



# OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY CARITAS SINGAPORE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

‘Caritas Singapore Young Adults reaches out to young Catholics to live their faith and find ways to put the Church’s social teachings in action.’

## Young adults step forward to do God’s work



Michael Loh, Executive Director of CARE sharing with young adult participants about the work of CARE at the Young Adults Awareness Event.

Software architect Alan Lim is a busy man. Married with two young sons, he wakes up at 7am, spends his day at his job before getting home for some family time, helping his homemaker wife Hannah Lee with laundry and other chores after the boys are in bed.

He is also the founding chairperson of Caritas Singapore Young Adults (CYA) Committee, the “younger” wing of the Catholic Church’s social arm.

Alan and Hannah were active in campus ministry during their university days, as well as in their parishes. They were first approached in 2012 to join a Caritas Singapore-organised focus group session on ways to get young adults more involved in the Church’s social mission.

“We were searching for something that both of us could serve in together,” he said. “When the opportunity came to serve in Caritas Singapore, we jumped at it.”

The Caritas Singapore Young Adults Committee was begun formally in October 2012 and comprises a core group of nine who then formed their three sub-committees: Outreach and Communications, Formation, and Volunteer Management. They organise events to reach out to young Catholics, including discussions on issues that concern society as well as the Catholic Social Teaching. The committee also helps to connect young volunteers with Caritas Singapore’s member organisations that need help.

The committee’s mission is to support Caritas Singapore in integrating faith and social responsibility among Catholic young adults. Its first major event was the Young Adult Awareness Event in January, 2013, co-hosted by nine Caritas Singapore member organisations, including Boys Town, Catholic AIDS Response Effort (CARE), and Faith and Light Community. More than 70 young adults attended and learnt more about various needs in Singapore and how the Caritas Singapore member organisations are doing their part to help.

Since then, a range of events has been held, drawing young Catholics to find out more about the Church’s social teachings and reflect on ways they can do more to help those in need.

Back in 2012, doctoral student Michelle Lee and her husband, project engineer Hyun Park, were unsure about playing a leadership role on the CYA Committee. They were not yet married at the time and felt they had plenty on their plates.

“We definitely did not feel ready at that time,” said Michelle, 29. “We only wanted to participate in the initial focus group!”



Members of the Caritas Singapore Young Adults Committee meet regularly to discuss on how to involve young adults in the social mission of the church.

Yet, she said they felt the Holy Spirit’s prompting to do more, so they decided to take a leap of faith.

Working with Hyun in volunteer management, Michelle said she found it tough juggling the tasks she had to do, her PhD work and preparing for their wedding. But they found themselves growing through service. They gathered more than 30 volunteers to do a Bread Basket project in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Commission for Migrants and Itinerant People (ACMI) in December 2013, for migrant workers living in a Yishun dormitory. Since then, they have been regularly rallying volunteers to support ACMI. They have also connected volunteers with acts29’s Angel Network to help needy elderly people in different parts of Singapore.

“It is so true that when we give, we receive so much more and we are humbled by the whole experience,” Michelle said.

For 34-year-old bank employee Francis Tay, joining the Caritas Singapore Young Adults Committee meant getting out of his comfort zone. “I had to leave my spiritual family, the youth ministry I had served in for more than six years, to take up this challenge,” he said.

He leads the Formation sub-committee, which helps young adults in their spiritual growth and getting to know the Church teachings. It has organised annual workshops and talks on Catholic Social Teaching as well as a basic introduction to the foundations of Moral Theology for interested young adults.

“I often struggle to lead or plan because I still feel inadequate. But I believe in the

importance of formation, and it’s amazing to know that what we are doing here is carrying out a mission mandated by Christ,” he said.

Financial analyst Mark Tang, who leads the Outreach and Communications sub-committee, said that before he joined, he knew he wanted to volunteer, but was not sure how. To help others find out for themselves, he helped organise a personal mission event in May 2014. Spiritual sessions by Father Christopher Soh, SJ, and a panel of invited speakers enabled 57 participants to reflect on their Christian mission and how they are living it in the context of their career choices.

Product marketing executive Erwin Susanto, 25, who heads the Formation sub-committee, said: “I always had some interest in social justice. I wanted to be part of something new that was going to build something meaningful.”

Policy officer Jessica Huang felt that getting involved in CYA was a natural progression for her. Her social work knowledge helped the group to better understand the issues on the ground and the context of their work. Besides serving as the vice-chair of CYA, she works with Erwin to organise Creed on the Street (COTS) sessions where young adults come together to discuss social issues like poverty in the light of the Catholic faith.

The CYA Committee typically meets on weekday nights or weekends to accommodate the schedule of the working members. The work of outreach, formation and volunteer management is shared with sub-committee members who take on

specific initiatives and projects.

For CYA Committee members, the commitment to serve comes with some sacrifices and juggling of tasks especially when family or job responsibilities demand their attention.

When Alan and Hannah had their second son last year, Hannah took a six-month break from active involvement with committee work. Even so, committee members met at the couple’s home during her confinement so she could attend meetings.

“Having two young kids makes it harder to be involved in full-day and weekend volunteering events, but I try to help in other ways, by being more actively involved in the pre-planning, coordination and publicity,” she said.

Hannah relates this to the Gospel story of the five loaves and two fishes. “It reminds us that we give the little we can, in whatever state of life we are in, and God will do wonders.”

The committee hopes to see more young adults living their faith in society, reaching out to those in need and answering the call of Pope Francis to be a Church which is poor and for the poor.

To find out more about Caritas Singapore Young Adults, join its Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CaritasYA/> or email [youngadults@caritas-singapore.org](mailto:youngadults@caritas-singapore.org) for enquiries.

### Young Adults Committee

#### Objectives:

To support Caritas Singapore in integrating faith and social responsibility among Catholic young adults.

#### Approach

1. To educate and form young adults in Catholic Social Doctrine and the Teachings of the Church and provide them with the tools to analyse and respond to social issues;
2. To inspire young adults to actively participate in issues relating to social mission;
3. To facilitate active discussions and the development of ground-up initiatives which seek to bring about social justice; and
4. To train and develop young adults to take on leadership or volunteering positions.