many positive changes in my brother since he has been in the Special Sunday School class. Now he has taken on responsibilities, shown leadership, become more sociable and happier. The Special Sunday School and S.P.E.C.I.A.L (a support group for parents) keep growing in numbers. It's amazing to see the Special Needs Ministry of RHCCC grow because it shows that more families have

found a place where their children can learn and worship God in an environment made just for them.

I'm very thankful that God has brought Matthew into my life. Through Matthew, God has developed my character and allowed me to serve Him. My parents always do their best to make sure both Matthew and I are content. They always tell me that they're thankful God brought me into their lives and Matthew's life which is really encouraging. No matter how hard life gets, God is always there and will never give us something we can't handle. He has a reason and purpose for everything. There is a reason Matthew is my brother, there's a reason each parent was given their child. I've witnessed and experienced God's love, mercy and grace in my life, my family, Matthew and the church. God loves all His children; He cares for every single one. The world may see my brother and others special needs children as weak, but God uses the weak to lead the strong.

Catherine Lo

When I was pregnant with my son, Sze Ka, my dream was that he would be smarter than my husband. When he was one year and three months old, I resigned from my job and stayed home to take care of him. I discovered that he was with special needs. When he was two years old, the test results came out that he had autistic tendency and was hyperactive. I suffered from insomnia. I slept for one to two hours and then cried through the night for years. It took the energy to look after ten normal kids to care for him. He would not quiet down for a minute. How much tears do I have to shed? How could I endure seasons after seasons? I collapsed both emotionally and physically and was suicidal throughout those years.

Upon immigration to Canada, I read an article that there must be a Creator for this immense universe. I started going to church. Later I heard a message on Ecclesiastes from Dr. Thomas

Leung and I read it many times. The explanation in this book of the Bible about life is so true, far better than any of the philosophical books I have ever read. I began to search for the true meaning of life, read the Bible and pray.

One night I was very sad and depressed about my son's behaviors. I opened the curtain in my bedroom and prayed, "Oh God! My son is an autistic kid. He cannot communicate with us. It is very hard to teach him. I feel very painful in my heart! People in the world do not acknowledge you. Are you as heart broken as I am? I heard God answer me. "Yes, I am!"

I read the Bible and it taught me that there was no need to worry about tomorrow, just do our best for today and it will be fine. Children are the inheritance that God has given to parents, who are like stewards. We just have to try our best to help our child. The fears that no one would take care of him after we died was gone. I began to sleep for three hours, four hours and eventually up to eight to ten hours each night. I am more relaxed now when I can sleep more. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." From a very unhappy person, I have gradually found peace and joy in Jesus! Praise the Lord!

When I received my Diploma for High School completion in Canada, I was still a part-time bank teller. I prayed to God for many nights for a full time job. Then I heard God telling me, "I have a job for you. You do not have to look for it any more!" I heard this for many nights and thought that it was my imagination. So I prayed to God, "If it is you, please show me!" It felt like electricity going through my body. I was doubtful and asked again, "I am not sure, if it is you Lord, please show me again!" I felt the same electrical shock going through my body, just like what happened when I put my little finger into the electricity socket when I was small. When I woke up, I told my husband. He said, "You have been running around to look for a job for many days already. You better stop and get some rest."

Later I got an interview at a bank. After a few days, they called me for a second interview. I thought, "If I got \$18,000 per year as a teller, I will be very satisfied." A few days later, the personnel manager of the bank phoned me. She said they would hire me in the Safe Deposit Box Department. It was four thousand dollars a year more than the salary of a teller and was a more senior position. So I happily started to work there.

As I had to take care of my son and my health had not been good, I felt very tired at work. But I still tried my best. After working for six months, I heard from God again when I prayed to him at midnight, "You will get a promotion!" The next morning when I woke up, I told my husband about this and said, "Promotion? It will be great if I can pass my probation and do not get fired." But half a year later, my supervisor told me, "There is no need for you to stay in the Safe Deposit Box Department, you are promoted to a more senior position." After discussing about this with my husband, I decided to accept the offer with a raise of a few thousand dollars more.

As the new position required a lot of over-time work till 7:30 pm, it kept me very busy and stressful. My husband asked me not to stay over-time. It is very difficult for me to do so as there was really a lot of work to finish. I found his request to be a bit unusual. Then I realized my husband got Leukemia. We hugged and cried as if our marriage would end soon. Over ten times I prayed to God and said, "Lord, you know I am not able to bring up my son alone. I am a person with quick temper". Finally I heard God said, "You asked and I will give you!" The voice was very loud as if it was coming from heaven and echoed in my ears for many times. I woke up and told my husband again.

The doctor planned to have bone marrow transplant for my husband, Lemuel, and asked for tissue matching among his siblings. His older brother, Marcus, and younger sister, Ophelia, were in Canada, and both of them were a match. I was thankful that my Mother-in-law have six children and thought all of them

must match that for Lemuel. But actually his three siblings in Hong Kong and America were not a match.

Before the transplant, Dr. Lipton at Princess Margaret Hospital said both brothers were still young with good health; the success rate should be fairly high. I was a very nervous and worrisome person but after hearing this remark, I was full of hope and enthusiasm. Praise God that in spite of the difficult and windy road, eleven years had passed by, and the situation is improving. Even Lemuel is weaker after the transplant, at least his life was saved.

I learned in Job 1:21 that: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." I do not care that much about success or failure now, but have gained the joy and peace in my heart. My son has also kept improving in his condition.



Albert Ng

It is every parent's dream that his or her child can lead a successful life. We are no exception. When Philip, our older son was born in October 1984, I had a satisfying job with good income. I thought that I was going to sail through life effortlessly and began to have a happy family. However, things did not turn out as I thought. We noticed that Philip had some abnormal twitching when he was six months old. We and our family doctor did not think that it was a concern. The situation had become more severe. After a series of tests, Philip was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. He had to take medication to control the seizures. We were told

that he might have to suffer from seizures for the rest of his life. In addition, he might never be able to sit up or walk. There was a list of what he might never be able to do just like announcement of death penalty for us. We felt hopeless and helpless. We tried to live our lives as usual, but we had no joy. My wife and I often got into fights.

In May 1990, happily but fearfully, we welcomed our second son, Jason. After a series of tests, it was confirmed that Jason was a perfectly healthy boy. That was a sign of relief for both of us and we started to put our hope in this new life.

In the summer of 1992, we were on our family trip driving long distance to Vancouver. Kitty's sister lent us an audiotape, which was a testimony of a medical doctor and her son with Autism. Since we were trapped in the car for a long time, we finished listening to the tape but I did not pay much attention to it. When we came back from the trip, Kitty's sister invited her to church. Kitty started taking the two boys to the church in cabs. In 1994, Kitty was baptized. I was still using different kinds of excuses not to go with them. I thought that I had everything in control. All I needed to do was to make more money. I did not need the church and I don't believe in God. Looking back, I knew I had made a big mistake and I was like a lost sheep. As noted in Matthew 12:26, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" But God had not given up on me. I knew that it was hard for Kitty to travel in cabs with the two boys, so I started going to church with them in 1996. On Easter in 1997, I was baptized. Therefore, Easter means a lot more to me as I was born again on the same day. Hallelujah!

Amazingly, shortly after Kitty had gone to church, Philip had fewer seizures. Therefore he was allowed to reduce his medication. Currently, Philip does not need any medication and have not had any seizure for over ten years. Without the side effects from the medication, Philip has regained some of his ability

to learn. Although his intelligence is still behind, he can at least walk and climb up stairs. It has lifted a big load from our shoulders. Hallelujah!

The first church we joined was a small church. As Jason grew older as a quiet boy, he did not get much support from this church with very few teenagers. We worried that his spiritual development will be affected. Also we were the only family with a child with special needs and there was no support in this area for us. We learned that RHCCC offered a very good youth fellowship, and so we left our old church and join RHCCC. Soon afterwards, Jason settled well and made a lot of new church friends. Currently he serves on the Worship Team for the Youth Sunday Service. He is now more open and joyful. Hallelujah!

By the introduction of a sister, we got to know a brother serving in the SPECIAL parent support group and was invited to the group. In the beginning of 2006, we joined the SPECIAL gathering for the first time. Ever since then, we have been actively participating in the meetings. Later we started to serve in this group as a core leader responsible for providing care and support to a few other families. This Parent Support group is led by a caring and loving pastor, and has the support of other pastors. We are most thankful to the brother and sisters who act as caregivers for the parents as well as those who look after our children. They could have enjoyed their own life. But they sacrificed their weekends and come to church to watch our children while we are in the monthly SPECIAL meeting. Their willingness to serve and to love the "special" children and care for us as parents with "special" children is a great reflection of the unconditional and unending love from our Heavenly Father. May He reward them and bless them abundantly.

The joy in our hearts grows when we continue to serve. It is my desire to spread the good news to all my friends, especially to those with children with special needs. I will share God's love with

them and encourage them to accept Jesus as their Savior so that the curses are turned into blessings.

I thank God for our children. They have parents who love God to love them, they have not give up on their children just as God does not give up on His children. May God's kingdom be expanded, the good news spread to the end of the world, all the peoples be saved and His name be glorified. As noted in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."



Kitty Ng

God's grace is too beautiful



I am a mother of two boys. Philip, my elder son, is 23 years old and he suffers from severe Cerebral Palsy. Jason, the younger one, is 17 years old.

Before I came to know Jesus, I had low self-esteem and was always withdrawn. I experienced a lot of failure at school including demotion and being expelled from school. I started working before I could finish my secondary school education. I was always seeking the value for my life. I thought that marriage could bring me out of the "slump" in my life. In 1983, I came to Canada and got married. But sadly Philip was found to have Cerebral Palsy when he was six months' old. He depended heavily on the medication, but still suffered plenty of pain brought on by the seizures. I watched him suffer and felt so helpless. I cried and cried daily and became numb to my feelings.

Due to his illness, the progress of his learning was really slow. He could not sit up until he was three years old. I could not

help but worry about his future. How many more years could I stick around to teach and take care of him? I spent my days in fear and sorrow.

In 1990, Jason was born as a healthy boy. He did bring joy to our family. However, it also meant that my burden in providing care to the family got even heavier.

In 1993, my month-in-law came to live with us. We had problem getting along and our relationship was tense. I was living under pressure and in pain. With my sister's invitation, I started going to church with the boys, with Philip in wheelchair, riding in cabs for the handicapped.

God touched my heart with His love. In 1994, I repented and accepted Jesus as my Savior and got baptized. I had started praying for Philip's pain and asked for God's healing. Amazingly, it was about this time, Philip's seizures started to happen less frequently. Doctors began to cut down his medication. By the end of 1995, Philip was totally off all medication and had no more seizures.

Praise God for healing Philip's seizure and for curing the pain in my heart. As my gratitude towards God, I sold my jewelry, including those I got for my wedding, and offered all of them to God on Christmas day in 1995 with the approval of husband, who was a unbeliever then. I decided to let Jesus to lead me for the rest of my life. God has blessed my whole family. With God's grace, my relationship with my mother-in-law was becoming better and better. We learned to accept each other. In 1997, my husband accepted Jesus followed by my mother-in-law in 2000.

In 2005, God led our family to RHCCC. We joined the SPECIAL parent support group and have experienced love and mutual support. The ministry is well supported by the church. The commitment and care from the pastors, brothers and sisters in

Christ have revealed God's love to us. I am thankful and happy to be part of and serve in this group.

In October 2005, Philip turned 21 years old and was officially out of school or any government funding. I had to take care of him on a full time basis. I got worried and exhausted. Thanks to God, in my devotion and God used His Words to encouraged and remind me: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." Colossians 3:23. I felt all my burden were gone. I surrendered to spend my days taking care of Philip willingly and joyfully.

In October 2006, the government started a new support program. Philip was accepted into this program. Now he goes to the Day Program twice a week, which provides him with one-on-one support and joined different activities including swimming.

Praise God that His grace is so beautiful. He always provides a way for me wherever I go and whatever challenge I face. He turned me into a positive and cheerful person because of His love and I am His precious daughter. I have also found the best gift for my sons – God's love and the hope of eternal life.

Philip is still severely challenged. Physically, he has grown up to be an adult but he is still like a baby who needs to be cared for. Life is full of challenge and requires a lot of hardwork – it is bitter. However, with God walking by our side, life becomes full of peace and joy – it is sweet. As it is written in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

May those who are heavy burdened come to know Jesus and walk with God, which will bring the biggest blessing of all.



Raymond Poon

I have been serving in the Special Needs Sunday School Class for a few years. Throughout these years, God has taught me many lessons through the children, their parents and the coworkers. I have learned to totally rely on God's guidance and strength each Sunday as I step into the classroom. I have learned that each of the children has his or her unique and lovable personality. I have learned from other coworkers how to show love and patience to the children even when they don't behave as expected. But most of all, I have learned from the parents who have shown their unconditional love and patience towards their children. Thank God that I can be a part of this rewarding ministry and I hope to see more brothers and sisters serve in the Special Needs Ministry too.

Peter Sen

Testimony of "Walking with God"

I found love in distress

My wife died of cancer four years ago. I brought my sons, ages 7 and 11, back to Canada. My older son is autistic. He is non-verbal and needs round the clock personal care from others. That was the lowest point in my life but praise the Lord that I found His love when I was in distress.

I got to know God's love

Then God provided me with the opportunity to hear the good news. It helped me to reflect on my life. As noted in Micah 6:8 "...O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with you God". The biggest difference that sets Christian apart from other religions is "Love" and "Mercy". Because of this "Love", I accepted Jesus as my Savior and my Lord.

I learned about God's love

In the past few years, I learned about God's love. I learned how to appreciate the strength of others and accept their weaknesses, rather than criticizing their shortcoming. Take my sons as an example. Even they are facing different challenges, I learned to appreciate them, and not to focus on their inabilities. In spite of being autistic and non-verbal, my older son has a kind heart. He likes to be around people. He always wears his smiling face. Therefore a lot of people really like him. My younger son has big round eyes. He is an honest person. People like him a lot, too. He also has good memory and strong math skills. All of them are gifts from God.

I decided to fulfill God's plan for me

I pray everyday and am learning to walk on the path God has set in front of me. Thank God that He has always been walking by my side and opening new path for me. I started to serve the community as a volunteer. I hoped that God would use me to help other families with members with disabilities. I wanted to help them to find the appropriate social support from government or other organizations. My long-term goal is that they can have a choice to live their lives with dignity and with independency. I know this is a difficult task and is almost like walking across the Red Sea.

I will walk the rugged path courageously

I was invited to speak at an opening ceremony of a mainstream organization. I represented the parents of children with disabilities. The Minister of Children and Youth Services was in the audience. At the beginning, I did not want to accept the invitation because I did not have public speaking experience and I was not familiar with politics. Why didn't I let other people do it? After praying for several days, I decided to go. When I first got up to speak, I was very nervous. However I was burdened to speak for these families as the services for people with special needs are lacking substantially. I started talking with my trembling voice. After a while, I became calmer. Then I started speaking from the

bottom of my heart. I had the courage to say all that I had to say. After my speech, the Minister came to me and thanked me for speaking for the families. Other people also came to give me encouraging words. They also asked me about the family group that I represented.

God will make a way

If we commit all of our hearts and efforts, God will certainly provide us with a way and give us strength. He cares for us and is always with us. As noted in Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." In 4:7 "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Thank you Lord for leading more people and more organizations to serve and support our volunteer work. Before I go to any meeting or any interviews with media, I always pray for God's guidance and submit the meetings in His hands. I pray that God will provide me with wisdom so that I can share God's love with others through the volunteer work I am involved in.

And I pray:

May our work testify our God.

May God's love reach every family.

May more people join us to support those with disabilities.

May our community become more inclusive and more loving.



Stephen Wan

Never give up

I have been serving in the Special Needs Ministry for two years. I was most touched by, not the children, but their parents. I found they are full of joy every time when they drop their children off at the Sunday Special class. I wondered, "How can a family with this challenge still be full of joy?" Having served in the ministry for the last two years, I realized that the key is exactly what Jesus has taught us – LOVE.

The environment can affect these children easily. When their emotions are fluctuating, it is fairly difficult to keep them under control. There were times when I felt discouraged and I thought I have not done a good job. Therefore I have thought of leaving this ministry. However after I have calm down, I realize all I have to spend is an hour or so with these children once a week. If this is affecting me to want to quit, what about their parents? I have really not done much as compared to them. Because of love, they take care of their children 24x7. I learned from these parents to treat these children as my own and use my best effort to help them. Then I have the joy to continue serving in this ministry. I pray that God will give me more love to serve them.

Sometimes I ask God why does he allow "autism" to occur on earth. His words come to me: "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." 1 Corinthians 13:12.

What we know is indeed limited. Three years ago, my daughter was 3 years old, and all of a sudden, her left body became un-coordinated. She could not ride a bike and had hard time walking up the stairs. She could not even use her left hand to put on her mittens. After assessment by four doctors at the Sick Kid Hospital, they could not find out what exactly went wrong with her

and did not know how to treat her. She needed support for her daily routines. The church, my fellowship and my cell group were all praying diligently for her. After seven months' continuous prayer, she recovered amazingly. No specialist could explain it. But God knows everything. Therefore "do not give up".

After years of training and treatment, Carly Fleishman, a 13-years-old girl in the States, has learned to use computer to communicate with others. She wrote this message: "I would tell them never to give up on the children that they work with." Possibly this is what every autistic child want to tell their parents and their therapists, and also an encouragement for us as caregivers.

What we can do is as limited as what we know. However what I can offer on a Sunday is to spend a couple of hours with these special children and let their parents worship God without disturbance and without worrying about their children. I believe that this is pleasing to God.

I was touched by the booklet of testimonies prepared by the SPECIAL group three years ago. A year later I stepped out of my comfort zone and learned to serve in this ministry. I am thankful that I have the opportunity to share with you in this Volume 2 the joy that I have gained from the service. I pray to God that through these testimonies, more brothers and sisters will be inspired join us to serve in this meaningful ministry.



Florence & Donald Wong

Sufficient Grace



As parents of an autistic child, we are challenged in many ways while raising Justin. The uncertainties surrounding his future have been emotionally draining for both Justin and us as his parents to say the least. But with each unique situation we face, our Heavenly Father has patiently shown us His perfect will behind it all. At times, in the mist of frustration, it is difficult to understand but God's promises have been the source of our strength and his unfailing love has been the source of comfort.

Justin will be turning 13 this May. Reflecting back over the years, whether in times of despair, frustration, or in times of worry free and happy moments, we have felt God's comforting hand consoling and guiding us. We are yet again reminded of God's promise given in Deuteronomy 31:6, "... for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you". Truly God is faithful as we continue to experience His presence and guiding hands in our daily lives.

We have also seen God's love through the love of the Special Needs Sunday School teachers. Each Sunday, the mood and behavior of each child can be unpredictable. The teachers not only comfort the children from their distress, but also assure the parents so that we can have a carefree worship time in getting closer with God. This group of teachers, week in and week out, has continued to interact with our special needs children. The love and care from the teachers provide the children with the opportunity to hear and experience God's unconditional love. Many other brothers and sisters have shown us the unconditional love of God through their actions of love and support. One of them is Pastor Irene. Under her untiring support and leadership in guiding the Special Needs Parent Support Group, every child and family have deeply experienced love and care.

We have found emotional and spiritual support and have seen God's love within the family of God. Although new challenges awaits us, we hold on to God's promise in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Stan Yip



There was a report by CNN this past April on Autism Awareness. The statistics showed that 80% of the couples with special needs children end up in a divorce. This is very sad. Indeed, there is a lot of tension in the families when they have to take care of a child with special needs. They are constantly confronted with numerous challenges: children's emotional and behavioral problems, costly treatments and therapies, battles for limited government funding and conflicts resulting from different parenting styles. It really exhausts the parents emotionally, physically, financially, etc. Tension is built up constantly, setting the stage for divorce.

As Christian parents with Jesus Christ in our lives, we have to face the same challenges. With the uncertainties of our children's future, there are bound to be times when we feel depressed and vulnerable. But the difference is we can always go back to God for His comfort. He loves every one of us, including our children with special needs. Although the sky is not always blue, just as depicted in the poem "Footprints", He is always there

to carry us through the difficult time. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

You may find it impossible to "rejoice in the Lord always" as commanded in the Bible. But the Bible carries on and says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7.

For the past eight years, I have personally experienced God's amazing love and care. He did not give up on me even when I was weak. In the Summer of 1999, I was deeply depressed and even thought of ending my own life. God used a tape with Dr. Philemon Choi's testimony to shake me up. I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior in the psychiatric ward. After a few months, my wife also became a born-again Christian when we were attending a marriage camp. The Pastor and his wife honestly shared with us their experience that touched our hearts. God then sent us a counselor who had helped us tremendously. She also has the experience of taking care of her nephew with autism and she can totally relate to our struggles. This simply could not be a coincidence. It was indeed God's grace.

Two years ago, I relapsed into depression. I could not pull myself off from the couch. I did not have the energy to do anything and couldn't even sing praises to God in worship or fellowship. It was such a heart-wrenching feeling. I was blessed to have my prayer partner who kept praying for my healing during these days of darkness. Amazingly, after attending the "Louis Program" with my wife, I was totally released from the depressed mood that very weekend. I could be back to church with a thankful heart to worship God. Praise the Lord. Hallelujah! We have to learn to always count God's blessings so that we can remain faithful with God's promise during difficult times: "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor

forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."
Deuteronomy 31:8.

Dear friends, if you have not known the Lord Jesus Christ, I sincerely invite you to come and talk to our pastors. God is waiting for you. If you have special needs children and you think their lives are worthless and meaningless, you are totally wrong. God has a unique plan for every one of us. It does not matter whether we live a long life or only for a few short months, it is our eternal lives in heaven with God that matters. There you will find no tears, no sorrow and no sickness. Although to this day I'm still not able to communicate with my son the "normal" way, I truly believe that he will have perfect health in heaven. We will be singing praises to worship God together. Isn't it beautiful?



May God's blessings be with each family who has children with special needs. Amen.







Pastor Irene Cheung








I will extol the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.
My soul will boast in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.
I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.
Psalm 34:1-4

It's been 3 years since we last collected testimonies and put them together to count God's blessings. Everyone who is involved in the Special Needs Ministry continues to experience God's abundance in the lives of the families. This includes:

- ✚ Over 15 new families joined our SPECIAL group since May 2005.
- ✚ Four more sisters joined us, forming a team of 7 Caregivers for the parents.
- ✚ A few more new caregivers for students were recruited into our Sunday Teaching and Support Team.
- ✚ 45 parents or volunteers joined the "Louis Program" training offered by Yolanda Wong from Australia in 2006 and the Toronto Louis Program Parent Support Centre was formed as a follow up ministry. A mini-concert by our children was presented during the "Continuation of Blessings" evangelistic meeting. Praise God that 10 people accepted Christ in these events.
- ✚ Brothers and sisters from Paul Fellowship continue to provide childcare service when parents are meeting for their Support Group, and support the annual Christmas celebration that has grown to an attendance of close to 150 people in 2007.
- ✚ Our first SPECIAL retreat for parents was held in July 2007 with 7 couples attending. 10 couples have registered for the 2008 retreat to be held in mid-May.

-  A team of fathers worked together to renovate the church old nursery into two classrooms for our Special Needs class and other church users, with a small room to be converted into a multi-sensory room.
-  Establishment of a prayer blog and a resource blog to strengthen our prayer network and sharing of resources.
-  First official sibling group met in early May 2008.
-  Volume 2 of our collection of testimonies is completed.

Praising God for

-  **Parents** who find hope in the Lord to stand firm in their faith to bring up their children and continue to reach out to other families.
-  **Siblings** who stand by their parents to love and look after their brother or sister who are different but equally valued by God.
-  **Caregivers for Parents** who gain strength from the Lord to encourage and support the SPECIAL families to meet different needs and challenges.
-  **Caregivers for Children** who trust in the Lord for wisdom to minister to the group of students with special needs every Sunday with love, acceptance and patience.
-  **Helpers** for special occasions **from Paul Fellowship** demonstrating God's wonderful provision and their obedient response to Him.
-  **RHCCC Family Fellowships** for welcoming our SPECIAL families into their communities.
-  **All our SPECIAL children** for having taught us so much about our gracious and merciful God.

We are saddened by the sudden departure of Aurora, beloved daughter of Dr. Milton and Renee Wan, and would like to express our deepest sympathy for their loss. We appreciate the encouraging sharing from Dr. Wan during this difficult period of grieving. He has been most supportive to our SPECIAL parents. May our Lord's presence bring comfort and peace to him and his families.

Together we serve a faithful, good, and great God! **THANK YOU LORD!**

Count the Blessings!

(Extract from RHCCC Special Needs Ministry 2005 May Testimonies)

Pastor Irene Cheung

Around 7 years ago, I noticed a few boys in church with strange behavior. They liked to hide underneath the tables. Occasionally when they came near the other children, they would scare them off. It was then when the Lord opened my eyes to see His infinite amazing love for some special families.

**For he has not despised or disdained
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.
Psalms 22:24**



Let me share about how God answers our prayers and leads us on in the past few years:

- Pray for courage and wisdom to care for those children with special needs?

God's answer:

Provision of 3 sisters to start a special Sunday class in September 1998 for a few boys with Down syndrome.

- Having been in the special class for around 6 months with the teachers, these boys started to accept us as their friends, and were comfortable coming to church. We asked God how we could include them in regular classes so that they would not be "isolated", and that our other children would learn to be friends with those who were different from them.

God's answer:

Provision of more caregivers so that we could arrange for these children to join regular classes with one-on-one support in April 1999. With every new child God brought to RHCCC, He rarely delays in providing a caregiver.

- By having their children being cared for, parents were able to have a peaceful time to worship God on Sundays. What else could be done to have their burden shared by the body of Christ? We started to pray for the possibility of forming a support group for these parents in May 2000.

God's answer:

A brother, whose son has special needs, had changed from a job that required a lot of traveling to another one based in Toronto. He joyfully agreed to be the Coordinator of the long-awaited Parent Support Group that met for the first time on October 20, 2001. There were a total of 8 families.

- God brought more children with special needs to our church and the Parent Support Group grew to include 17 families by mid-2002. We prayed for God's provision of more helpers to take care of the children while their parents were meeting.

God's answer:

Starting from early 2002, brothers and sisters from Paul and Peter Fellowships take turn to look after the children every third Saturday afternoon of each month. They continue their commitment faithfully till now. A few sisters, who are Music Therapist or Art Therapist, also volunteered to lead the children in music and art activities for a few times.

- The demands in supporting these families were rising. We asked God how to proceed further?

God's answer:

4 families agreed to form a Core Group on November 22, 2002. They would set direction for the development of the Parent Support Group and plan for the monthly programs. One more family was added to the Core Group in August 2003 and two more in early 2005, making a total of 7 families. Starting from January 2005, they even handle the arrangement of childcare helpers with Paul and Peter Fellowships.

- With friendship being developed, network being established in sharing resources, and troubled hearts being lifted up by words of encouragement from each other, the foundation of fellowship in the Lord was strengthened. What else then could be the bridge to connect the members to a close personal relationship with God, the One who is able to lead them on to face life challenges?

God's answer:

Those families that did not belong to a fellowship formed a small group to join the 40 Days of Purpose campaign towards the end of 2002. On completion of the 6 Bible studies, this group continues to meet as a LTG (Life Transformation Group) in January 2003. Praise the Lord that one member accepted Christ on August 6, 2003. Within 2004, 6 brothers and sisters from the Parent Support Group were baptized.

- When the children joined the Children Sunday School summer program in the previous years, they were very nervous with the new format. What could we do to maintain a routine for them this coming summer? With the new year term in September approaching, it would not be safe for the older ones to travel to the Bayview School to join the Junior High Sunday School.

God's answer:

A team of teachers and caregivers were recruited to start a special Sunday class as from July 2003 during noon service. The curriculum and format were designed at the children's level of understanding. For those parents who join Morning service and prefer to have their child join regular Children and Youth Worship, their child will be cared for by one caregiver. We have over 20 dedicated teachers or caregivers serving with us on Sundays.

- Some of the siblings of these special needs children might be ignored as their parents may have paid more attention to the other child with special needs. How can we offer them support? We started praying for them through our daily email prayer network in August 2002.

God's answer:

We invited a few siblings to join a small group, which is a follow up support group for children from divorced or bereaved families after completion of the S.P.R.I.N.G (Single Parent-&-Kids Renewed IN God) program in 2004. With the help of the Group Leaders, children support each other to deal with losses in life and are learning to find new hope in God.

- With over 8 children and youth with special needs in a class, it can be fairly challenging when they are not cooperating. Lord, how can we help our coworkers not to get frustrated and remain committed and excited to serve this group?

God's answer:

We were introduced to one non-profit organization specialized in providing services to people with disability. They are prepared to offer us a series of training.

- The Parent Support Group has grown to 23 families by early 2005. Apart from teachers and caregivers for the children, we also need non-parent members and LTG leaders to help the Parent Support Group. How can we get more people joining us to serve these families and create an environment of love and acceptance in our church?

God's answer:

Some church members did give support, e.g. a small group from Enoch Fellowship invited the families to camping in June 2003. They served them food and other needs so that these families could enjoy their first ever camping. Paul Fellowship volunteered to do the set up, prepare food and look after the children in the 2004 Christmas celebration. The Lord also put the idea of organizing a Ministry "Open House" to bring awareness of special needs ministry among the church congregation in May.

- While we have not done much to make the availability of our special needs ministry known to the community, it is clearly God's will for us to reach out to other unchurched families raising children with special needs. They should hear the gospel and accept Jesus as the Lord of their lives. What is God's plan for us next?

God's answer:

God has been faithful in leading us to serve these families and since 1998 and has been providing all our needs abundantly. He has been opening doors and leading us all the way. As evidenced in the testimonies in this booklet, everyone involved in this ministry has been blessed to be a blessing. We can all testify God's goodness and greatness in our lives as we witness His turning curses into blessings.

There is no need to worry at all!
We can join these Special Parents
to Exalt Christ's Infinite Amazing Love.



我要向山舉目，我的幫助從何而來？
我的幫助從造天地的耶和華而來。
詩篇121:1-2

I lift up my eyes to the hills,
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
Psalms 121:1-2



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