

Family Letter 3

14 April 2024

Updates on Project 518

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” - Jeremiah 29:11

Over the past 2 years, God has blessed EFCA’s 3 congregations with expanding ministries, effective outreach, local and overseas mission trips and increasing numbers of Christians joining together to exalt Him! He has also led the church on an amazing and miraculous journey, providing us with a vision to continue our ministry growth and giving us the potential of becoming more united as we serve Him as one church in one bigger location. We may not know with certainty what the future holds and we still have doubts and concerns, but we have full confidence that God will continue to lead us according to His will and perfect plan.



Praise the Lord that on 25 February, we commenced the pledge survey as an important step to get an insight on our financial capacity and indeed our intent to purchase the 518 site.

On 10 March, we had the second round of family meetings for all 3 congregations. We presented the progress of the pledge survey and answered more questions from the congregations.

As of 10 April 2024, total funds is \$17.79m, representing 71% of the \$25m funding target. It's a combination of pledged offerings and interest-free loans, allocated money from existing Church Building Fund, and the proceeds from the sale of our East Lindfield property.

What is the long term strategy for EFCA?

In over 100 years of Australian church history, we have seen examples where white Australian Christians intentionally spread the gospel to Chinese migrants, and in one instance, the Presbyterian Church of NSW gave a community of Chinese Christians a large church building in Surry Hills to enable their long-term growth.

Reflecting on this history, our disciple-making vision and the general decline of Christianity within the Australian population, one of the long term strategies for EFCA is to equip generations of disciples who would spread the gospel not just to Overseas-born Chinese and Australian-born Chinese, but also intentionally to non-English-speaking immigrants and English-speaking Asians, and of course to the wider Australian communities. God's plan works in ways beyond our imagination.

A church's strategy does not ultimately depend on its location or building, but it is definitely an important part of its strategy. The 518 site presents a rare opportunity for EFCA now, to meet current needs and prepare for future growth. For example, the site can give us the space to grow a disciple-making congregation as a whole church, strategically and suitably situated, and provides future opportunities to establish an education centre to train disciples that we can send overseas and locally, to be His witnesses to all ethnicities and backgrounds.

Can I still submit a faith pledge?

Of course! The current faith pledge survey will remain open until the SGM. You can submit your pledge via <http://efca.org.au/pledge> or QR code.



We encourage all brothers and sisters to continue praying and seeking His leading as we continue this journey with God. He has graciously allowed our pastors and deacons to discern the immense potential of serving Him at this new site. If you share this same perspective, we humbly request that you prayerfully submit your faith pledge.

Furthermore, we invite you to prayerfully consider submitting faith pledges for the next 5 years. The faith pledges do not stop at the purchase of the 518 site. We will incrementally renovate and improve the 518 site over time. Our aim is to continue expanding God's Kingdom and ministry.

When are we having the SGM?

Today, the Board is distributing the Notice of the SGM, which will be held at 1:00pm on Sunday 5 May 2024 at Zenith Theatre, Corner of McIntosh St & Railway St, Chatswood. As a united church, we will collectively decide whether we wish to pass the proposed motion. The motion can be found in the Notice of SGM, which essentially authorises the Board, on suitable conditions, to purchase the 518 site, to sell the East Lindfield property, and to obtain a secured loan.

Please note non-EFCA members are welcome to join SGM as guests. We will let members have priority to enter the main auditorium to facilitate the voting procedure. We will allocate a specific zone for non-members to listen to the proceedings of the SGM.

Welcome to approach any deacon to discuss any questions or concerns before SGM, we are very happy to have further discussion in detail.

How do we pass the motion?

The motion must be approved by at least 75% of the members of EFCA present at the SGM. Voting at the SGM will be by ballot. Ballot paper will be handed out on the day as members sign in. Only members of EFCA can vote. Voting must be made in person. According to our Constitution, voting by proxy is not accepted.

You will be asked to vote either "YES" or "NO".

- Voting “YES” means you are in favour of purchasing the 518 site and would like the Board to continue the process under the stated conditions, including the sale of East Lindfield property and obtaining a loan if required.
- Voting “NO” means you do not want the church to purchase the 518 site under the stated conditions, including the sale of East Lindfield property and obtaining a loan.

The votes will be counted at the SGM. We will elect the scrutineers from among those present at the SGM to count the votes. The result will be disclosed immediately.

What happens if the motion is passed?

The Purchase Fund

The Board will formally call for funds.

- You can give to the Church Building Fund (CBF) before the exchange of contracts (which is tentatively at the end of May).
- Alternatively, if you intend to give after the exchange of contracts, you can fill in an offertory notification form, before the end of May, to indicate when and how much you will give to the CBF.
- Also, you can provide an interest-free loan to the church. You will need to contact Deacon Felix Tang or Deacon Stanley Xie, before the end of May, to discuss an arrangement.

The Board will source the total Purchase Fund from:

- The proceeds from the sale of the East Lindfield property
- The allocated money from CBF,
- Pledged offerings according to received offertory notification form,
- Interest-free loans, and
- A secured loan, if necessary and depends on serviceability.

The Purchase of the 518 Site

The Board will begin contract negotiation with the owner of the 518 site and perform due diligence on the 518 site. Various consultants will need to be engaged, such as heritage consultant, structural engineer, arborist, etc.

The Board will take the following conditions into consideration before exchanging contracts for the purchase of the 518 site:

- No major adverse changes to the final purchase price of 20 million dollars.
- The due diligence has been completed with an acceptable outcome.
- The Purchase Fund has enough available cash to cover the purchase price plus transaction costs (estimated at 21.5 million dollars).

The Sale of East Lindfield Property

The Board will also begin contract negotiations with the buyer of the East Lindfield property.

The Board will take the following conditions into consideration before exchanging contracts for the sale of the East Lindfield property:

- No major adverse changes to the final sale price of 9.6 million dollars.
- The sale is necessary to fund the purchase of the 518 site.
- There is a provision in the contract to ensure our continual use of the East Lindfield property for at least 9 months after exchange of contracts.
- The exchange of contracts for the purchase of the 518 site has already taken place.

Using Secured Loans if necessary

The Board will avoid using secured loans if possible. If necessary, the Board will obtain secured loans using the East Lindfield property and/or the 518 site as security. The loan amount will need to balance between how much the lender is willing to lend, and on the church's ability to service the loan over time.

In general, options to borrow are very limited for churches. Based on current enquiries, we will be able to obtain a secured loan of up to 3 million dollars, over a term of up to 5 years, at a fixed interest rate of 5% per annum, for Project 518. This is currently the most favourable option available for our church, but it does not mean we will borrow to the upper limit.

The Board will take the following conditions into consideration before obtaining secured loans:

- The secured loans are necessary to fund the purchase and/or renovation of the 518 site.
- The loan amount and terms are appropriate, and commensurate to the church's ability to service the loans.

What happens if the motion is not passed?

If the motion is not passed, the purchase of the 518 Site will not proceed, unless circumstances change to allow the motion to be reconsidered, or an alternative motion relating to the 518 Site is found.

If there is no change in circumstances and an alternative motion cannot be found, then Project 518 will be suspended. The Board will then prayerfully review the church development strategy to address the long-term challenges that our ministries are facing, including continued efforts to search for other suitable sites.

We also understand that some brothers and sisters are being moved by the Holy Spirit to offer large amounts relative to their financial circumstances to support Project 518 at a time when the cost of living is impacting everyone. Arrangements will be in place for those who would like a refund of their offering made to the Church Building Fund for Project 518. It is still possible to request a refund even if you do not have an official receipt from church, but we suggest you keep your own record when submitting your offering.

If there is a change in circumstances, or an alternative motion is found for the 518 Site that the Board considers appropriate, there may be another SGM in the near future. Any SGM

will require 3 weeks' notice to inform EFCA members. This is subject to the owner of the 518 Site and the buyer of East Lindfield church accepting a time extension.

Whatever the outcome, it is important that we maintain the unity of EFCA. We are a united body in Christ and we seek His Leading. God is always in control!

When will we move to the 518 site?

It will likely take at least 6 to 12 months to progressively renovate the site and move in stages.

All pastors and deacons will meet with all ministry teams to discuss the usages of the site. We will form a committee to oversee the renovations needed at the site.

We will also form a committee to plan the logistics of the move in stages to ensure continuity of all essential ministry activities, as well as allow for expansion of current ministries.

Why are we deciding by voting?

Our constitution has formalised that important decisions of the church should be made by the congregation through voting. It is because we believe as Christians that all of us should have the same mindset as God. By voting, we can witness God's Leading in EFCA through the whole congregation. Everyone is part of the church and has a role at EFCA!

How should we prepare ourselves for the vote?

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. - Philippians 2:5

We should individually, prayerfully reflect on how EFCA can fulfill the Great Commission of Christ in the North Shore of Sydney in the coming decades. With East Lindfield church as our base, our congregation had grown from 100 to 800 over 30 years. How much longer can EFCA continue to grow healthily in the current setting?

The Pastoral Team wishes to appeal to everyone associated with the ministries of EFCA, members and non-members, to spend no less than 2 minutes every day for the next 3 weeks, to pray that the Holy Spirit may give you "the mind of Christ" as you contemplate the future development of EFCA. This helps all of us to make sure that when we vote, we don't vote according to our own will or preference, but to seek God's will and way.

God has opened a door for EFCA with the 518 site already designated for church usage. It may not be perfect in all aspects, but it can accommodate a church of our size, and has plenty of space for future growth. There have been shortcomings at East Lindfield church and yet we have grown beyond its capacity. Wherever our church will be, we remain united and faithful to God to face the challenges that need to be worked through.

Our decision at the SGM should focus on whether God has given you the vision that the 518 site is where EFCA can continue to grow healthily and expand in the future. We may hesitate because of the huge and seemingly impossible costs, but this allows God to take control, for

nothing is impossible through Him! God has called us to be His followers, surrendering our lives to Him, trusting Him and not ourselves. May God's Will be done and His Kingdom continue to expand!