

Evangelical Free Church of Australia

澳洲基督教播道會靈福堂

【Family Letter】



Dearest Brothers and Sisters of EFCA family,

Shalom and greetings in Christ!

God is full of grace. Over the years we have witnessed His ample provision for our church in countless different ways. We have waited five years for a senior pastor, and we saw God answering our prayers with Rev David Tse joining us this year. Praise the Lord! We acknowledge that in God's goodness and perfect timing, there are seasons for sowing and growth, and at other times, seasons of change – a natural closure of ministries, consolidation of efforts, and a time of rest. We write to inform you about two changes to our worship services.

Cantonese 11:45AM Thanksgiving Worship Service on 8 December 2019

It has been 32 years since we started worshipping at Chatswood Church of Christ (CCoC). God has richly blessed our time there. As we mentioned in our Family Letter on 8 September 2019, the 11:45AM service at CCoC will come to a close at the end of this year. We will have a Thanksgiving Worship Service at 11:45AM on 8 December 2019. This will be our last 11:45AM service at CCoC. Meanwhile, all other current activities will remain unchanged.

The Cantonese Ministry Team is working with various ministry leaders for a smooth transition over the coming months. As we are all one family in Christ, we encourage you all to engage with this process: please show our love by helping others who may need assistance during this transition time.

We pray that this consolidation of worship services to Zenith Theatre in Stage 1 will allow brothers and sisters to refresh physically and spiritually, deepen relationships with each other, and seek God's wisdom for a new direction in the future development of our Cantonese ministry in Stage 2. We also pray for the growth of CCoC and their desire to reach out to the community.

Consolidation of 5PM English Worship Service

Since 2014, the English ministry of EFCA has had two congregations, namely the 11AM service and the 5PM service. We are thankful to God for the 5PM service held at Gordon Library, which has been faithfully running over these years, reaching out to the local community and young adults.

During the past year, the sustainability of the 5PM service has been in the mind of the 5PM team. Resources and personnel have been highly stretched; and the departure of the English ministry pastor (while not the sole reason) added more pressures to an already difficult situation. More importantly, the 5PM congregation yearns for mentoring from older

Christians, who are absent from the 5PM demographic. The 5PM core team has been serving continuously and wholeheartedly throughout the year, but they have been doing so with a lack of training, mentoring and rest.

After open and earnest discussion with its congregation members, the 5PM team has proposed to discontinue the service. This decision is supported by the English Ministry Team and endorsed by the Deacons Board. This decision was not taken lightly nor rushed and was made with heavy hearts. The 5PM team believes that the closure of this service is the best step forward for training, maturity, sustainability and capacity of the members of 5PM. The consolidation of the two services will benefit the English congregation as a whole, freeing up extra leaders to serve in ministries of need, such as Kids Church, SWITCH and Kitchen Team.

The last 5PM service will be held on 15 December 2019. It is anticipated the majority of 5PM members will join the 11AM service. It is worth noting that in years past, 5PM service closes between December and February for the holiday period, so they are quite accustomed to having combined service together. Some members of the two services have had lots of great fellowship and have ministered together in the past and we know that this will continue.

The Deacons Board would like to thank the leaders of the 5PM English congregation for their years of faithful and steadfast service. Please remember the 5PM congregation members in your prayers, as they settle into the 11AM English service, new ministry roles, and fellowship with new brothers and sisters across all life-stages.

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Change is never easy, and we appreciate that there will be challenges ahead. We have faith that God will lead us through these challenges and emerge victorious as we follow the Lord's leading. We will be doing everything we can to look after all brothers and sisters affected. These changes also present us with opportunities such as reimagining our worship service arrangements for the growth of our church - revitalising it and making it more sustainable into the future, saving souls around the globe and discipling the nations for Christ's glory. This will take time and will require your support and involvement.

We invite you to share your ideas and feedback and continue to support one another in love as one body in Christ. Please in particular care for brothers and sisters who currently attend the 11:45AM service or the 5PM service. Above all, please pray with us. Pray for a smooth transition and an edifying conclusion of these two services. In the meantime, please share any questions and comments with a deacon, pastor or member of the respective Ministry Team.

The Almighty Lord and King has given us an important mission – “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.” (Isaiah 54:2) For the glory of His great name and eternal kingdom, let us follow wherever He leads us.

Prayerfully,
Deacons Board
3rd November 2019