

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY



Left: Christine and Bernadette at the Caritas office

Change is a constant. For Caritas and other charity organisations, change encourages us to look at how we need to constantly be prepared and embrace changes to allow us to partner the poor.

After serving as Executive Director (ED) of Caritas Singapore for eight years, Ms Bernadette Lau stepped down from her role on 1 August 2018, and retired on 31 August 2018.

Taking over the helm as ED is Ms Christine Wong. Christine was previously the ED of the Samaritans of Singapore. She has served in the social service sector in Singapore for over 30 years, including her tenure with NCSS and the Methodist Welfare Services.



Departments in Caritas Singapore

Christine, together with the Caritas team, is committed to continue to be a voice for the vulnerable and marginalised in our community.

In this interview, we hear from our outgoing and incoming leaders.

Q: What was/is the pull factor for you to join Caritas?

BERNADETTE: In the late 70s, I worked with youths at risk with the then Narazeth Centre, now Beyond Social Services. When Caritas Singapore was looking for a new ED, I discerned for a few months. I believed then that there is a time and a season for all things, and that God had a plan for me. So I said yes! I knew that this journey would enable me to grow in my faith. It has been wonderful and fulfilling so far.

CHRISTINE: As a social worker, I have worked with people who feel hopeless. They are searching for an answer to life's problems and the meaning of life. There is a void and emptiness in them. Also, in suicide prevention work, creating awareness in the community to reach out to others who require help is crucial.

Through Caritas Singapore, we can show God's love by reaching out to others to show our love in action.

Q: What are you most proud of during your time as ED?

BERNADETTE: The highlight for me was setting up Agape Village (AV), even though it was very challenging. The many meetings with member organisations, the 2012 leaders' retreat where we had the envisioning exercise of AV and then, seeing the fruition of the project. AV is now in its third year of operations.

Q: How have you seen the social service sector in Singapore evolve in recent years?

BERNADETTE: The sector has become more professional in the last 10 to 15 years, and the issues/problems faced by those in need have also become more complex. Caritas, with our 27 member organisations, grows in tandem with the sector to address some of these service gaps.

CHRISTINE: There is a greater expectation for social services to do better with less, to review our services and to increase collaboration with other organisations to better serve clients holistically. I hope to see this in Caritas and our member organisations.

Q: Christine, what are you looking forward to in your role as ED?

We should strengthen and build on the existing good work done under Bernadette's tenure as ED. Then together, we can work towards bringing the organisation to the next level.

Thank you, Bernadette, for your passion and dedication to the Caritas family.
We welcome Christine to the Caritas family, and look forward to her leadership and contributions to Caritas.

A FRIEND TO THE DYING

Death doulas spend their time helping people die as peacefully as possible. One of the early death doulas at St Joseph's Home was Canossian Sister Rita Jaswant who started her vocation in the mid-1980s. Here, she shares her journey with us.

On helping patients finish unfinished business: I realised this when I was taking care of a dying man who needed assurance of forgiveness. I noticed that this dying man's wife also seemed very aloof. Then one day, I heard the wife said, "You can go. I forgive you. You have permission." From then, I realised that there was hurt between the couple...

On a patient's dying wish: He said he didn't want his family around when he dies because he didn't want them to feel upset. I promised him that I would carry out this favour ... true enough, the man died about 20 minutes after they left. I called to inform them.



“People often like to ask me, ‘Sister, how can you manage being with the dying? Death is so depressing.’ But I say, No lah!...It is my privilege to be with the patients till their last breath.”

On interacting with patients of a different religion: We treat them all the same. Someone who wants to do this job must be very convinced of God's love. We do this job not for conversion, but for the patient to recognise the Creator so that the patient can die peacefully.

This excerpt was taken from St Joseph's Home's 40th anniversary commemorative magazine www.stjh.org.sg



The infant and childcare curriculum includes specially designed daily interaction between the children and residents.



The wheelchair-friendly intergenerational playground allows conducive interaction time between residents and children outdoors.

St Joseph's Home in Jurong West was officially reopened following a 2.5-year redevelopment. Among the new features of the six-storey home is an open-air café, gym for the residents and community space called the **Funhouse** and the **Giggle Palace**. The new home can house about 400 residents.

What sets the home apart from others is that it has its own infant and childcare centre whose staff work closely with the older adults' caregivers to develop programmes that encourage daily **cross-generational interaction**. This could be through activities like storytelling, arts and crafts, water play and excursions.

Another unique feature of the home is how its architecture considers the residents' dignity. The **'Peace Rooms'** at the entrance are holding areas for the deceased until the undertaker arrives. Sister Geraldine Tan, ED of St Joseph's Home, explains that the dignity of a person remains even after passing. As residents enter the home via the front door, they should also leave the same way, with the same amount of dignity.

Residents' rooms are furnished to make the space as home-like and comfortable as possible. Beds and bedside cabinets feature wood-panel finishes, while the communal dining areas are decked with clover-shaped tables for persons in wheelchairs.

Among some new services offered are **music and art therapy** as well as **hydrotherapy** in an indoor pool with adjustable depth. Next to the pool is the centre where the **Dusk-to-Dawn** programme is run. This is an overnight respite service for caregivers of persons with dementia and who experience sundowning. This way, caregivers have quality rest at night, knowing that their loved ones are cared for by healthcare professionals.

A visitor to St Joseph's Home can see through the staff's eyes how they value human dignity and love; a love that is centered on God, and on those they serve.

St Joseph's Home is run by Catholic Welfare Services and the Canossian Sisters.

OUR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS



FAMILIES, YOUTH & CHILDREN

POOR, SICK & THE ELDERLY

PROVIDING CARE AND COMFORT

Our pioneers have played an important role in building our nation, and many are now in need of care during their last days.

74-year-old Mr Quek Yee Boey is one of them. Living in a kampong in the early days, he started working as a construction apprentice at the young age of 13, and played a part in building many of Singapore's landmarks in the 1960s. He found opportunities as a sub-contractor in the 1980s, but the recession in 1983 wiped out his savings. His wife divorced him soon after and left with their two daughters.

For the next 25 years, Mr Quek did odd jobs whenever he could find any. As he aged, even odd jobs at construction sites became too physically demanding.

In 2012, he found work as a cleaner, but just four years later, he found himself plagued with frequent fainting spells, and a fall landed him in hospital for a month. Then, doctors discovered a large cancerous tissue mass in his back muscles. There was no cure. Mr Quek lost his job and could not afford further hospital treatments.

Mr Quek was referred to Assisi Hospice in March 2017. Home Care service was offered free, and the team consisting of doctors, nurses and other multidisciplinary team members visited him regularly to manage the symptoms of his illness. The team was also contactable on the phone 24 hours a day to address any urgent concerns.



Mr Quek Yee Boey used to stay in a one-room rental flat with his brother and benefitted from Assisi Hospice's Home Care Service.

After almost a year, Mr Quek's condition deteriorated to a point where it was unsafe for him to be alone at home. He was admitted into Inpatient Care at Assisi Hospice in March 2018. The Assisi team continued to journey with him and his brother.

The medical team focused on managing his symptoms and pain so that he can be as comfortable as possible physically. The social workers and clinical pastoral care counsellors offered a support system to help him and his brother manage their psychosocial and spiritual needs. The art and music therapists engaged him and brought him joy.



Patients enjoying their group art therapy session with Assisi Hospice's art therapist.

Assisi Hospice provides palliative care for patients and their families, including seniors in need, that preserves their dignity and quality of life. Patients can journey with a clinical team they are familiar with and receive care in the way that they need, as the hospice provides care for patients across the continuum of Home Care, Inpatient and Day Care.

Patients of any race, faith and financial position are cared for by the team of specialist doctors, nurses, allied health and pastoral care professionals. When faced with life limiting illnesses, patients receive medical care, as well as psychosocial, emotional and spiritual care.



Volunteer from Japanese Association of Singapore providing foot massage for patient.

Assisi Hospice moved to its current six-storey purpose-built hospice in 2017. With the many cosy quiet spaces and comfortable furnishing, the hospice provides comfort and dignity for patients and loved ones in a life-affirming space. With a doubled capacity for **Home Care and Day Care**, 85 **Inpatient beds**, new wards for **Dementia Palliative Care** and **Paediatric Palliative Care**, a Sensory Garden, Chapel and Roof Terrace, Assisi Hospice serves more than 2,000 patients a year.

With the support of donors, volunteers and corporate organisations, the hospice is able to serve the community of patients and families with love and compassion.

www.assisihospice.org.sg



EVENTS

18 – 6
OCT DEC
(Every Thu)

Personal Moral Compass 2018 – Social Justice (Module 6)

Fr David Garcia, OP will cover topics such as: Personal Development in Society, Human Societies and Social Principles, Wealth and Poverty, Political Leadership, Global Challenges, and God and Social Development.

🕒 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm

📍 Agape Village, 7A Lorong 8 Toa Payoh S319264

To register ☎ 6338 3448 ✉ formation@caritas-singapore.org

Live the Gospel in the World

This is a 2-part Formation Series facilitated by Fr David Garcia, OP. This retreat and the follow-up sessions bring participants on a journey of discovery of how we are called to live our faith more intentionally in our daily lives.

27 – 28
OCT

Part 1: Weekend Retreat

📍 San Damiano Spirituality Centre, 5 Bukit Batok East Ave 2 S659918

To register ☎ 6338 3448 ✉ formation@caritas-singapore.org

**9, 16
& 23**
NOV

Part 2: 3 Evening Sessions

🕒 7.30 pm - 9.30 pm

📍 Agape Village, 7A Lorong 8 Toa Payoh S319264

To register ☎ 6338 3448 ✉ formation@caritas-singapore.org

Review of Life (ROL) Workshop

Do you want to learn how to see clearly with eyes of faith, start living the Gospel in your daily lives and grow in faith?

Come learn The Review of Life (ROL) Method as a method of formation and a tool for helping you integrate faith and life. Besides content inputs, there will be discussion and practice sessions.

🕒 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm

📍 Agape Village, 7A Lorong 8 Toa Payoh S319264

To register ☎ 6338 3448 ✉ formation@caritas-singapore.org

20 – 21
NOV

Agape Experience (Church of Divine Mercy, St. Anne's Church and Church of the Holy Trinity)

A programme specially crafted for youths who will soon receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Through prayer, experiential learning and engaging activities, the youths will learn about Catholic Social Teaching, and its connection with the sacraments and our Catholic social mission.

🕒 9.00 am to 4.00 pm

📍 Agape Village, 7A Lorong 8 Toa Payoh S319264

To register ☎ 9144 4933 ✉ eve@caritas-singapore.org

**20, 27
& 17**
OCT
NOV

Public Talks @ Agape Village – In You, Death Has Lost its Sting: Preparing for Death

With every beginning, there is an end. Through Jesus' Paschal Mystery, the death of a Christian has been transformed into a blessing. In the liturgy, the Church celebrates death as a passage to eternal life: the faithful soul has gone home to God, while the body awaits the resurrection; the Christian will never die again.

Fr Edward Lim, OCD will introduce the Christian understanding of death, and the means the Church makes available to the faithful in preparing for it. Dr Ong Yew Jin will give the medical perspective on bodily death and explain the need for Advance Care Planning.

🕒 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm

📍 Agape Village, 7A Lorong 8 Toa Payoh S319264

To register ☎ 6801 7400 ✉ agapevillage@caritas-singapore.org

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NOV

RESOURCES FOR SENIORS

ABLE (Abilities Beyond Limitations and Expectations)

Transport Services Ease transportation for persons with physical challenges by providing wheelchair accessible vans at affordable rates.

T 6801 7460 E enquiries@able-sg.org

CATHOLIC LAWYERS GUILD

Pro Bono Legal Clinic For those in need who wish to seek free basic legal advice and information on personal matters such as family issues, estates, employment, personal accidents, etc.

T 6801 7494 E admin@clgsingapore.com

ASSISI HOSPICE

Palliative Care For anyone with life-limiting illnesses, including but not restricted to the elderly through inpatient, home and day care services.

T 6832 2650 E assisi@assisihospice.org.sg

MONTFORT CARE

YAH! short for Young-At-Heart, aims to empower seniors by encouraging personal growth, enhancing their relationships with family and friends, and strengthening their connection to the community.

T 6445 0300 E contact@yah.org.sg



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Wish to receive an e-copy of this newsletter? Write to us at comms@caritas-singapore.org

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