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Dear Prayer Partners,

The COCM annual staff retreat took place during the last week of May. This year we changed the location to the Ashburnham Place. Upon arrival I was immediately drawn by its prayer driven spiritual atmosphere. I couldn't wait to visit the centre for 24 hour prayer as well as the lovely prayer garden created to encourage personal growth in faith and spiritual discipline.

Later I found out more about the fascinating story behind the Ashburnham Place. It was once a glorious estate in South East England in the 1800s with a renowned library and art collection. Due to various problems including war time damage and insufficient wealth to meet tax demand when it was passed to next generation, Ashburnham gradually declined to a near ruined condition in the 1950s. It had a sealed fate of demolition when the Rev. Bickersteth inherited this troubled estate. He had to sell contents in the house and some land to pay the huge tax and repair bills. Against all odds, Rev. Bickersteth held on to a vision from Haggai 2:9 and while sorting out financial problems he established a prayer centre in the stable block. Eventually, he gifted the estate to the Ashburnham Christian Trust to make it a Christian conference and prayer centre.

The theme for our retreat this year was "Renewing the Vision". Our fellow workers' sharing and discussions provided important feeding into the strategic planning process for the mission of COCM. At the opening session, our council chairman Rev. John Wallis encouraged us with the Biblical truth declared in the Book of Joshua --"the battle is the Lord's and the victory belongs to Him!" As we assessed the changes confronted our generation and prepared to adopt fresh strategies, it was a needed reminder to us that God's promise and commitment to His peo-

ple shall be the same from generation to generation, that we are serving the same Lord and following the same Guide, thus we have the same tasks passed down from the generation before us. The Lord will grant us new strength and courage to meet new challenges.

Coming home from the retreat, I continued to reflect on the collective experience of Joshua's generation throughout the journey from the wilderness to the Promised Land. Somehow I kept thinking about Caleb, one of the 12 men sent to spy out the land of Canaan. He and Joshua were the only two who had faith in God to urge the people to go up and possess the land at once. Though he didn't get much attention amid the unfolding drama of a rebellious generation, Caleb stood out as one having a "different spirit" (Numbers 14:24). He sought after God wholeheartedly in the shadows of God's chosen leaders and served the Lord steadfastly without recognition. While external circumstances changed and at times seemed out of control, Caleb's inner confidence in God and God's commitment to fulfill His promise never faltered.

I often wonder how Caleb coped with such 'worst scenario' situation when he was forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years due to no fault of his own. He never blamed God but simply went along with God's plan and patiently waited for the day when he would be allowed to enter the Promised Land. How did he do that? What made Caleb's faith so strong during those wasted years filled with trouble? The key elements must have been his unconditional obedience and total commitment to God and to God's chosen leaders. I also think it has a lot to do with his ability to hold on to the vision of the land flowing with milk and honey he saw with his own eyes before he



Annabel's birthday celebration trip to Windsor castle and Pendley Manor



began the wilderness wandering. The vision of the Promised Land must have reminded Caleb the wondrous contrast between where he was and where he shall dwell ultimately. It must have brought him inexpressible hope, overflowing joy, and unquenchable optimism whenever he encountered opposition, death, and defeat.

Caleb is one of the finest examples of a faithful follower and a remarkable team player. Because of his great faith, Caleb was blessed with the same strength in age 85 as the day Moses sent him out to explore the land when he was 40 years old, and he had the triumphant possession of the hill country of Hebron as his inheritance (Joshua 14:13-14). May his life story inspire us to hold on to the vision of God's Promised Land for us and keep longing for the day of entrance, so we will not give up but take courage to persevere in the wilderness of our personal sojourn.

**Updates and Prayer requests:**

On Saturday, May 16<sup>th</sup> Henry went to New York to attend the commissioning service for our dear friend Yen Chun Mao. She was sent out jointly by COCM USA Board and Christian and Missionary Alliance as a missionary partner to serve with COCM in the UK and Europe. She will be here at the end of August. It is so hard to believe that after almost 10 years growing and serving in different places we will be working closely again like our more youthful years in Amherst in the last century.

Please pray for Yen Chun's fund raising needs, her relocation process, as well as her missionary visa application to the UK. She will be our first staff worker to apply for missionary visa under UK's new point system. Our current 2 year visa will expire on 1<sup>st</sup> of July so we are also applying for UK visa extension. Henry had to refrain from overseas travel

for the time being. Please pray for a smooth process and speedy approval.

May 16<sup>th</sup> was also the day Ling received the notice letter about whether there would be a place for Annabel to transfer to one of the grammar schools outside our area. Annabel passed the required test in March but we were told that these schools were very full and had very few openings for transfer, usually only for students moved to live right next to the school or those with siblings already in that school. Needless to say that Ling was surprised with joy when she opened the letter that said ""Your child has been offered a place at Aylesbury High School, your first preference school." This was so unlikely to happen that it was clearly God's arrangement for Annabel. It was a miracle and an answered prayer.

Please continue to pray for Annabel as she is not as excited as we are about changing school in September, because she might be the only new girl in the new school (really scary for teen years). Please pray that she will be able to quickly make good friends who will be going to the same classes and also meet caring teachers to help her transition into the new school environment.

For the past few months we have tried hard to intentionally block out time every evening to give undivided attention to our children, eating dinner, telling jokes, playing games, having Bible reading and prayer together. We have seen visible results on our family interactions. But it isn't easy to keep it up, especially now as we become busily involved in the mission's strategic planning process and Henry has numerous meetings lined up over the next couple of weeks. This summer, we hope to take a real vacation away from ministry responsibilities completely so we can strengthen our family unit before a new school year starts. Please pray that we will be able to plan ahead with wisdom and can truly let go of our worries.