



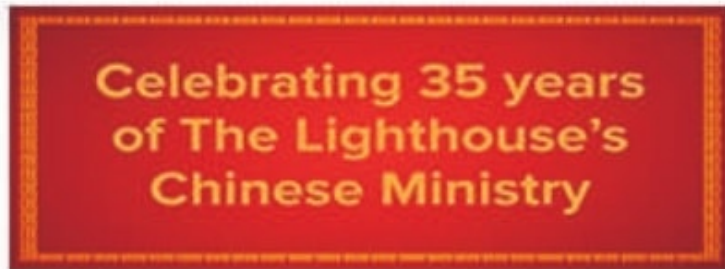
Winter 2017

The LIGHTHOUSE

Helping People | Changing Lives

1008 Bathurst Street • Toronto • ON M5R 3G7

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A Ministry of Faith

Yao Dan Cao



Rita Wong

On November 5th, 2016, we celebrated The Lighthouse's Chinese Ministry at our Annual Dinner and Silent Auction. Many came together and enjoyed a delicious meal along with a silent auction and presentations by our Chinese Counsellor and Program Coordinator, Rita Wong, as well as staff members, volunteers, ministry partners, and clients of The Lighthouse. It was a special evening as we remembered the milestones and accomplishments of

this ministry in its services to Chinese newcomers, immigrants, and refugees in Toronto, Scarborough, and Markham.

Rita started working at The Lighthouse as the Refugee Coordinator in November 1981. Her previous work with the Ontario Government's Welcome House gave her knowledge and experience in helping refugees and immigrants settle in Canada. For Rita, the greatest joy in working at The Lighthouse was that it gave her the freedom to share the Gospel through her work. *"It's a ministry not only a job"*, says Rita, as she shared with me her involvements at The Lighthouse, her best memories, and the challenges that she faced. Rita is a very well respected woman who has made an

*"It's a ministry
- not only a job"*

impact on the lives of the many clients she served and the volunteers and staff members she worked with. Volunteers describe her as friendly, talented, generous, dedicated, selfless, loving, and caring - a strong leader with a faithful heart.

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1989 - Nursing Home Visits



1996 - Niagara Falls Trip

Baptist Church to launch an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, which served newcomers in a Chinese community in Scarborough. Students of the ESL program were grateful for being able to gain independence in taking public transit, visiting the doctor's office, making appointments, and renewing their health cards mundane tasks fluent English speakers often don't give a second thought to. Besides developing their language skills, the students also participated in dance and praise classes, educational outings, evangelistic lunches, and special celebrations throughout

During the mid 90s, as the surge of refugee sponsorship slowed down, the focus of Rita's ministry shifted to working with Chinese immigrants of all ages in the local community in downtown Toronto providing them with social, emotional, and spiritual support. Linda, a client of the Chinese Ministry shared her thoughts on her experiences with The Lighthouse in the past few years: *"The Lighthouse treats me like family... [It] has helped me furnish my apartment and has purchased things for me that I didn't realize I needed. The Lighthouse*



1997 - 100 Year Old Man Baptized

the year. The ESL program provided a platform for The Lighthouse's clients to build a community of support they had a shared language, background, and culture that enabled them to bond and build lasting friendships with one another.



2000 - Christmas Celebration

In 2010, the Chinese Ministry expanded to Markham. In collaboration with Zion Alliance Church, Rita launched a women's group which included ESL classes, Western cooking and baking

came into my life and offered me and my daughters unexpected, amazing assistance. My wish for my daughters is that they grow up to be happy and kind to others, as The Lighthouse has treated me."

At the same time, God also opened the door for Rita to collaborate with different churches across the city to develop outreach programs for Chinese immigrants. In 2002, Rita collaborated with Calvary Logos Chinese



2003 - Visit Laotian Refugee Family in Hamilton

classes, nutrition workshops, and dancercise classes. Similar to the Scarborough program, the Markham program also fostered a safe environment where immigrants and refugees could engage in their heritage culture while participating and integrating into Canadian culture.



2010 - Cooking Class in Markham

Although there were great accomplishments, there were also challenges. As a non-profit organization, The Lighthouse is always in need of financial support as well as volunteer support to run its many programs. Volunteers have been an integral part of the Chinese Ministry, and without them, its programs would not be possible. The Chinese Ministry is very fortunate to have volunteers who continually give their time, skills, and passion to share God's truth and love with the community. *"We do our work, but God makes it a miracle. He always provides,"* said Rita.

In 2012, Rita directed a children's Vacation Bible School (VBS) camp for the first time at Calvary Logos Baptist Church. In the first year, the camp started out with 25 children. By 2016, this number tripled to 75. *"The summer camps for children was instrumental in opening doors to families to learn about Christ and also providing family support to those in need. The children look forward to coming and some don't want to leave at the end of the day,"* says Ann Lai, a volunteer of the VBS camp and ESL classes. *"The greatest fulfilment is witnessing the positive transformation in the ESL students and children's lives by the message of the gospel of Christ,"* says Anita Wong, who volunteered with the Chinese Ministry for at least 10 years. *"Because of the positive change in the lives of the adults and children, it has increased my faith in God and His truth. Also, it has*



2016 - Children's Summer Camp



2007 - ESL Class in Scarborough

As we gathered together on November 5th, Pastor Winnie Cheung from Zion Alliance Church and Pastor Christina Ng from Calvary Logos Baptist Church honoured Rita's work and the impact that it has made in their local communities. As we reflect on this ministry and the other ministries at The Lighthouse, we are reminded of God's faithfulness as He reaches out to people of all nations, languages, cultures right here in our city from generation to generation. The Lighthouse is truly grateful for Rita and all the work that she has done over years. Congratulations on all your accomplishments!

encouraged me to have more boldness in sharing the gospel of Christ."

Thank You, Rita!

From the Desk of Rob

In 1981, The Lighthouse took a leap of faith and hired its first employee. Rita Wong was this first staff person and she stayed working for The Lighthouse until she retired in 2016. She gave 35 years of passion, commitment, innovation, and hard work to The Lighthouse!



When Rita started working here, she often travelled to the airport to pick up refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Along with Dirk Jongkind, Rita was the staff person who welcomed the refugees and connected them with Christian Reformed Churches in Ontario. Rita worked alongside churches to help these refugees get settled in a new country. She is still in contact with some of them today.

In 2000, Rita presented a proposal to Calvary Logos Baptist Church and The Lighthouse about working with the Chinese Community around Finch Avenue and Brimley Road in Scarborough, Ontario. With the approval of this proposal, Rita began developing a Chinese Ministry for The Lighthouse. She started by offering English as a Second Language class and support groups. She was also involved with advocacy and settlement work within Chinese Communities. Through Rita's efforts this ministry continued to flourish and help many newcomers who needed assistance. In 2008, Rita began developing a partnership with Zion Alliance Chinese Church to work with the Chinese Community in the Markham area.

Rita was involved in many different activities at The Lighthouse. Part of her work also included setting up the Income Tax Clinics each spring. With Rita's assistance, The Lighthouse has been able to do over 300 individual tax returns for refugees and low-income people. These clinics have been a blessing for everyone who participates in the program.

Rita has been involved with The Lighthouse for 35 years and we cannot thank her enough for all the work she has done. Through her hard work, Rita has touched many lives. She has been a blessing to everyone at The Lighthouse.

Thank you Rita for your years of committed service! May God richly bless you in your retirement and in this new phase of life! We will miss you.

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