

Pentecostal Women Pioneers and Leaders of Malaysia: Testimonies and Stories

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Introduction

This work celebrates some of the key women leaders of pentecostalism in Malaysia. Written by Ps Tryphena Law and Ps Ling Siew Lim, the life and ministry of these women are presented as ‘dictionary’ entries to provide an introductory background and understanding of the significance of these remarkable women. While providing essential background, this work also utilises the form of ‘testimony’¹ from the pentecostal tradition to identify the work of God in their lives. The women celebrated in this work have been identified as key women leaders of pentecostal in Malaysia by key Malaysian leaders. They include: Ps Wendy Ching Poh Chee, Ps Tryphena Law Pek Leng, Ps Teo Kwee Keng, Ps Dorcas Wong Lai Meng, Ps Wong Yin Ming.

1. ‘Ching Poh Chee, Wendy’

Wendy Ching Poh Chee (1956 -) is an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God, Malaysia (AG Malaysia). She has been the Academic Dean of Bible College of Malaysia (BCM), which is the national seminary of AG Malaysia, for 26 years. Her contributions in the advancement of academia for the largest Pentecostal seminary in Malaysia is closely related to how the Holy Spirit birthed forth these desires in her that have turned into reality today.

¹ For further discussion on ‘testimony’ in the pentecostal tradition, see Mark Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (London: Routledge, 2016); Tony Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit: A Pentecostal Model for Interreligious Dialogue* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2011); James K.A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

Born on 27th September 1956 to a Chinese Buddhist family, she is the eldest of seven siblings of three boys and three girls. Her father was a pious Buddhist. When she was doing her internship as a college student in Penang, a neighbor tried to share the gospel with her. But it was only later at the age of 20 that she decided to give her life to Jesus.

Her conversion was truly the work of the Holy Spirit. A newly converted friend of hers invited her to attend a special meeting. It was a meeting on Baptism of the Holy Spirit, so it was not the usual evangelistic meeting for newcomers to accept Christ. The irony was, Wendy was encouraging her friend who brought her to church that day to go to the altar to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Supernaturally, while she was seated at the back of the church seeing her friend and others at the altar receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, she experienced the Lord. The Holy Spirit prompted her to receive Jesus as her personal Lord and Savior. When she prayed the sinner's prayer, she was in tears and immediately she knew that Jesus is alive. Something happened to her heart that day and till today, the sense that Jesus is alive never left her.

Her encounter with God has always been very personal. Her desire to be filled by the Holy Spirit became a reality when she just simply read and followed the instructions in a small handbook on the Baptism of the Spirit.

In response to a desire to serve God, Wendy went to the Bible Institute of Singapore where she completed her Diploma in Theology. Upon graduation she returned to serve in her home church, Emmanuel Assembly Ipoh. Even though she was unable to read Mandarin, she started the Cantonese speaking ministry in Emmanuel Assembly, Ipoh.

After pastoring for 6 years, she went to Australia to pursue her Bachelor of Ministry for a year at Garden City School of Ministries, Brisbane. Having felt that the Lord is calling her into a teaching ministry, she proceeded to do the Master of Divinity at Asian Theological Seminary at Philippines.

Her journey with God has impacted the way she trusted the Lord in her spiritual growth. In the Philippines, God blessed her with scholarships that enable her to have adequate finance for her studies. She saw the faithfulness of God in never failing to provide her alternative means of finance even when a crisis occur that affected her scholarship.

In 1992, Wendy joined BCM as a faculty member. The college encouraged her to pursue a Master of Theology but due to insufficient funds for faculty development, she has to source for her own support. That was when she witnessed again God's miraculous provision. She received 4 international scholarships which covered all her tuition fees at Regent College in Vancouver, Canada. There in Vancouver, God enabled her to find a fully furnished basement room that comes complete with a private kitchen all for the price of a room. By the grace of God, Wendy was able to complete her course work and thesis within 12 months.

Upon completing her ThM, she returned to BCM and in 1996, she took on the role of Academic Dean and Registrar simultaneously. In her time as the Academic Dean, BCM has started various programs like Master of Ministry, Master of Divinity, Master of Leadership Development and a Counseling program.

In 2015, BCM joined with AGST Alliance and Malaysia Bible Seminary to offer the Doctor of Ministry in Leadership program aimed to equip ministry practitioners to be more competent and reflective in their leadership roles. BCM celebrated her first doctoral graduate in 2022.

Wendy's motto is: We must serve God's purpose in our own generation (Acts 13:36).



Appendix 1: Ps Wendy Ching Poh Chee

By Tryphena Law Pek Leng

2. Law Pek Leng, Tryphena

Tryphena Law Pek Leng is one of the important, influential women in Malaysia's Christianity and the Pentecostal movement. She is an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God of Malaysia, a Christian counsellor, and an educator.

She was born on 21st April 1968 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Growing up in a Buddhist family, she was the firstborn, while the parents expected a son instead. In her growing up, she sought love and acceptance from parents and friends who could not fill the emptiness in her heart. She was forced to take the role of a surrogate husband to support her mother after a violent quarrel between her parents when she was thirteen years old. Since then, her image of men was shattered while she was yearning for acceptance among the female group whom she admired to be. At the same time, she has been addicted to pornography since her teenage years. During her young adulthood, she became a lesbian.

At thirteen, she was invited to her school's Christian Fellowship. It was there that she first heard of God's love and the Gospel. Attracted by the love of God, she accepted Christ and converted to Christianity, although she was struggling with her self-image and gender identity. She answered the call and enrolled in the Bible College of Malaysia in 1997 while practising lesbian life secretly. Under the mighty move of the Holy Spirit, she finally surrendered her life after the break-up with her female partner. She began a journey of healing and recovering with Rev. Mike and Diane Constantine's companion and the program provided by Choices, Singapore. Since then, she found great relief and liberty in Christ after struggling with same-sex attraction and living a double life for many years.

In 2002, she joined the Pursuing Liberty Under Christ (PLUC) board, a Christian organization to help those who struggle with same-sex attraction and confused sexual identity, regardless of their religious background and ethnic group. In 2003, she became the Executive Director of PLUC and was actively involved in providing pastoral counselling, support groups, talks and seminars on LGBTQ issues. Under her leadership, PLUC organized the very first inter-denominational and nationwide Christian conference on LGBTQ in 2007 at Banner of Love Church. Subsequently, many regional conferences were held in 2009, 2012 at Full Gospel Assembly Kuala Lumpur, 2015 at Glad Tidings Petaling Jaya, 2016 at Life Point Subang Jaya and in 2019, co-organized with Assemblies of God of Malaysia and Bible College of Malaysia.

She is active in the leadership of the Assemblies of God of Malaysia. From 2014 to 2017, she served as the board member of Bible College of Malaysia. From 2016 to 2017, she was elected to the Assemblies of God of Malaysia Kuala Lumpur-East District committee as District Secretary. She is also the adjunct faculty of the Bible College of Malaysia. Besides that, she is also invited to teach in other seminaries like Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, Seminari Theoloji Malaysia, Malaysia Bible Seminary, Borneo Bible School, Cambodia Bible Institute, Everest Theological Institute, Nepal and also National Association of Christian Counselors, Malaysia. She has been invited to speak on LGBTQ issues in Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, USA.

Besides being an active committee member of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Women Commission in Malaysia, she has been actively serving at the leadership level for the Malaysia Alliance of Christian Social Workers and CareGivers. She is also serving the Board of Trustees for PADERI, which stands for Pastoral Development and Renewal Initiative,

comprising a group of pastors, lay leaders and theologians of various denominations who are concerned for the personal spiritual formation and the development of pastors and lay leaders in the Church in Malaysia.

She published her first booklet entitled *Tryphena's Journey: From Struggling Pastor to Pastoring Strugglers*. It is a booklet on her journey out of homosexuality and how she provides support for those who want to discover their identity in Christ. Her story was made into an e-movie, "Lady", by the Information and Communication Board of Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference in the year 2013. In 2018, Tryphena appeared in an interview about her life featured on the Dare to Change Facebook page as part of the global advocacy. Later in the year 2019, the website truelove.is produced Tryphena's story entitled "Unbroken".

She is a well-sought preacher, conference speaker and trainer among the denominations of Christianity Malaysia. She is the leading architect to establish a nationwide support system for LGBTQ in different denominations through respective churches. She is the core advocator on LGBTQ issues from a Christian perspective. She is also recognized as the foremost important Christianity representative in the inter-faith dialogues and networks on LGBTQ issues in Malaysia.



Appendix 2: Ps Tryphena Law Pek Leng

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By Lim, Ling Siew

3. Teo, Kwee Keng

Teo Kwee Keng (1952 -) an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God Malaysia (AG Malaysia), has been in the ministry for more than 40 years as an evangelist, church planter and pioneered prayer ministries both locally and internationally.

Kwee Keng born on 14th October, 1952 and she came from a village located at Morib in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. Her grandfather who originated from China came to Morib and started the fishing industry. He was famous and rich man but because of gambling, he lost all his property and then passed away. Kwee Keng grew with 3 brothers and 5 sisters of which she is the second youngest. She lost her father at a young age and due to poverty, her youngest sister was given away.

Her brothers had to work due to poverty and when she was 10 years old, they moved to Klang. Due to her late grandfather's connection with the royal family, they stayed in the royal palace compound and serve the royal family till she turned 15 years old. Kwee Keng's grandfather built the temple in Morib and when her dad passed away, her brothers inherited the temple. Therefore, her family are staunch temple worshippers.

At the age of 17, her family went through years of hardship like death of father, siblings having to start working at a young age, seeing people died of young age in her village and witnessed the practises of witchcrafts and all these have led her to ask about "life and death questions". She saw fear in her family who are staunch temple worshippers. Her best friend died at the

age of 14 due to kidney failure and that drove her to wonder where will their destination be, will she get to meet her best friend one day and questions about who this true God began to cause her to begin this search.

At the age of 17, Kwee Keng cycled to a nearby Catholic church near the royal palace compound and she knelt in front of a shrine at this church and whispered a simple prayer if she will ever get to know who this god is. Two months later she moved to a new place and she lived right in front of a Christian family. The Christian neighbour invited Kwee Keng to church, which was Glad Tidings Klang. The Lord touched her, she repented and she gave her life to Jesus that day. She cried as she felt the love of the Heavenly Father which she never experienced as her father passed away when she was just two years old. She knew she was a new creation that day.

That night she started to pray and called God her Father. She joined the church first prayer meeting and during that meeting, she was filled with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The infilling was like river to her whereby she could not stop speaking in tongues for hours. Even when she was at home, she continued to pray fervently at least three hours daily till she entered the seminary. The Holy Spirit taught her how to pray. These events were significant in her spiritual journey but most importantly has developed her intimacy with God.

Kwee Keng began the work as an evangelist by sharing the gospel wherever she goes. She was even serving as interpreter in her church. She was just 18 years old. Her family persecuted her because she was so passionate about Jesus. In 1972, she completed her secondary education at Methodist Girls School and the Lord called her to a seminary known as Bible Institute of Malaysia (BIM) but today known as Bible College of Malaysia which is Assemblies of God Malaysia National school. Kwee Keng graduated in 1975. She pioneered the first church at Kapar Assembly of God in Kapar in 1974 during her second year in Bible School.

The church planting vision was birthed during her years of intercession when God put the burden of souls into her heart. She spent many years in tears for the lost. In 1976, she joined Betty Teh to pastor Berean Assembly in Batu Pahat, Johor and then took over Berean in 1977 with only 40 students and stayed there till 2019. It was a place of training, moulding, breaking and testing by God to take her deeper and higher onto Him. In this place of prayer and labour, God unfolded His calling and destiny for Kwee Keng in Malaysia and to the nations.

While pastoring Berean, she continued to spread gospel and plant churches in Johor, the southern part of West Malaysia. The Pentecostal heritage in her whereby her experience with the Holy Spirit has given her great burden for souls. Kwee Keng knew she was called to bring souls into His kingdom. Most of her family members came to know the Lord through her. Her discipline of three hours prayer has softened the hearts of the people to the Lord. It was during her leadership that more than thirty full-time workers raised for the Pentecostal movement.

In 1996 she had encounter with the Lord during her sickness and she nearly gave up serving God due to her many years of church planting. But God came to revive her and led her to walk many miles especially among the Chinese churches. Kwee Keng was the first woman elected and served in the Executive Committee of AG for sixteen years until she stepped down in 2012. During this period, she was appointed as the Southern Division Supervisor, Chinese Language Supervisor, East Malaysia Supervisor and later the Prayer Commission Chairperson for AG Malaysia. Serving in these capacities brought her many learning experiences as she travelled to hundreds of churches.

The exposure made her a more equipped minister. During her 10th year leading the AG Prayer Commission, God enabled them to raise more than 6000 intercessors that are praying incessantly. In 2000-2004, Kwee Keng was the senior pastor of Glad Tidings Klang, the church where she came to know Christ and later became a church of about 1000. For the past 15 years, she is also the catalyst in mobilising thousands to pray for the nation. Kwee Keng is involved at the national level prayer network like Malaysia United Prayer Wall. The baptism of the Holy Spirit has given her the burden to intercede not just for Malaysia but to 32 nations.

Her 40 over years of ministry is truly led by the Holy Spirit. Her love relationship with God fills her with great joy, even in the presence of physical sickness, financial needs and great trials. Today she has the joy of seeing the salvation of souls, churches being planted and many young people answering the call of God to full time ministry.



Appendix 3: Ps Teo Kwee Keng

By Tryphena Law Pek Leng

4. Wong Lai Meng, Dorcas

Dorcas Wong Lai Meng (1949 – 2018) was a pioneer, a pastor, an advocator of Chinese culture into Christian practice and innovative in all her endeavors. The innovative spirit of Dorcas Wong has enabled her to take her pastoral ministry beyond conventional boundaries. She has devoted her life to serving the Lord. She was like an arrow polished by the hands of God, her light shined forth in her ministerial domains.

Dorcas was born in Kuala Lumpur on 20th May 1949, and was adopted by a Chinese Family. She has an adopted sister and was deeply loved by her adopted parents. Even though her parents were not Christians, they had great influence over her life especially the way her adopted mother showed care for people. When she was young girl, she was injured by some woods that hit her head and developed epilepsy. This incident impacted her even when she was in her teens. She studied in Kuan Cheng Secondary Girls School but did not complete her studies. She had low self-esteem because of her epilepsy condition in public and had suicidal thoughts.

She was saved in 1965 in the First Assembly of God, Kuala Lumpur church (previously known as Pudu Assembly of God, Gospel Hall). Her salvation story was similar to the happening in the Book of Acts. She was out with a basket wearing her wooden clogs to buy some charcoals one night when she heard worship song from a church nearby. The sound of her wooden clogs caught everyone's attention in church. It was a prayer meeting and she sat in that church listening to the pastor's preaching and responded to the altar call. She responded to Jesus as her best friend and she felt all her burden was lifted away immediately. She experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that night and spoke in tongues. She was just 16 years old.

Her parents found out that she became Christian, she was beaten and persecuted. Dorcas asked God for strength to continue to believe in Christ despite all these sufferings. She knew that only in Christ she will have this genuine love. Her parents saw her perseverance and began to accept her decision. She pursued Christ and serve Him faithfully in church.

Dorcas was amongst the first group of students to enroll for study in the Chinese Department of Bible Institute Malaysia (BIM) at its inception in 1967 and the first to have graduated from the Chinese department. Following her graduation from BIM in 1970, she started her ministry co-pioneering the Kampung Cochrane Chapel, which was later renamed as Grace Assembly of God but today known as Charis Christian Centre.

In 1973, she got married to John Lim, who later became an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God Malaysia and started to serve in Elim Chapel Kuala Lumpur. Their three children are Andrew, Peter and Esther. After her husband graduated from Malaysia Bible Seminary, they were sent to Kampong Ampang Tasik where they planted their first church known as Glory Assembly of God. While her husband was installed as the senior pastor of First

Assembly of God, Kuala Lumpur church in 1986, Dorcas became the senior pastor of Glory Assembly of God.

In 1991, First Assembly of God, Kuala Lumpur church invited her to start Mandarin service in order to pastor the Mandarin-speaking believers. Dorcas was active in the Chinese ministries nationwide, and dedicated to writing. She was a committee member and President of the “Persatuan Penulis-penulis Kristian Malaysia” (Association of Malaysia Christian Writers), Chief Editor of AG Voice, President of the pastors’ wives’ group or CCOWE – West Malaysia. She continued to equip herself by attending Masters of Ministry in MBS in 1994. Later, she also audited Doctorate of Ministry at the Alliance Bible Alliance Bible Seminary in Hong Kong.

Even in the early years of ministry, she recognized the importance of incorporating Chinese culture into Christian practice. In order to reach out to those who held fast to the traditional belief that Christianity was a “Western religion”, Dorcas introduced Cantonese gospel songs to them. She also formed a Chinese Orchestra as a mean of engaging with the community’s interest in traditional Chinese music in order to attract them to church. Additionally, she introduced many other activities that featured traditional Chinese culture practices such as Chinese tea culture, Chinese dances and even ancient leaf-blowing skills in making music. By cleverly leveraging on these cultural arts and activities, she developed an effective evangelistic tool to reach out to the community. In this way, she endeavored to instill a better understanding of Christianity among them and thus, remove their fears of “losing” their Chinese culture once they became Christians.

More significantly, Dorcas’ pioneering work was not limited to church ministry alone. With barely any financial resources and despite skepticism from their peers, together with her husband, they took the step of faith to focus on social-care ministry. Together between year 2000 - 2005, they established various ministries like “Love Eternal Charity Association” (LECA), “Chinese Orchestra Artistic Troupe”, “Faith Gamble Rehab Centre”, “Single Parent Families Association”, “Evergreen lifelong learning centre”, and “Single parent families shelter home”.

She preached in churches of all denominations. Her ministries were all well-recognized by all, serving the Lord whole-heartedly. She has led her children to serve God passionately. However, her health started to deteriorate as she was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis in the beginning of 2015. She handed over the ministries to her daughter, Esther towards the end of 2015.

Dorcas has been faithful to the various missions that God has entrusted her with throughout her ministerial life. As a polished arrow in God’s hands, she has always forged ahead boldly, giving her all to penetrate new ground and overcome whatever obstacles and trials to achieve God’s purposes. She was called home to the Lord on 4th Jan 2018.

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By Tryphena Law Pek Leng

5. Wong Yin Ming

Wong Yin Ming (1957 -) a wife and a mother of 3 children, is one of the few women pastor in the Assemblies of God of Malaysia (AG Malaysia) that is married to a lay-man, a board member of the Bible College of Malaysia (BCM) which is the National seminary of AG Malaysia, Senior pastor of Subang Jaya Assembly of God (SJAG), held position in Central District Committee of AG Malaysia and also is the first married woman pastor that is voted into the Executive Committee of AG Malaysia. She is one of the catalysts used by God to pave the way for married women pastors then to be ordained in the AG Malaysia.

Yin Ming grew up in a purely Chinese educated Taoist family with five other siblings. Born on 10th August, 1957, she is the youngest in her family and had the privilege to receive her education in a male favoured society. It was in an English missionary secondary school that she had the opportunity to be exposed to the gospel and received her salvation at the age of 15. Prior giving her life to Jesus, she put God to test and encountered God.

She secretly attended ISCA which is a Christian fellowship for students and was called to serve the Lord full-time at 16 years old. But upon graduation, she was confused, especially with the different career opportunities available during then. She desired to be an accountant. After dragging on for about four years before she finally gave into God's Will. She doubted if this is

what God really wanted her to do. Like Gideon who asked for signs of confirmation, The Lord also convicted her heart through prophetic words and also the 'inner witness' of the Spirit.

In 1979, Yin Ming enrolled into Bible College of Malaysia (BCM) at the age of 21 and graduated after three years. Her first ministry was serving at Glad Tidings Petaling Jaya (GTPJ) as a pastoral staff in charge of the Christian Education, which covered the curriculum for children up to adults. She enjoyed serving in Christian Education because she loves teaching. While serving as the Christian Education Director, she was also doing pastoral work as God was preparing her eventually to pastor a church then.

In the 1980's, Yin Ming was appointed as the National Director for Church Education department in AG Malaysia. Together with her committee, they organised National teachers' training camps, National children camps and many children day programs. The Church Education department was one of the most active departments in AG Malaysia. Children ministries in different churches begin to grow during her leadership.

But in 1991, she moved from her pastoral work to teaching in BCM as one of the full-time faculty and then as the Academic Dean. Her significant contribution in BCM was to lead BCM team through the accreditation process with Asia Pacific Theological Association (APTA). She was also the Chinese department dean in BCM. Being in the ministry for 16 years and yet not ordained, Yin Ming became one of the catalysts in challenging the movement to consider ordaining lecturers in seminary as well as married women pastors. Subsequently, it was in 1997 that she together with many married women pastors were being ordained by the AG Malaysia.

Even though she loved teaching, she had never quite left pastoral work even then but continue to serve in the church which her family is attending, Subang Jaya Assembly of God (SJAG). She taught in the Bible Classes of the School of Christian Growth. She enjoyed teaching in BCM but come the sixth year, her Spirit grew unfathomably restless. She felt that the Holy Spirit was leading her back to pastoral ministry and she did not know that the Founding Pastor of SJAG would be resigning.

It was impossible for her as a married woman to be in the Senior pastor position yet in 1997, she found herself transiting into the role of a Senior Pastor of SJAG. She is the first married woman in AG Malaysia that became a Senior pastor of a church. Most of the women pastors then are either single or married to pastors. Yin Ming then married a non-pastor husband (Francis Yip) whom today is also an ordained minister with AG Malaysia and serve under her leadership as the church mission pastor.

Her strength and gifting as a married woman pastor have impacted other married women pastors to embrace the call of God for them to sit in the boardroom and lead churches. Her leadership is not just being recognised in AG Malaysia but also in the community where her church is located. She is currently leading a pastors' fellowship (Love Subang Pastors'

Fellowship) as the Chairperson whereby 90% of the pastors are men. Her leadership is also recognised in the Christian community.

Under her leadership as the chairperson of the Love Subang Pastors' Fellowship, the churches came together for the first time organizing a Christmas Bazaar to raise funds for charity. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Yin Ming managed to get the Love Subang churches together and network with a refugee school and then coordinate the distribution of groceries to the Myanmar migrants.

Yin Ming is a 'full-fledged' Pentecostal and she grew with strong Pentecostal heritage during her youth days. Through strong discipleship training program and her sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit has enabled her being led by the Lord to fill in "gaps" for many different transitions wherever the Lord has placed her in. Today she is preparing her church and leadership for succession plan. She is in the process of passing her baton to the younger generation whom God has been raising in her church.

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By Tryphena Law Pek Leng