

Unfolding His Story:

The Story of the Charismatic Movement in Singapore

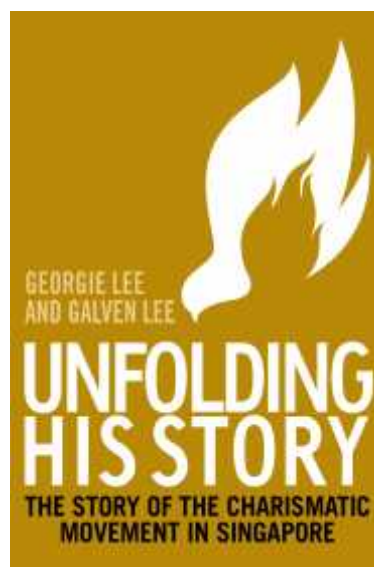
By Georgie Lee and Galven Lee

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This book presents the nation-state of Singapore's formational history alongside its telling of Charismatic Christianity in that place. The reader is drawn into the emotional frenzy of Malaya's decolonisation from the British Empire, and the tiny island being absorbed into independent Malaysia, then expelled to stand on its own as the Republic of Singapore. This pre-1970s situation will be uncertain and foreign territory today for many readers, who will be acquainted with a very different notion of Singapore – a modern state-of-the-art leading metropolis with an international population, a reputation as an intelligent and ordered society and a country that punches above its size and history. The authors' primary subject is the Charismatic Movement but their book also offers a wider perspective on Singapore.

There is youthful naivety in the narrative. It captures the reminiscences of the co-author Georgie Lee's youth as much as his son and co-author Galven Lee's writing as a young adult. The reader is invited to share their surprise at each testimony of encounter with the work of the Holy Spirit. Their narrative comprises primarily observed or received and paraphrased testimonies – always highlighting the unexpected and the resulting impact of faith. Each testimony introduces significant elements in the overall story: baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues; Spirit-impassioned home groups worshipping and growing; and the coming to faith of families transformed by the Spirit.

We are told 'the story of the Charismatic Movement': it is not a story of the Charismatic Church or even the charismatic expression of faith. Beginning ostensibly with several teenagers in a school discovering the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a newly ordained Anglican priest, and a Bishop whose diocese had been cut adrift from the Church of England, the Holy Spirit's



anointing in Singapore mirrors the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. It is more chaotic than that first Pentecost; there is a sense that the nature of the Holy Spirit's anointing shook a society where deference to authority is paramount.

I declare a personal interest having personal knowledge of the Church in Singapore and of most of the people highlighted in this book. The title is in my view misleading: we have an incomplete story, an introduction to the Holy Spirit's power in the


Church in Singapore. There is a great deal more to be said about the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, which is referred to repeatedly as 'FGB gatekeepers'; their relationship with and effect on established Christian denominations and congregations; the growth and theology of mega-churches; and the Charismatic Movement's effect on Christian business leaders and prominent entrepreneurs. Readers would find a deeper reflection on the response of the established Church denominations and their leaders to the way in which the effervescent power of the Holy Spirit became evident in Singapore particularly interesting. The fact that the prospect of a 'them-and-us' divide was averted should not be underestimated.

The impact of the Holy Spirit on many of Singapore's exceptionally committed and dynamic civic and business leaders who were spiritually affected at charismatic meetings contributed significantly towards Christian unity. In its long list of acknowledgements before the story commences, the book hints at the relationship between the FGB Gatekeepers and these leaders. Judges and lawyers; politicians; Singapore's equivalent of the Governor of the Bank of England and other senior managers of financial institutions; chief executives of both public sector companies and private conglomerates; multi-national business leaders are mentioned with church leaders on the list. Each represents a Christian testimony including conversion from other

religious traditions, and affiliation to various church denominations or independent church communities. There is a further story to be told about the Charismatic Movement's role in transforming and anchoring

Singapore's business and national ethos and ethics.

The past features rather heavily but I am heartened by the authors' desire to explore the unfolding movement today and its implications for the

future. There is much that can be gained by Christian leaders in civic life and business everywhere in the world from Singapore's story, and perhaps that could feature in the next instalment. 



Eileen Harrop is the Entrepreneur Priest in Bishop Auckland and Priest-in-Charge of Gainford and Winston in plurality in the Diocese of Durham. She trained at Ridley Hall 2010-12. She is a Singaporean who grew up in Singapore during the formative years of the Charismatic Movement described in this book, and whose ancestry includes both Christian converts and refugees from China and Buddhists in Malacca. Eileen had an extensive and wide-ranging international occupational life in teaching, hospital management, organisational change management, and as a business owner and director, prison governor, and advisor to local and national government, prior to her life in ordained ministry.



The Star Church, Singapore, designed by Andrew Bromberg, 'a place in which religion and commerce mix but don't collide'. Commissioned by the New Creation Church, it contains not just shops and restaurants, but also an auditorium with space for five thousand people to celebrate the liturgy.