

## MY JOURNEY WITH THE YOUTHS : FROM AUNTY TO LEADER OF YOUTHS



At Central Market, Phnom Penh, Cambodia in 2016

Who would have thought that at 50, I would be leading a youth ministry; mentoring and shepherding the youths. ME, an aunty and a mother of two!

What could I possibly know about the struggles, dreams, and energy of young people? But God's ways are higher than ours, and when He calls, He equips.

This is my story—a journey of tears, laughter and divine surprises!

### From Burnout to Breakthrough

After leading the Youth Ministry with Joel Neo, then Youth Chairman, for a year in 2015, I was close to being burnt out. The weight of this responsibility was overwhelming, and I questioned myself if I was even supposed to be doing this.

It was while at Tung Ling Bible School in 2016, God spoke clearly that He wanted me to “*work for and with the next generation*” and be a *spiritual mother* to them. That confirmation became my anchor through countless storms and rocky waters.

Little did I know, this was not just a temporary assignment—it was a destiny shift!

From serving the elderly in Hokkien Ministry for a decade, I had to step into a completely different world. I had to learn, unlearn, and relearn what it meant and took to connect with youths. It was sometimes uncomfortable, messy, and humbling, it was also one of the most transformative and fulfilling seasons of my life.

## The Coolest Aunty in Town?

One of the best moments for me came from an unlikely source—a “cool” youth who told me casually, “You’re the coolest Aunty I know!” That affirmation meant the world to me.

It was not about trying to be cool or hip; it was about being myself and being real. Authenticity became my mantra. I learned to be vulnerable, to laugh at myself, and to step out of my comfort zone.

Hosting and cooking dinner for youths at my home? Hanging out with them for late night suppers? Joining in their crazy fun games at Youth Camps? Going on mission trips? These were things I never imagined myself doing at this stage of my life. But somehow, God gave me the energy and joy to keep up with them.



First Assignment - In Pursuit Youth Camp 2015



Canoeing at Kallang 2018



First Cambodia Mission Trip 2015

## Mission Trips and Ice-cream Chats

Some of my most cherished memories are from the seven mission trips to Cambodia over a span of ten years. Traveling, serving, and growing together with our youths as well as the youths in Phnom Penh, was an incredible experience.

It was not just the big moments that mattered—it was the small ones too.

I will never forget the one-on-one conversations over coffee or ice cream. Those moments were precious. They allowed me to see beyond the surface and connect with each youth on a deeper level. I learnt about their struggles, dreams, and fears, and in turn, they taught me so much about faith, resilience, and the importance of community.



Last Cambodia Mission Trip 2024



Cycling at Cony Island 2016

## Project GROW3:18: A Legacy of Discipleship

By 2023, I felt a sense of growing unease. The youth ministry was not growing as I felt it should, and I spent time praying for direction. God's answer was clear: "Go back to the basics if you want growth."

*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.." 2 Peter 3:18*

That is when He gave me "Project GROW3:18" – a discipleship and mentorship journey designed to help youths grow into disciple-makers for Christ.

This was not just another course or programme; it was a divine "blueprint" for growth for the youths. I knew it was not something I could have come up with on my own. In 2024, my last assignment in Salem Youth Ministry was to lead the youths to a successful completion of the first run of Project GROW3:18. I have since passed on this baton to the next Youth Ministry Lead. My hope and prayers are that this initiative will continue to bear fruit for years to come in Salem Chapel, equipping youths to be passionate about Christ, committed to growth and disciple making, and ready to make a lasting impact for God's Kingdom.



Last Assignment - ARISE Event (GROW3:18) 2024



## A Generation Transformed

As I stepped down from the Young People Ministry, one of my former youth leaders sent me a message that brought me to tears: *“This generation in Salem Chapel is still here today because of your call to serve.”* That’s what it is all about—seeing a generation of youths grow into young adults who love God and love the church community.

My journey in the Youth Ministry was not always easy. There were times of discouragement where I felt misunderstood, under valued and side-lined. It was only through His grace and love that sustained me.

I kept telling myself that If I was able to touch and make a difference to the life of just ONE youth, then it was well worth every tear, every prayer. To see them growing and maturing in their faith and stepping into their God-given calling and destinies—that’s my greatest honour and my deepest hope.



First Young Adult & Youth (YAY) Event 2018

## Final Thoughts: Every Youth a Disciple-Maker

As I look back, I’m reminded that God does not call the qualified; He qualifies the called. He took an “aunty” like me and placed me in a role I never imagined. Through it all, He taught me that youth ministry is not about being cool or having all the answers—it’s about being authentic, available, and obedient to His call.

My prayer for the next generation is simple: “May every youth be a disciple-maker - passionate, equipped, and committed to advancing God’s Kingdom.” If an aunty like me can play a small part in that, then I’ll consider my journey a success.

Here’s to the next chapter—for them, and for me!



From Aunty Jenn to Grandma Jenn - with grand-daughter Danielle and Elder Weng Kln