



Shekinah

Assembly of God

"Our Vision: A strong disciple-making church impacting people and nations for Christ."

Empowered • Exemplary • Excellence

23 Dec 18 ♦ **HOST** Ps. Hock Cheng ♦ **WORSHIP LEADER** Daniel Goh & Paul

Coming Home for Christmas

- Special Presentation
- Testimony • Message

by Teen Challenge Singapore

Join us for our Celebration Service every Sunday @ 10.30am!

Venue: Park Hotel Alexandra Function Room Level 7, 323 Alexandra Road S(159972)

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Your Punctuality Honours God

Former Drug Addict And His Prison Officer Brew New Opportunities For Ex-Offenders



Former prison officer Hillary Lo (left) with Matthew Poh (right).

“God saved me from death and dumped me into prison.”

It’s an unusual statement to make, but after just five minutes at Matthew Poh’s café, his sentence starts to make sense.

Poh chortles behind the coffee counter as he jokes with a fellow barista, Dee, who is at least 40cm shorter than the lanky “only 1.98 metres” man. Dee recently converted to Christianity, he mentions. Another fellow colleague, Bruce, whom Poh met at the halfway house Teen Challenge, makes you feel right home with his boisterous laughter. Robert, the chef from Texas, is quietly rearranging containers at the salad corner and figuring out new recipes for the joint.

This is **The Caffeine Experience**, a café at Tanjong Pagar that hires ex-offenders and those with family and friends who have had brushes with the law. Poh himself is a former drug addict and dealer who started popping pills in 1994 after his ex-wife introduced him to Ecstasy.

He was just beginning to run his interior design firm then. It flourished, and so did his hedonistic lifestyle.

“My business was doing well. I earned millions, and spent it on women and cars,” the 47-year-old says.

“My life was a mess, just not in my eyes.”

In 2013, after his mum died and his wife left him, Poh doubled down on his drug habits. His company faltered and he went bankrupt. So, he turned to dealing.

A fallout with his partners caused him to leave the syndicate before he was caught. He was still a free man when his friends were served with more than 10 years' jail time. One was even sentenced to death.

Ironically, it was while he was “high” at home that the thought of surrendering to the police came to him. It was October 2015. He took a cab down to the Bedok police station and turned himself in. Poh got just a year's sentence, including four months at a halfway house.

But the year sobered him up. A nominal Christian since he was 11, Poh finished the Bible twice behind bars.

“I probably reached out to more people in that eight months than my entire life put together. That's kind of sad,” he chuckles self-deprecatingly.

Inside prison, everyone talked about how they were going to change and find a job when they were released. But it wasn't surprising to see cellmates return after less than a week outside the drug rehabilitation centre.

It was inside the centre that Poh met Hillary Lo, a supervising officer.

With his born-again experience, Poh decided that he wanted to do something right for once.

He approached Lo, 49, with a business proposal, hoping that the prison officer would join as a partner. Without hesitation, Lo, who had spent 17 years working in the prisons, said yes. It was an answered prayer, and he trusted Poh, whom he sensed had a savvy nature.

“One of my dreams was to become an entrepreneur. In prison, it's just ‘yes, sir, no sir’ all the time. I questioned why I wasn't doing my own thing. That's not the way I wanted to live,” Lo said.

The business proposal stated that it was going to be a social enterprise selling coffee, providing employment for ex-offenders, with profits ploughed back into other Christian social businesses.

“I told God to let me do what I do best,” says Poh, who attends Full Gospel Assembly. “But this time round, let me build something not just for myself, but for the people around me.”

His last day in prison was poignant. Harkening back to Job 1:21, he decided: “Before I leave, I have to put all my possessions –which was just three shirts, three shorts, some bread – into a Toyogo box. And then I step naked into a room, put on some clothes and leave. I can't bring anything out. Nothing.

“It gave me a preview of death. When I die, everything goes into a coffin and the rest of my money is distributed out. So there's no need for me to build anything for myself.”

Source: Read the full article by Rachel Phua from “Salt&Light”

30 December 2018, 10.30am

Thanksgiving Service & Lunch Fellowship

6 January 2019, 10.30am

VISION SUNDAY:

The Power of Imagination

Rev. Tan Hock Cheng

Shekinah Family Walk

Date: 1 Jan 2019

Time: 8:30am – 1pm

Venue: Singapore Botanic Gardens

Wear the new church jersey. All are welcome!

serving today

Interpreter: Deborah Liow
children Dorothy, Grace Too, Sylvia,
Tze Tze & Rachel

projectionist Jeremiah Goh

sound tech Audrey Goh

musicians Ai Kia, Kelvin Thien &

Swee Kwang

ushers Filipinos' CG

financial summary (Oct 2018)

Tithing	\$ 15,993
Offering	\$ 10,463
Other Receipts	\$ 6
Total Income	\$ 26,462
Total Expenditure	\$ 17,063
Surplus (Deficit)	\$ 9,399

For tithes, address cheque to "Shekinah AG Church" DBS 006-016190-1

For missions, address to "Shekinah AG Mission" DBS 006-016198-7

For Orissa, address to "Shekinah AG Orissa" DBS 006-901874-7

For church building fund, address to "Shekinah AG Building" DBS 006-016187-1

For welfare fund, address to "Shekinah AG Welfare" DBS 006-016188-0