



Miss M. Fong – 1939- (Edition 2)

Miss Minnie Fong, a Chinese sister born, educated and converted in New Zealand, was commended by the Greymouth assembly and left to serve the Lord in Canton, China in January 1939. She was accompanying Miss Clare Shirtliff, but because of the war between Japan and China it was felt advisable for her to stop off at Singapore. By the grace of God she has faithfully served there ever since.

In her early years in that city she found many opportunities in visiting the lepers, hospitals and schools to speak to people in Cantonese. She was associated with the Chinese assembly and when the Japanese forces occupied the city she stayed on and helped nurse the sick and wounded, in the POW camps during 1942. "Restricted freedom" was the term used for her activities in 1943. During those years she was remarkably kept safe and did a tremendous job in encouraging the Chinese assembly.

At the end of the hostilities she was repatriated to New Zealand, but after a very short visit returned to Singapore. The post-war years witnessed difficult times in that city as corruption and violence increased. Nevertheless the Word of the Lord was greatly blessed to all who believed and many were saved, especially amongst the Chinese women. Minnie maintained a constant programme of visiting, predominantly amongst the women, and she often longed for some full time worker to witness amongst the Chinese-speaking men. Her Hillman car was amongst one of the 76 stolen in one month in 1958, but it was returned, with both bumpers dented. As a precaution she locked the gear lever in reverse to the seat and that proved adequate. Although the Lord blessed her ministry it was not easy and one woman she led to the Lord made her decision after being visited continually for seven years.

Later the Lord has touched the hearts of some older people. A devout Buddhist of over 80 was saved and baptised, and a woman dying of cancer was led to the Lord - Minnie marvelled how readily her mind grasped the truth. An old woman of 86 was saved and threw away her Buddhist prayer beads. The gospel is indeed the power of God to salvation.

In 1974 the 34th anniversary of the commencement of the Cantonese assembly was celebrated. Back in 1940 some 20 believers had first met together and over the years the number had increased to over 100. The consistent visitation of people in hospital and in prison and Minnie's care for people in their own homes was a very real contribution to the growth of the assembly. In succeeding years Minnie had a strong influence in the lives of women and girls through her large Bible class in English and her ministry to the needs of so many Cantonese. Her reports in the early 1980's of both young and older women being saved, taught and baptised were an indication of her consistent method of discipling people by caring for them.

In 1984 the government requisitioned the ground occupied by the Bethesda Hall in the city and the building was marked for demolition. For over 120 years the gospel had sounded out from this site where the assembly had met to serve and worship. However, a new site was obtained in a residential area that presented

wonderful opportunities for outreach. A new hall was planned with four storeys and a basement to accommodate the English, Hokkien, Cantonese and Tamil-speaking assemblies.

[Source entry includes an uncaptioned photo of Miss Fong.]