



S H A R E

 CEDAR FUND 施達基金會 From Church - Through Church	Suite 504, Rightful Centre, 12 Tak Hing Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong		APRIL - JUNE 2018
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FOCUS ~ RECONCILIATION

Will You Make Things Right?

Written by: Jady Sit

"Where are you?"

"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

"The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

The above scene (Genesis 3:9-12), well-known by every Christian, documents the event when men and God's relationship went from perfect intimacy to complete distant. As Adam accused "the woman you put here with me", relationship among humans had also become distorted. Then, men and land were cursed. Sin made the world a broken world plagued with poverty, warfare, and exploitation of resources.

Often, we describe CEDAR as a development organisation, but we believe what we actually do is the ministry of reconciliation. Through the work of CEDAR and overseas partners, we hope to urge men to reconcile with God, others, the land, and with themselves; then, we would be able to break the chain of poverty.

Back to His Intention

CEDAR's Zimbabwe partner, Foundations for Farming (FfF) shares a similar vision. Brian Oldreive, FfF's founder, saw that Africa was a land blessed with abundant resources, yet it had been in poverty and hunger for so long. He began to realise that they had not been fulfilling their role as stewards of this land of abundance given by God. Under God's guidance, he founded FfF to help the poor and marginalised farmers based on the foundation of God's words, teaching them to farm in God's way.

Last year, 30 San people participated in a 2-week training by FfF which was supported by CEDAR. The San tribe is one of the smallest tribes in western Zimbabwe. They lived in a forest and have traditionally been hunters and gatherers, so they did not have any knowledge in farming. They seldom had connection with the outside world and lived in poverty, as the society thought they are lowly and arbitrary.

We believe that one should first reconcile with God, addressing the poverty at heart, then he/she would be able to deal with poverty in real life. Agricultural training is only part of our partner's work. A holistic transformation of the participants' lives is what we want to achieve. FfF helps participants to see themselves and others in God's eyes and experience the Father's love by studying the Bible with them and learning about God's intention for His Creations, the Fall of men, and Christ's salvation. The course also goes through faith, finances, and family with the participants, so they can review their lives and relationships and become a good steward.



Participants are preparing a land for planting by chopping off weeds bit by bit



Farming in God's Way

On the first lesson of farming, FfF lays down four principles for farming based on God's words and characters: On time, At standard, No waste, and With joy. Because when we are willing to follow these principles to farm, we will surely reap a good harvest.

Since men and the land were cursed, the relationship became a bondage. Humans tend to use quick and easy ways to farm like using chemical pesticides, slash-and-burn to prepare agriculture land, etc. Yet, these methods destroyed the ecology of the soil and land. Hence, FfF taught students to live in harmony with the land, so that the land would no longer be abused and men could depend on the land's produce.

In an agroforestry session, participants from the San tribe did not see the value of growing trees around the field. A man in his early 40s expressed that he cut nearly 100 trees a month. When asked, "Do you know that the forest will disappear if you continue to cut trees?", they all said: "Impossible. This would not happen!" This was because the group lived in the bush, their daily lives were surrounded by trees, so they did not think the forest would vanish. The lesson opened their eyes to see the consequence of everything they do to the environment, and to realise the importance of having trees would benefit their farming activities. This helped them to rebuild their relationship with the land and environment.

Breaking Bondage and Chains

Besides agricultural knowledge, they also talked about finances and family in classes to review how these affect their relationship with neighbours and their partners. On the money lesson, most of the participants thought that financial management is for rich people, so they rarely did budgeting for their expenses and ended up borrowing money from others. A student shared that he promised to pay back his debt when he borrowed the money, but he was not able to fulfill his promise and ended up in a village court. Financial debt becomes a bondage between people and the chains for oneself. We hope that students would have a mindset that everything they own are given by God, regardless of how much we own, poor or rich, we are commanded to be a faithful steward. FfF encourages participants to do financial planning with their partner and practise a habit of savings; and stresses that they should end the practice of money-borrowing, removing the stumbling block between themselves and others. Just as the parable of the talents concluded: For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them (Matthew 25:29).

In a session about marriage, the majority of the group agreed that they should stick together with their spouse through thick and thin, but our partner discovered that this was not what they practised. They said if one married a woman and she failed to conceive, the man had the right to divorce her or marry another wife. They thought that the blame fell on the woman, not the man. The session helped them to go back to God's word and reestablish their concept of marriage and restore their relationship with their spouse. When two people are married, they are united as one flesh. Both are to be honest and faithful to their other half, restoring their relationship as God intended for Adam and Eve. The two are equal in the marriage and shall build a strong family together. At the end,



how we treat natural resources, money, or our marriage reflects how we relate to the land and other people including our loved ones. These relationships would influence the way a family, a society, and the world develop.

Ending Poverty and The Mission of Reconciliation

FfF designs their training with a strong Biblical framework to help San people become disciples of Christ who know God and themselves well, and would examine their lives and relationships. Agricultural training helped them to understand the relationship of men and land is not just a one-way relationship where men extract resources from the land, but to honour God's will for men and land to live in harmony. As they learned about financial management, it not only helped them to recognise the importance of managing their money, but also to stop borrowing and become debt-free, so they and their neighbours will no longer live in tension. After learning about God's intention for family and marriage, they can build their house with love and truth. Our vision is that all relationships will make right under the love of God, no longer will there be curses, slavery, inequality in relationships; ultimately, poverty and injustice could be eradicated. We believe that Christ gave the Church a mission of reconciliation. May the Holy Spirit move you and I to first start on our own and be reconciled to God, ourselves, others, and the land. Will you make things right?

BACK TO THE BIBLE



"Our Bodies and Our Land"

*Written by: Dr. Bernard Wong (Assistant Professor
(Theological Studies) and Associate Dean of China Graduate
School of Theology, Board Member of CEDAR Fund)*

During Joseph's tenure as Egypt's prime minister, he managed to keep his country fed while all the other lands experience famine from the great drought. People were buying food from Joseph, and with their livestock when they ran out of money. When they finally ran out of things to offer, they told Joseph,

"We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate." (Genesis 47:18-19)

The people could technically exchange their land for food, but interestingly, they not only did not do so, but they were repeatedly saying "We and our land" as though the two were inseparable from each other. Given the circumstances, we would certainly choose to sell our land for food—think about how the funds you get from selling a tiny flat in Hong Kong could buy food for the rest of your life!

The Bible depicts a world that is vastly different from ours, where the land was not traded as commodities as men were tightly connected with it, and their lives depended on it. The reason for this was simple—people had no ways to obtain food other than by farming themselves. No land means no food, and no food means no life. Such relationship was changed in the face of modern technology and economic development, where most people do not have to farm anymore to survive, and the change was welcomed as it took away the physical exhaustion from farming. Consequently, it led to the increasing gap between the land and the modern people, who could no longer experience the intimate relationship as it once was. The new relationship turned into one that marks men's commercial usage of the land, treating it as tools and assets for profit, or as resources to stimulate economic growth. Today in Hong Kong, we often damage the land and the ecology it supports, or pave perfectly good farming soils in the name of development, as though the development of a city could only be done at the cost of the land.

One shall not forget that our lives will always depend on the land, as it is intended by God since the Creation. We are not different from the people trying to buy food from Joseph, only that they could directly notice their relationship with the land, and we could not. We assume that technology and economic development could sustain our lives indefinitely. However, the damage of lands and environment, plus climate change, have severely affected crop yield around the world. This alerts us that land development cannot remain the same way without affecting men's lives. Our bodies could not be separated from our land, and only by respecting and caring for it, and reconciling with it, could we sustain our lives on it.

JOIN HANDS JOIN HEARTS



Me as an Ordinary Person

Amongst the children ministries of CEDAR and its partners, post-war children ministry in Myanmar must be the most well-known one. You may ask, "Why do we still support this particular children ministry after two decades?" The answer is simple: Because it is worth it. We saw how God worked amazingly on these children, and we hope that they will become ambassadors for reconciliation.

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies." (Luke 6:27a) This verse can well describe our Burmese partner, Full Moon. Some thought they are just a children's home, taking care of children separated from families due to internal conflicts, but Full Moon's core ministry is to repair relationships and heal wounds. The children's home uses the Bible as their principle of teaching children. Apart from school work, children worship God and study the Bible every day, so that they would know God and experience His love during their childhood. If you have ever seen their pure cry in prayer and zealous joy in worship, you will realise God's powerful love can heal every wounded heart.

Our partner understands that hatred could only leads one to live in fury and even causes recurrence of war, hampering a community and country's development. Therefore, they encourage the children to love their neighbours and enemies, hoping that these children, after being healed and redeemed by God, can forgive those perpetrators and give back to their communities once affected by wars when they grow up. Today, we witness many of our children have grown to be teachers, social workers, and healthcare workers. Some gave up their urban lives and started all over again in rural areas to serve their communities, including those who had participated in conflicts. With scarce resources, they loyally contribute what they have and love their enemies based on their faith in God. For those who chose to stay in cities, they taught their families to open their home for youths from mountain villages by taking care of them as part of the family, so that they can stay and study in the cities. This is a living testimony of loving their neighbours.

We are thankful for our Burmese partner who had sowed seeds of love and forgiveness in these children's hearts, such that reconciliation can be spread to their communities through them. Their lives resemble the lyrics in a Cantonese praise song, "Ordinary People" (普通的人), in a way of demonstrating "contributing all I have" and "sufficiency despite scarcity" through their lives. May different ethnicities in Myanmar experience reconciliation, for love can drive out hatred. ►

TAKING ACTION



Divine Intervention in Broken Lives

Written by: Maylin Hartwick (Harmony Baptist Church)

When one wants to reconcile with oneself, God's intervention is indispensable as God transforms the life of a person. In the past few years, CEDAR has witnessed many encouraging testimonies of its partners. We saw how God healed the brokenness in the lives of the poor and exploited.

Harmony Baptist Church (HBC) is a friend of CEDAR. Like CEDAR, HBC is active in mobilising local believers to care for refugees, asylum seekers, domestic workers, and victims of human trafficking here in Hong Kong. Maylin, a leader of HBC, is going to share with us stories of women they have served and how God has intervened in their lives.

At Harmony Baptist Church, we know we have to focus on this important fact: We need to be serious followers of Jesus. We probably can't do big things for God, but we can do little things with a LOT of love and a LOT of perseverance because of His Love for us. We focus on one precious soul at a time and pray that we would lead them to the knowledge of the One who is Mighty to save and to rescue them. It's easy for us to look at people around us and think they are different than us, but we must discover the similarities we share and see how we all are desperate to belong, to be loved, and to be accepted.

Reaching Out into the Dark

Eva* was a young, insecure, and shy girl who started working for a company and was pursued by a persistent young man. After a few weeks, his mother started wooing her too and eventually she succumbed to the fervent romantic advances of this seemingly wonderful man. She had two children with him before she found out that she was not the "legal" wife. This wonderful man already had a wife and children before her and now those suspicious work travels made sense. In desperation to support her two children, she became more vulnerable to deception and she was trafficked into one of Hong Kong's girly bars. During one of our Lost and Found outreaches, she desperately grabbed one of our church sister's hand and said, "I want to leave this work, but how can I?" It was desperate prayers that bonded our team together to plead with God to rescue this woman from her plight. Eva was carefully led to see God's plan for her life is to look to Him, not to change her poverty, but to see God's purpose for her life is to glorify Him. We praise the Lord that He miraculously intervened in her life and helped her return to the Philippines and her children. Please pray for the many in Hong Kong who are in very similar situations and for those ministries trying to help them.

Compassion—Embracing Suffering

Rosie* came to Hong Kong as a domestic worker hoping to provide for her family back in the Philippines. This single mother of three already experienced sexual, physical, and mental abuse. She cried out to God on her first Sunday off that God would show her where to go in this new and confusing city. God heard her cry and she met someone from Harmony Baptist Church a few minutes later which started her journey to knowing God. She did not realise how much she needed God's help until the grandfather in her employer's house started sexually harassing her. She would come to church shivering from trauma until the day when her employer agreed to come and met Pastor Chris and I. She terminated her contract and God graciously provided a wonderful employer. Now, she worries for her three children who are being cared for by her parents. She is learning to trust God to protect her children from being abused and mistreated by their grandparents. God is to be trusted and Rosie continues to glorify and trust God through her suffering.

However, the beauty of when someone comes to realise that God can be trusted is that they rise from victims to victors! We are not here to tell people that when they come to trust and believe in Jesus that their circumstances will change. No, we are here to journey with them and say, "Our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." He came to die, to save, to serve; and as followers, we also ought to take the risk to love, die to self, and to embrace compassion, "being willing to suffer with others" as Christ did.

In an effort to further reach out to people in desperate need, HBC is prayerfully seeking for God's providence to open a shelter for women at risk soon. A group of concerned members of the church have also started a craft business – Lost and Found, to help support anti-trafficking efforts. For details, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/hklostandfound>

*Names are obscured

FULL VERSION OF THIS ISSUE



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2017/2018 OPERATING STATEMENT

(Our financial year is from 07/2017 to 06/2018)

Jul '17 – Feb '18

Income			
	Donations	HK\$	7,133,384
	Grants		721,587
	Appeal for Relief		1,372,774
	HK Government Disaster Relief		2,883,000
	Fund (for flood relief in India)		
	Other Income		43,354
			HK\$ 12,154,099
Expenditure			
Projects	Asia		4,551,690
	China		1,655,906
	Africa		1,771,926
	Disaster Relief &		593,012
	Rehabilitation Projects		
	HK Government Disaster Relief		2,883,000
	Fund (for flood relief in India)		
	Education & Promotion		1,392,949
	Administration		617,073
			HK\$ 13,465,556
Surplus/(Deficit)			HK\$ (1,311,457)

Remarks: The annual budget for 7/2017 to 6/2018 is HK\$17,906,000. From July 2017 to February 2018, there is a total spending of nearly HK\$8.6 million, and reserve fund was used to cover deficit. Please support CEDAR's and its partners' work with prayers and donations. 🙏