

Centre Director's Report

Gerald Cheung

First Light Care entered into its second decade of service to the community with the new status as a Harm Prevention Charitable Institution with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status approved by the Australian Government. The new status is indeed timely in terms of helping the ministry to face the impact of the global financial crisis. We are grateful to our donors for their unfailing support and the many volunteers who helped in our fund-raising activities during the year, ensuring our financial wellbeing in this difficult time.

We are grateful to all our staff as they continue to serve faithfully and with professionalism and creativity, often beyond the call of duty. We are particularly thankful for the many guest speakers and volunteers who spent time helping out in running the education activities and in providing administrative support. I am pleased to report that, with the dedication of our staff and volunteers, we have been able to increase the overall services to the community this year.

In the financial year of 2008-2009, our counselling service dealt with more complex cases and spent more hours counselling despite a slightly lower number of new referrals compared to the previous year. The strong competition from Medicare-funded counselling services provided by psychologists in private practice seems to have and will probably continue to impact on our counselling service. However, it is important to note that our counselling service continues to make an important contribution to the community in helping the clients with problems that are not covered by Medicare Mental Health Care rebate, especially for low-income clients with marriage and family problems.

During the year, we continued to help nurture new professional counsellors by providing clinical placements and supervision to four post-graduate trainee counsellors. This is important for preparing the ministry to have the capacity to serve the community with a group of competent and committed counsellors well into the future.

In the financial year of 2008-2009, the preventive education and training programs have increased in variety and quantity. We conducted 394 hours of education and training activities/programs, in 28 different types of activities, with a total of 2,489 participants (not including the number of listeners on radio broadcast programs). We continued to create new educational programs, including "Parenting 0 – 5" and "Ready to be First Time Parents", as new priorities of community needs are identified.

It is pleasing to see the ministry continue to evolve and develop, as different talents join the ministry. We are thankful that a group of volunteers, coordinated by Dora Lee, has been working hard this year to produce First Light Care's second audio compact disc (CD) "Cherish" after their successful debut CD "Silent Love" last year. This "Cherish" CD, with a collection of new songs, will promote love, family and relationships, with proceeds helping to fund the ministry.

Every organisation needs constant renewal in every level in order to meet the changing demands and challenges of its time in fulfilling its vision and mission. It is the quality of its innovation and the commitment from the people who are already involved or who will be involved in the ministry, that will determine the effectiveness of our service to the community. For this ministry, with a relatively short history, small financial resources and manpower, we have now been blessed with a tax status that will help us to achieve greater things for the good of the community. However, there is a lot that we can seek do better as an organisation and as a service. The planning day held in February has examined this and highlighted the target areas of fund-raising, promotion and marketing, and human resources. We are to begin a new stage of our journey in building up First Light Care to realise its God-given potential to become a service that will bring light to the lives of many more people.

"In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered." (2 Chronicles 31:21)