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Excerpts from the Chinese Grace Bible Church Application

Life Story: Provide a sketch of your life story including particulars or significant events that you feel would be important for our church to know about you. Include joys of life like marriage or births and trials like deaths or disappointments. Help us understand how God has shaped and molded you in the development of your Christian faith and life, including your conversion to Christ and your call to the ministry.

Sustaining life without purpose and grace is horrible. My spiritual journey started in high school where my sister, with unrelenting persistence, invited me to go to church with her. My ego said no and my soul resisted it to the core and yet God's grace attracted me as I saw my high school friends and peers were attending the same fellowship group. After a month, I started attending a Sunday School class led by a Christian physicist Milton Wan (now a theology professor at Chinese University Divinity School). He led the class with much passion for the Lord and opened my eyes to the wonder of God's love over and above the limits of my scientific acceptance of faith. God convicted me of my sins and led me to a public confession in an uneventful Sunday service in the summer of 1976. I was baptized on April 7th, 1977. A prodigal son goes home.

Shaping is essential to growth. Much of my spiritual upbringing comes from testimonies of humble missionaries. Douglas Webb taught me how to wash toilets. Taylor Field introduced me on Greek New Testament one to one. Rev. Philip Teng, my pastor, nurtured me with a solid foundation of Bible and mission in my formative years, leading me to missions studies at Fuller and a vigorous study program at Princeton. My pastor also officiated my wedding and presided at my ordination council. My ministry training in expository preaching under Professor Haddon Robinson changed my view on preaching and my outlook towards ministry. I learn gradually what it means to live out for Jesus.

Prayer is "right" side of spiritual formation. It was a huge struggle when I pondered full-time ministry in 1983. Through prayer, God had miraculously provided me financially through a Christian lawyer. Through prayer, God blessed me with a wife in 1988 who also was praying to become a pastor's wife! My wife Linda is an almost an ABC with a strong passion for prayer, worship and song writing (<http://www.obmusic.org>). She is a mother of four: Christine A Chan (with the Lord), Wesley I Chan (named after the great preacher), Stephanie R Chan (a faithful testimony), and Esther Gloria Chan (a great surprise from God). The guidance of prayer also led us to accept God's sovereignty in taking away our firstborn in 93 and in 1997, I received the call to serve at FBC (with the highest congregational approval of 97%). Through prayer, I learnt patience and humility and most recently the lesson of His plan of bringing salvation to my Dad while taking my Mom away this year. God revealed to me through weekly prayer and fasting a roadmap for the extent of my ministry encompassing my whole life.

Strategic ministries at CBI, Stephen Tong Crusade, CCHC and teaching in seminaries opened my eyes to mission, nurturing and discipleship making ministry.

With the overwhelming responsibilities at FBC and a deeper need to nurture of our 3 kids (my second one Stephanie has Delayed Speech Development Symptom), Linda and I prayed and decided to quit her full-time job at Pepsi while we gave attention to the needs of young ones. The current ministry at GCAC is very family friendly and the support base was sufficient for us to ride on a single income and give the rest to the church. He continued to allow me to serve in a as a seminary teacher and to carry leadership and administrative roles and board duties at various agencies. Crafting by Him was a tough life-long experience but He is more patient than I do by adding grace sufficient for all circumstances.

Pastoral Experience: Discuss your previous pastoral or Christian service experience. For each experience, discuss what your responsibilities were, how long you served, the most important contributions you believe you made, and your reasons for leaving. If you have had a long pastoral career, focus on your last two or three pastorates.

I can simply put the past three pastorates as a growth chart of my spiritual maturity in the area of care ministry (CCCW), leadership and gift-based ministry (FBC) and nurture-based ministry (GCAC).

God has given me unique experiences in pastoral ministries and an expanding touch on kingdom ministry towards local and multi-international churches in recent years. My first church ministry (Jan 90 to Jul 97) beyond internship was a church plant with 50-60 adults in attendance. With 2-3 core families reaching out to an upper middle class suburban neighborhood, I started as an assistant pastor and later became the pastor. The main task was reaching broad into different segments of needs including teens, family life, care of the elderly and preaching. Solo pastoral duties are too numerous to count but everything counts in the operation of a small church. It is a solid training ground for humility, willingness, submission, patience and persistence to learn and grow. The most enjoyable times were training teens and young adults through 3-4 day wilderness hiking trips in 92-94, developing a regular English service in 1994 and involving the parents for the children ministry. The experiences of learning how to deal with conflicts with wisdom, teaching older people with patience and leading lay leaders are part of my ongoing drills for maturity. With a clear vision received in the early part of 1997, God has led me through the reference of my mentor to start the second phase of Christian ministry at FBC.

First Baptist Church is a multi-ethnic, multi-congregational, multi-service church in the center of a growing city. Under exemplary leadership of Rev. Russ Rosser (founding board member, Seminary of the East and Christianity Today feature speaker), I served as an associate pastor in the Chinese congregation of 180 adults (total Sunday

worshippers 700 + children). FBC believed in one administration, one structure and one budget. The leadership board works with the Senior Pastor to direct pastoral staff towards the English congregation (27 nationalities represented) with 2 services, Spanish congregation (including Latin Americans) and Chinese congregation. Indian fellowship and Korean fellowship are developing ministries at FBC. My ministries involved preaching, teaching, and coordination of various ministries in a highly multiethnic staff structure (Anglos, Chinese, Hispanic, Black American, Korean, Indian and Latin American). God blessed the ministries with a steady growth from 170 to a high of 220 and a healthy giving increase of 6% annually. With the retirement of the senior pastor in 1999, I was appointed by the board in 1999 as the lead pastor (the youngest in the pastoral team). My task went beyond a congregational ministry into FBC developed ministry entities (including Pastoral Counseling Center, Chinese school and Concert of Prayer Movement), mission board meetings, staff meetings (of 9 pastoral staff), trustee meetings and other community related liaison meetings. My 4.5 years at FBC helped me to realize the dynamics of a city church and the supreme task of bringing unity to the church. Differences are not merely dialectical +theological but also cultural and habitual. My broader Christian ministries included seminary teaching (Bethel/Seminary of the East), City-wide crusade, board duties at international mission boards and Chinese para-church organization. I became the first coordinator of the Greater New York prayer network (gathering 15-20 churches for monthly revival prayer meeting in various churches). The overwhelming admin responsibilities on top of a congregational pastoral ministries (18-20 hours per week on meetings alone) and the urgent need of giving care to my second daughter with DSDS had pressed hard on Linda and I to give full attention to family life and a less hectic pastoral life.

My transition to Gaithersburg Chinese Alliance started in Jan 2002. Our family is blessed with young families and a good school district. Stephanie reached 100% of her speech abilities and is now reaching high in her academic achievements. As the Senior Pastor, my tasks have been to provide leadership to the church ministries and staff in terms of preaching, teaching, caring and administration. The ministries have been on a slow gradual maturing process. Landmark ministries included: acquisition of the ministry office building (3rd building) in 2002, Awana ministry in 2003 (now the largest in MD), formation of evangelism based praise team in 2004 (<http://www.youtube.com> under gcacpraise), County-supported Tsunami Relief Concert (5 churches), Family Builder's series (30+ couples), new Cantonese Service in 2006, Stephen ministry in 2008 and campus expansion initiatives in 2009. I become a more humble person as I lead the church and continue to see the mission budget increase (2x in 8 year) and individuals going to full time ministries. God has given us two more staffs during the past few years adding to 5 in total. God has continued to show favor by providing me with greater ministry opportunities in 5-6 countries. My pastoral visitations reached 325 a year in 2006 (my pastoral limits) and the church continued to mature through trials and occasional conflicts between the congregations and members. I began to develop a better articulation of the following ministry philosophies such as ministry partnership, QT, discipleship and doctrine of the church. As I exegete my life, my faith in Christ and His plan more, I sense the convergence into the center piece of ministry in the next 15 years. If God wills, I will be developing church ministry around discipleship and

mentorship and to give the best of my 50's to the enriching of the younger church leaders and pastors in ministry.

Ethnic Churches: The founders of Chinese Grace Bible Church focused directly at the immigrant population and children. Over the years, many of those children grew up and stayed in the church while the church continued to seek out the 1st generation. How would you describe the challenges of leading a congregation made up of 1st and 2nd generation Chinese speaking believers with 3rd and 4th generation English only speaking believers? What are your thoughts about the state of the Chinese Church in North America?

Living faith is a way of appropriating life's call into its destiny in Jesus Christ. Cultural relevance is a mark of our earthly existence and there is no good way of removing the marks of our creations, whether be color, skin, employment, background or social status. My past DMin dissertation on preaching to the immigrants in NYC dictated my reflections on how the message ought to be delivered to the needs of our unique cultural identities. Unless the transformation takes place under the lordship of Jesus Christ and our Christian values begin to germinate over an extended maturing process, we will continue to face the rough issues of authority in church and administration, extended patriarchal structure over personal freedom, values of doing vs value of being, cultural values vs Christian values, decision making vs shared partnership, mediated conflict vs grace-based reconciliation, consensus building vs submission-based transformation. There are too many to name. Rituals are forms of retaining cultural inheritance but the mandates of the Scriptural truth demand our progressive transformation in Christ (Eph 5:1;Gal 4:19; Phil 1:9-11;3:8;1 Tim 6:11;Heb 6:4-6)

Language and culture are twins and communication without those grids will hurt than to achieve the unity of the church. The continual flow of parental influence upon their descendents can be a blessing if guided in its proper channel. However, culture dictates the way of thinking that can be damaging to the formation of a new Christian life. To avoid conflict in cosmic dimension, we need to measure the true core values of being a new being in Christ. Deliberate envisioning is primary to the growth of the church. It brings people to the same platform of ministry. Strong Bible-based servant leadership will foster a glory-driven ministry that will foster humility, genuine identity, passionate serving and attentive adherence to the kingdom values.

Being in a multi-cultural pastoral background for 5 years reveal to me the proper way to deal with differences of values, orientations, backgrounds and cultures. The task of the church is less likely trying to bring all parties to peace but to admonish Christians to live out the core values in the Bible as exemplified by Jesus Christ. There is a roadmap leading to Canaan. Cultural heritage is attached to our identity so much so that we cannot force depart both. Rev 2-3 mentioned of the power of the vision to overcome self-based ministry. The term used is to overcome it with spiritual quality (patience,

trust, repentance, obedience, etc). As an alternative, we can migrate and import Christian values that will become a stronger purpose for them to live through and live for. The search for common denominator in our faith experience is far more important than to find a model that will fit this unique circumstance.

The church unique setting demands a broad approach based on the nurture towards groups whose weaknesses have to be dealt with in Biblical perspective and those strengths need to be augmented under the lordship of God. The blueprint of the church is based not on equal but common grace that trespasses our social and cultural identities. The status of the Chinese church in NA is changing. It will be less immigrant based (being seen as an extension of a fraternity order or social agency) but more integrative. Cross cultural marriage, search for social identity, appropriation of faith in culture will shift the wind of the Chinese churches. With increasing highly-educated individuals seeking a lifestyle quite different from what the church is promoting, diversity with acceptance will reshape the contours of church leadership structure, worship formats, education priorities and communication style. Romans 8:1-2 speaks of the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ and yet speaks of great freedom in Christ. With partnership as the main currents of our culture nowadays, Christian churches need to explore a deeper dimension of responsive mutual partnering in Christian ministries that the riches of the body of Jesus Christ can be experienced to those who give or serve and for those who receive.

Giftedness and Heart's Desire: It is a desire of the Senior Pastor Search Committee to find a man whose giftedness and heart's desire match the needs of this local church. What is your giftedness and heart's desire? If you were free to pursue aspirations planted by the Holy Spirit, what would you be doing?

Perceptions can be deceiving and I feel inadequate in answering this question. God gives gifts to us both in static form (you own them) and in dynamic form (when the church needs them). However, I feel that after years of maturing and being molded by the Great Shepherd, I can know with some degree of certainty that my preaching and administration are slightly stronger than my gift of caring and compassion. The gift of management can be a blind spot in team leading and partnership. The power of shared belief and envisioning are what I am learning. Here are a few of my ministry philosophies incubated for some time and I hope to them to fruition:

1. The doctrine of the Church is the most assaulted doctrine in a church.
2. The power of the discipleship is a healthy nurturing model for every church.
3. The ultimate sense of Christian growth rest in personal and daily encounter with God in Quiet Time.
4. Grace-based initiatives are the best avenue to restore the zeal and passion of the church ministries.

My passion continues to be shaped by His call. Moses' passion is turned to humble leadership. At 52, I feel the greater urgency to develop a layer of mature Christians and lay people who can model and live out for Jesus. Such leaders and mature Christians can be a blessing down the road to 2-3 generations. The age-old and time-tested principle remains to be developing discipleship vs maintaining a service-based ministry where the needs of the church take over the mission of the church. Given available resources, I have a deepened understanding of giving out and living out for Him through developing young or younger pastors so they can be the effective tools of world evangelism and church revival. There is no greater principle than to follow what Jesus has done to glorify the Father. Acts 20:32.