

Correspondence No. 1

From: Jasper Yee [mailto:jasper.yzy@gmail.com]

Sent: Saturday, September 18, 2021 11:35 PM

To: AGM2021@gsccc.org.sg

Subject: Timing of Voting Deadline and Visibility of Issues to Members

Dear Deacon Board,

I would like to refer to:-

1) The Pre-AGM Dialogue held on the 18th Sep 2021

2) and The "Resolution 8: To Approve the Budget of \$150,000.00 for the Upgrading of Toilets at Level 2 and Level 4 of our Church"

It has come to my realisation that the voting on these issues would be done prior to the AGM held on the 26th Sep 2021. Given that the overwhelming majority of members did not attend the non-mandatory Pre-AGM Dialogue, I have deep concerns if all the members casting their votes would at that point in time have a complete understanding of the issues and resolutions at hand.

While the Pre-AGM is open to all members to participate, to better understand and voice any opinions on the matters, we have seen that only 70-80 members were online during the event. This would directly imply that the vast majority of members would not have been exposed to a forum of discourse and explanation on the matters. Furthermore, a sum of 150,000 dollars would seem logical to me that the resolution requires much more visibility by the rest of the members as that amount is approximately the entire sum of offerings collected for the Church Building Fund in financial year 2020/20201.

We have all seen in the past where matters of similar amounts (eg, Purchase of Church Van, Upgrading of AV system) were given a much more substantial platform of discourse during the actual AGM before members cast their vote.

Can we say that this Resolution 8 has been successfully and adequately pitched to and feedbacked by the members prior to voting, much like how we did it in the past? Be it in person or done via zoom, I believe we can have a more creative way to **proactively** increase the visibility of the matter to the members.

Thank you for your kind consideration on this matter given the weight of the resolution and the insurmountable importance of the Church Building Fund to the Church's future.

Regards,

Jasper Yee (MC)

Correspondence No. 2

On Tue, Sep 21, 2021 at 2:12 PM Fui Kim Chong <cfksing@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Jasper,

Thank you for writing to us. The Deacon Board (DB) appreciates your concern and input.

This voting process is in its 2nd year, introduced last year due to the pandemic situation. In 2020, when there is a strict restriction of gathering (50 per zone, 1m safe distance, etc.), the parliament passed a law to allow companies, societies, charities, etc., to conduct virtual Annual General Meeting. The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and Charity Council issued a set of guidelines for us to follow, including the process of voting – to vote before the AGM date and announce the result at the AGM.

In 2021, DB was hoping to organize an onsite AGM. However, the situation did not improve. When Singapore went into another “semi-lock down” position (heightened alert) between May and Aug 2021, DB had no choice but to continue with the Virtual AGM mode again.

We understand your concern that there seem to be so few people attending the Pre-AGM dialogue session when we need to vote for resolutions, including the proposed renovation budget for level 2 and level 4 toilets. DB first informed the members about the Pre-AGM in Aug and encouraged members through the bulletin, pulpit, WhatsApp, and SMS to attend this event as there are important matters to discuss. As a result, this year’s participants are the highest since we started the dialogue ten years ago.

DB deliberated this matter in depth over a few meetings and sought feedback from various channels, such as congregation exco, ministries that frequently used such facilities (Youth Ministry, choir, etc.) before deciding to move forward with this proposal. The request to upgrade the 2nd level toilet started almost ten years ago when the choir members often gave feedback on the shortage of facilities. To meet the demand, we have to turn the male bathroom into the female toilet for Sunday. Indeed, this will not be a long-term proposition. As for the level 4 toilet, it serves both level 4 and level 5 ministry. With the increase in activity and the need to mitigate the pandemic situation, we must upgrade the toilet as soon as possible.

We believe your concern is on the cost as it seems high. DB has asked for quotations from 3 different contractors, and the \$150,000 budget was derived from the highest quote + 10% buffer. DB set a higher budget as, according to the constitution, DB needs to seek approval from members for any amount of \$10,000. If the members accept this resolution, DB will do its best to control the budget and seek the best deal for the church. With your expertise and training, we believe you will be able to help in this process (budget control). We invite you to join this project team to monitor the upgrading process (from budget to implementation). Please consider it favourably.

Lastly, we seek your permission to publish your letter and our reply on the church website so that all can consider your input and our answer equally.

Regards

Fui Kim,
Chairperson
Deacon Board 2020/2021

Correspondence No. 3

On Tue, Sep 21, 2021 at 9:59 PM Jasper Yee <jasper.yzy@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Chairperson Fui Kim,

Thank you for your prompt and very insightful response to my queries and concerns. I am ok with the publication of the emails as an open discourse.

I appreciate the DB's intentions and vigour to address long standing problems aglamated with present issues, and coming up with proposals for the member's considerations. While it is in my view that \$150,000 is a sum too high to solve the issue on the shortage of toilets, this conclusion is made through prior contextual knowledge, inferences made, hearing of additional insights by the board and members during the pre-AGM dialogue, and from your reply to my email below. Much of this information that primes a member to understand the situation as completely as possible is lacking in the process, and this is precisely what I was trying to convey in my earlier email.

May I bring up some examples and precedence to illustrate my thoughts:-

1) In the document explaining Resolution 8, it was not brought up that the proposed sum is a premium over pre-covid times. This was only highlighted during the pre-AGM dialogue and the justification for this premium was explained to be [1] lesser disruption during lower usage of the premise, [2] no guarantee that the price will ever go down, and [3] that GST will increase in the near future. At this very point, the matter becomes more than just about approving an acceptable sum for the works, but rather a multi-faceted balance between the Need, the Cost premium, the Timing of renovation, and if waiting it out could allow for a lower cost in the future. These factors would and could not be directly derived from the documents as put forth in the voting portal.

2) There is also an indirect link that can be drawn between the church's financial statement and the cost of this upgrading proposal, which further puts one in perspective of the sum. The \$150,000 is just shy of an entire year's offering for the church's building fund. It is also not uncommon knowledge that the Church would have to address an inescapable issue of a new church lease in the coming 20+ years, an issue that I have raised amongst church members and some members of the board. How "healthy" (as described during the dialogue) is the fund? This perspective puts into question if prudence is of key in this issue.

3) In the past, voting was done by members who have attended the AGM, listened to the full explanation of the proposal, discouraged by members, and with clarification made etc. only then and there when members have this full plate of insights, then a decision is made. The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and Charity Council issued a set of guidelines which stipulate voting to be done prior to AGM, but this is not a reason to not more aggressively engage the church members prior. Take the annual Mission Convention as an example. Multiple updates during Sunday services and cell group level engagements were done to proactively spur members and be in the know as the convention approaches. On the other hand, the pre-AGM dialogue was conducted just a week before the actual AGM with little broadcast of the issues that would require members to vote on. The pre-AGM dialogue was also held AFTER the polling is open, where it seems to leave the resolution inflexible to changes if a sound suggestion was to be raised during the dialogue, or for members to vote with or without attending them. This is a stark difference when in the past, members could only vote when they attended the presentation and Q&A during the actual meeting. While COVID does not allow us to have a live session as in the past, could then the pre-AGM be brought forward, or more active engagement on the grassroots level be done? Would this be all the more pertinent considering the number of issues to vote on, i.e. constitutional and budgetary matters, and with much more in number and complexity than the past year of 2020.

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While my view on this specific issue of the toilet upgrading may not be "the only right conclusion", my concerns stems more from the conditions and preamble of the process that reduces the visibility of the issues to the members voting on them, and if we can say that as much ground, opinions, questions, and outreach has been done? I am also well aware that the "ship" has already sailed, but in the unfortunate case when a pandemic situation spills forth to 2022, would things be run the same way as we did for the past 2 years?

Best Regards,
Jasper (MC)

Correspondence No. 4

From: **Fui Kim Chong** <cfksing@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Sep 22, 2021 at 11:52 PM

Subject: Re: Timing of Voting Deadline and Visibility of Issues to Members

To: Jasper Yee <jasper.yzy@gmail.com>

Cc: ng_wee_hua@yahoo.com <ng_wee_hua@yahoo.com>, Lui Chi Pang <funmlin1@yahoo.com>, Yeow San Chua <yeowsan.chua@gscce.org.sg>, Rev See <choohar.see@gscce.org.sg>

Dear Jasper.

Thank you for agreeing to publish the emails between you and the Board.

We understand the point you are presenting, that information does not seem to be readily available for members to make informed decisions. But, first and foremost, let me state it clearly that the Deacon Board (DB) does not hide any information from any members.

DB had to balance what is easy to understand and what information is deemed necessary in making a proposition to the members. Grace Church has an aging population, with more than 50% of the members above 50 years old; DB tries to be as concise as possible for the ease of reading and review. Before putting up such documents, DB and or its designated committee would have met relevant ministry leaders and committees to collate information and feedback. For example, the EXCO discussed the proposed amendments to the Constitution at Leaders'ers' Focus Session in Aug 2020,

The Notice Meeting No 2 and the resolution documents were sent out by email on 3rd Sept, 23 days before the AGM date, encompassing three weekends (4,5,11,12,18,19, Sept) where members would have gathered to attend service. Therefore, I sincerely think that there is more than enough time for anyone to clarify any doubts with any leaders. Members can also raise their queries by sending emails to the Church or approach their respective Congregation EXCO. You probably would have seen me standing opposite Church every Sunday after MC service, and I am delighted whenever members approach me to clarify issues. I treasure the opportunity to share DB's plan and view. I believe the rest of the deacons are readily doing the same too.

Members do not have to wait till the AGM date to raise questions, which a few individuals had dominated in the past years, so much so that DB has to set a time limit per question (even then, not all abide by the rule). That is the premise that we organized the Pre-AGM dialogue for members to have an additional platform for feedback.

Regarding the 3 points you are mentioned:

1. As explained in the above paragraph, we aim to be concise in our proposition (ease of reading and understanding) and at the same time provide ample opportunity ("window period" and channels) for members to clarify and give feedback. It could be your first time hearing the reasons at the Pre-AGM session, but others would have received the same explanation in other sessions. I want to highlight that the sum of S\$150,000.00 is not the actual cost of the project. The paper clearly states that the Board received quotations ranging from \$110K to \$137K. Should this resolution be passed by the members, the Board shall endeavor to work at the minimum possible cost. With this intention, we invite you (with your design expertise) to join us in working out the most cost-optimum plan.

2. I am glad you asked about the church building fund, as we can share the insight here. Please see the table below:

FY	Receipt	Fund Transfer	Interest	Expenses	Surplus/Deficit	Balance
09/10	\$52,183	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$52,183	\$307,702
10/11	\$118,281	\$19,191	\$0	\$0	\$137,472	\$445,174
11/12	\$167,633	\$0	\$1,450	\$0	\$169,083	\$614,257
12/13	\$1,916,259	\$2,086	\$3,281	\$2,092,351	-\$170,725	\$443,533
13/14	\$244,834	\$3,482	\$3,362	\$0	\$251,678	\$695,211
14/15	\$108,610	\$11,139	\$2,019	\$0	\$121,768	\$816,979
15/16	\$166,449	\$0	\$5,903	\$0	\$172,352	\$989,331
16/17	\$154,533	\$0	\$10,204	\$54,872	\$109,865	\$1,099,196
17/18	\$160,067	\$0	\$11,423	\$0	\$171,490	\$1,270,686
18/19	\$211,253	\$0	\$12,522	\$0	\$223,775	\$1,494,461
19/20	\$170,102	\$0	\$31,764	\$61,157	\$140,709	\$1,635,170
20/21	\$158,922	\$0	\$18,061	\$0	\$176,983	\$1,812,153

All these data are available in our Annual Reports

- From FY 11/12 and FY 12/13, we saw a significant increase in building funds because of the church lease renewal. More than 1.7million was raised between Sept 2012 (After the Sept AGM) and April 2013 (day of EAGM). Again, God's faithfulness was in full display when He compelled the members to step up in meeting the challenge. We strongly believe that this will repeat when the need arises again.

- In 2016 EAGM, members agreed on the following Church Building Strategy

2016 – 2026	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To expand church ministry – Local Mission (China Friends Ministry and Migrant Workers) 2. To engage communities around the church neighborhood through Love and Care/Grace Elderly World ministry involvement. 3. To explore Christian Education ministry.
2026 – 2028	To draft plan for redevelopment and approach the relevant Authorities for renewing the land lease and approval of redevelopment plan.
2028	To redevelop church land with new land lease. The redevelopment plan will include worship spaces, fellowship and education facilities, church office space, etc

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We are five years away from the 2026-2028 phase, but I have already sounded out to the Church leadership on the need to kick start the process now as we face the changing landscape and circumstances. Such as do we need colossal building space, or shall we consider scaling down and use technology to bring the Church to everyone's doorstep (Such as Live Streaming of worship service).

- In the same EAGM, members have also agreed to spell out the use of the Church Building Fund

- A. To upgrade the existing church building at 14 Queen Street;
- B. To pay for the renewal of the land lease of 14 Queen Street;
- C. To redevelop the church building at 14 Queen Street

We believe the building fund is in a healthy and stable position; instead of putting the funds to the bank with a low interest rate, it will be better to invest a portion of it in upgrading church facilities and serve members' needs.

3. We were hoping to hold an on-site (Face to Face) 2021 AGM; however, circumstances do not allow us to do so. As explained in the above paragraphs, we have mitigated this challenge by extensively collating views and feedback from various ministry leaders; extended period of Notice (compared to non-COVID 19 years), pre-GM dialogue, etc. In addition, the admin office sent the documents one week before the electronic voting started. Lastly, at the Pre-AGM session, you will probably hear my request to the election committee - to explore conducting a live vote at next year's virtual AGM, which certainly meets what you hope to see.

There will never be a perfect solution for every circumstance, and there will always be trade-offs, especially in today's pandemic climate, where circumstances change almost every other day. Perhaps, upholding each other in prayer will be the best option as we do our very best to fulfill the delegated responsibilities and duties.

The best position to be in the thick of the action, receiving updated information, understanding Church's circumstances and needs are to step up and serve. Pastors and Deacons have always encouraged members to come forward and participate in this servanthood journey, as one will taste the goodness of God and see His faithfulness in work. We do hope you can step up to serve too.

Regards

Fui Kim
Deacon Board Chair