

SLE Church AGM 2026 – Chairman's Report

Overview of the Year

If 2024 was a roller coaster and 2025 a year of quiet strengthening, then 2026 has been a year of fruit and stretch. We have seen more people come to faith, more baptisms and more newcomers than in recent memory, and we have felt that growth press against the limits of our building, our budget and our staff team.

Both the fruit and the stretch are reasons to give thanks. They tell us that God is at work among us as we seek to be a community of maturing disciples of Jesus investing in the next generations, and they send us back to him in prayer for what comes next.

Births, Deaths and Marriages

We continue to rejoice in new life. Since our last AGM we have welcomed Claudia, born to Joel and Sarah Ng in November 2025; Holly, born to Curtis and Ruth Low in April 2026; and Noah, born to Esmond and Vanessa Leong just a few weeks ago in September. Pray with these new parents as they navigate a whole new world!

It has been another full season of weddings. At the end of 2025 we celebrated the marriages of Royce and Sarah, Johnson and Jessica, and Boonito and Wendy. In 2026 we have rejoiced with Dominic and Isabel, Daniel and Emma, Joshua and Jenny, and Joshua and Sarah, as well as Kezia, a former regular attendee and ministry partner, and Giuliano. Two lots of pre-marriage classes were held with these couples.

We have also grieved. In August we farewelled in quick succession founding elder Paul Tan and the wife of founding elder Richard Teo, Molly Teo. Many of our older generations also said farewell to old CCCB friends soon after. In these moments we have again been called to weep with those who weep, holding on to the sure hope we have in the Lord Jesus.

Baptisms

One of the great joys of this year has been the number of baptisms – sixteen since our last AGM.

At the end of 2025 we baptised Janessa Tran and Harry Tan from SaLT. At Easter 2026 we baptised Wan Sin Lau and Ian Izree from IYF; Hannah Guo, Sarah Shen, Lucia Young and Elizabeth Zhang from SaLT; and Eric Wang, Daisy Zhao and Junn Wing from SYF. In September we baptised six more from SaLT: Anabel Suen, Zoe Suen, Sophia Liu, Ava Lee, Olivia Fong, and Austin Song.

It was especially encouraging to have the fathers of the SaLT teens in the pool baptising them – a reminder that families play such an integral part in the spiritual formation of these young believers.

Challenges from Last Year

Space

Space continues to be one of our most pressing challenges, particularly at our 9am service. Conversations with the HET leadership are ongoing, though progress has been slower than we had hoped. Any change to how we share the building needs the agreement of both congregations, and each has its own considerations and its own timing. Please pray for patience, wisdom and unity as we keep working towards a way forward together.

A third staff member

On Sundays we averaged 314 attendees, with upwards of 350 people, gathering across our two services, with more on our books. Our current staff team is two full-time pastors, a part-time Operations Manager and a part-time Administrator, which comes to three full-time-equivalent staff. (Ministry trainees are not counted, as they are in training.) That is roughly one staff member for every 117 people, which is not sustainable for ministry now or for the growth we are praying for.

Our growth plan is towards three services, which will require at least a third pastor, and ideally four full-time pastoral staff. We also recognise that administration needs grow as the pastoral team grows.

The biggest challenge here is the budget, and our giving towards it. Last year's budget covered two pastoral staff and part-time administration. This year's budget (2026–27) is not yet enough for three full-time pastoral staff, though it is a deliberate step towards it. We are praying for generous giving towards the budgeted targets.

In terms of the search, one viable candidate is potentially available to begin in the middle of 2027. Please pray that he will finish his studies well, and that we will be in a good financial position to take him on.

The building masterplan

In the middle of 2026 our architect, a fellow Christian familiar with the challenges of church spaces, presented the Building Committee with a plan. It is a bold plan, and one that would help to resolve some of our longstanding capacity issues.

Bold, however, potentially means expensive. The plan involves swapping the locations of SLE's 9am service and Kids' Church, and pushing into the hillside underneath the HET hall. SLE and HET services would then be meeting essentially one on top of the other, which would require substantial acoustic insulation.

As of late 2026 the Committee, together with both the SLE and HET Councils, has agreed to engage town planning and engineering consultants to assess the feasibility of the plan. It is our fervent prayer that they return with good news on both the plan's potential and its cost. Pray with us!

Council's quarterly rhythm

This calendar year our Council meetings moved to a quarterly rhythm. We are still learning what this means and how best to run those meetings. The subcommittees have met through the year and have worked well, allowing focused discussions that do not need every Council member in the room.

In the year ahead we plan to bring greater clarity to these subcommittees, including role descriptions, so that Council meetings can focus on the vision and the planned pathway forward for SLE Church.

Encouragements

Grow

God's Word has continued to be at the centre of our life together. On Sundays we began with Every Season of the Soul, a walk through the Five Scrolls of Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs and Esther. From there we heard from Nahum, Exodus 1–12, 1 Corinthians and Matthew 13–16, before considering what it means to be human in Made in His Own Image. We will finish 2026 in Isaiah.

Most of our Grow Groups worked through Evangelism and Romans in 2025 and the Gospel of John in 2026. Our women's groups went through Six Steps to Loving Your Church, Ruth, and a series on parenting. Grow Group leaders also met semi-regularly through the year for training and encouragement.

One quirk we have discovered is that our Grow Group attendance is larger than our Sunday service attendance. In other words, there are people actively involved in a Grow Group during the week who are not regularly with us on Sundays. We are thankful that so many are opening the Bible together midweek. The staff team have also been thinking this through theologically over the past few months, and working on ways to help more of us make Sunday a priority. Sunday is where we worship in song, sit under God's Word preached, and encourage one another, and it is the main regular gathering the Scriptures call us to.

Worship

Our Sunday gatherings have grown again, up 6% on last year to an average of 314 – with many weeks topping 350!

The Worship purpose area has been humming along well. Our music leaders have made a significant change this year in trimming our song catalogue to a smaller list, to help us learn our songs by heart and be encouraged as we sing them.

There are some areas where we need more people, chairing our Sunday services being one. We are prayerfully looking for people to serve in these roles.

Connect

We welcomed 398 newcomers in 2025–26. It is always encouraging to see so many new people visiting each week, whether checking out church for the first time or seeking a place to call their spiritual home. Of these, 36 have become part of our church life, with 24 joining a Grow Group and the other 12 attending regularly on Sundays.

This year we reworked our Newcomers Lunch and gave it a new name, Next Steps. It walks through our church's vision and invites newcomers to join us in pursuing a community of maturing disciples of Jesus who are keen to invest in the next generations. The pastoral staff are strongly encouraging every newcomer to come along, as a crucial step into church life at SLE. Please actively invite the newcomers you meet.

Church camp has moved from every two years to every three. Our next camp is scheduled for the Labour Day long weekend in May 2027.

Serve

Over 180 people serve across our church in various capacities, official and unofficial. That is a remarkable number, and I thank God for each of you.

Step Up, a short course led by Pastor Richard, has been an encouragement to those serving. Our two Leaders Training Days were also well attended as we sought to equip one another for purposeful ministry. And twelve of our members attended the Reach Australia National Conference, returning better equipped to know, love and serve our church.

Reach

Fourteen people came to faith in the past year through LIFE, SaLT and our church life together. Praise God!

Across the year, 89 non-believers attended LIFE and Taste and See, hearing the gospel and engaging with their questions. We have found that many who come to faith through LIFE have gone through the course twice before believing. That gives us much to thank God for, and good reason to keep praying for those in our midst who are encountering the life-saving message of Jesus.

Our Kids' Church children have also been active in inviting their friends. At their outreach events, 40% of those attending were friends invited by our children and families!

All of this is immensely encouraging. Let us pray that our church will always keep mission and evangelism at the centre of what we do – that we might not be a 'cruise ship' for believers, but a 'rescue ship' for the world.

Investing in the Next Generations

Kids' Church

Primary Kids' Church grew through the year, from an average of 38 to 44. Over the same period Junior Kids' Church dipped from 23 to 10. This may be due to lower births at church.

Youth

SaLT Camp 2026 saw 50 teens and leaders together. Ministry trainee Laurie Glen gave two talks on our identity in Christ, and the leaders ran workshops on body image and AI. It was a positive time for all who came.

Trainees

Liesl See began as a ministry trainee in 2026, and Laurie Glen has continued and is set to finish in mid-2027. Boonito Kartono is set to begin training in 2027. This is a great encouragement for our church and for God's kingdom, that people are putting up their hands to be trained for future ministry. Pray that more will be raised up!

Beyond SLE

Mission partners

This year our partnership with Steve Manders came to a sad end when he went to be with the Lord in January 2026, after a long battle with cancer. Later in the year we took up support for Saeko, who will be continuing the work with some of the smaller rural churches Steve ministered to in previous years.

We are thankful to continue with our major mission partners, and glad to hear how God has been at work through them: the Nikles and Living Wholeness, training missionaries in Christian counselling across South-East Asia; Sonja Graml among students in Toowoomba; K in a Muslim-majority nation; the Bartleets in Thailand; and the many other organisations SLE Church supports.

Centenary Evangelical Church

Three years on, Centenary Evangelical Church has gone from strength to strength. Over the past year they became financially independent, which is very quick for a church plant, helped in part by a large number of people transferring from another church. We continue to pray for CEC's evangelism and mission, that they would grow by conversion as well.

Partnership with HET

Beyond building matters, our partnership with HET continues to grow. I have had opportunities to preach at the HET service over the past year, with more to come. These times have been received very well, and we pray that this encouragement

from God's Word will keep building trust and a healthy partnership between our congregations.

Leadership and Staffing

Staff

This has been a demanding year for the staff team, as we have worked through big-picture plans and the structures that sit underneath our church life.

I am deeply grateful to minister alongside Pastor Richard Wong, for his thoughtfulness and his gift for thinking through big-picture questions.

I thank God for Winnie Wong, who has persevered through an evolving role over many years and has now stepped into a new one as Operations Manager, serving faithfully even as that role takes shape.

In September 2026 we welcomed Serene Wee as SLE Church's new Administrator. In the short time she has been with us she has already been an immense help, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise to the team.

Our small staff team is also joined by our ministry trainees, Laurie Glen and Liesl See. I thank God for how he has gifted them and for all they contribute.

Elders and deacons

This year we acknowledged and thanked Mike Husband, who stepped down as elder towards the middle of the year after decades of service. As a church we recognised his immense contribution to the life of SLE over the years, in his steady, in-the-background way.

Elder Randy Chan will also be stepping back for the coming year for a much-needed sabbatical.

Council

Our Church Council will see some personnel changes too, with Simeon Wong and Daniel 'DT' Tan stepping back after years of faithful service. We thank them both!

In the coming year we are asking God to raise up more deacons and future elders to serve his people at SLE.

Challenges and Pathways

Space and services

The ongoing space issues remain a difficult matter for our leaders to think and pray through. Please pray for wisdom in the conversations ahead, and for patience among all of us who squeeze in each week. At the same time we give thanks that we are regularly overflowing! I want to encourage all our members and attendees to keep coming regularly. The seats are for you.

Staffing capacity and pastoral care

I want to share something here for awareness, particularly for anyone unsure why a third pastor is needed. Richard and I are stretched. With two pastors and a church of our size, there is more pastoral care, more discipling and more training of leaders to be done than the two of us can do well, and many other good things are waiting longer than they should. I say this with gratitude, because the load is the fruit of God's kindness in growing our church.

Finding another pastoral staff worker who is right for the team is no easy task, and the appointment of a pastor ought to be slow and thoughtful work. Please pray for us in the meantime, and keep caring for one another as you already do so well.

Generosity

Thank you for your generosity this past year. This year's budget is a step towards supporting three full-time pastoral staff along with the administration that supports them. The increase reflects both our needs and our desire to care well for our staff financially.

More staff means more ministry can be done, which gives us more opportunities to share the gospel with those who do not yet believe and to help disciples keep following Christ.

Looking Ahead to 2027

As we look to the year ahead, would you join me in praying for three things?

- That the consultants' work on the masterplan would give us a clear and affordable way forward, and that SLE and HET would walk it together in unity.
- That God would provide a third pastor in his timing, and that our giving would grow so we are ready to welcome him.
- That God would raise up new elders, deacons and leaders, and that more of us would make Sunday and Next Steps a priority as we welcome those he is sending us.

Personal Highlights

The FIEC Senior Pastors' Forum and National Conference were both wonderful highlights, in particular seeing how God is at work drawing people to himself through our fellowship of churches.

This year I was also invited to lecture on preaching at Queensland Theological College. In Semester 1 I took three two-hour classes, walking the students through my process of moving from Scripture to sermon. After many years of preaching, and of receiving feedback on it, I was glad to serve the students in this way, and I

consider it a vital opportunity to invest in God's kingdom work beyond SLE. The feedback was very encouraging and I will be doing the same in 2027.

Over the King's Birthday long weekend I spoke at the annual Y-Conference at Tamborine Mountain. Some 280 young adults, aged 18 to 35 or so, came from churches as far north as Hervey Bay, as far west as Dalby and as far south as just over the NSW border, and heard from Deuteronomy God's call to choose life! It was a joy to take up this opportunity.

Conclusion

Thank you, church family. Thank you for serving, giving, inviting, praying and turning up week by week. It is a joy to be your pastor.

As we head into 2027, my prayer is that the fruit of this year would keep us thankful and the stretch would keep us prayerful, and that through both we would keep growing as a community of maturing disciples of Jesus investing in the next generations.

May the Lord who has begun this good work among us bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ.

Senior Pastor Steven Tran
Chairman of SLE Church Council

7th October, 2026