

Principal's Message

Ties that Bind and Care



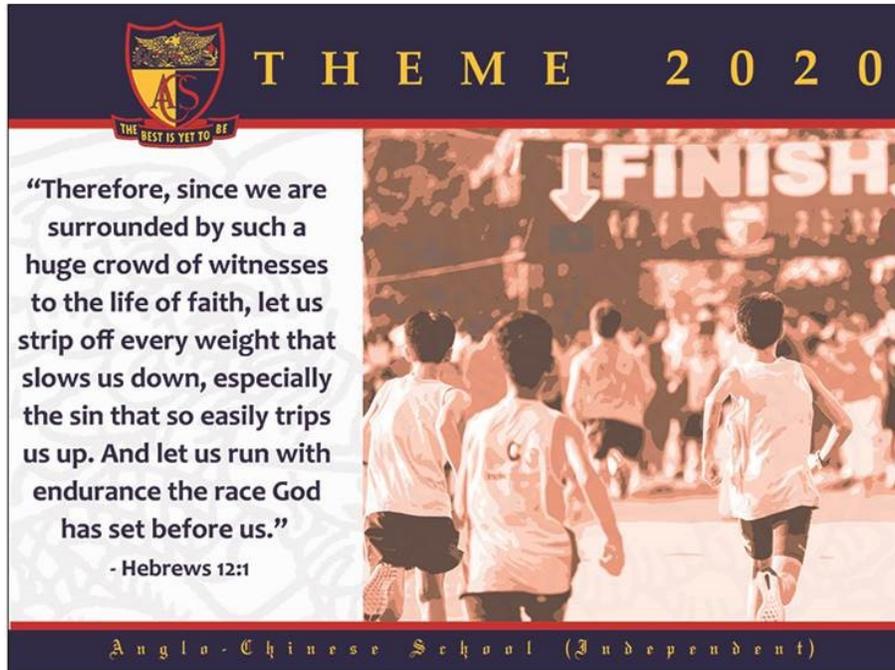
Mr Arene Koh
Principal
ACS (Independent)

Ms Agnes Yong's card was the first thing that caught my eye amidst other emails and paperwork that I had to clear one morning.

Hand-written in neat, cursive script, Ms Yong narrated her encounters with Class 4.13 from July to August 2020. The boys taught Ms Yong how to use Zoom, played charades and shared jokes with her, presented a fighting scene from Act III Romeo and Juliet, and rendered recitals on the violin and guitar, singing two Mandarin songs for her. Ms Yong also took the opportunity to thank the class teachers – Mr Julius Lee and Ms Muralitharan Mohana for 'encouraging and helping the boys to pamper (her) with delightful and useful gifts'.

An alumna of ACS Pre-University Centre at Barker Road, Ms Yong formerly taught General Paper at ACJC for 13 years. Class 4.13 linked up with her as part of a Befrienders' Programme initiated by ACS(I) and ACSOBA. In its second year running, some of our students have met up with former staff of ACS to renew links with the ACS family. Beyond just an act of service and giving back to ACS staff who have since retired, the Befrienders' Programme gives our students a glimpse into the stories of ACS past, lived through the lens of the retired ACS staff whom they have interacted with.

At such a time where our young charges have many things on their plate to occupy their time with, where needs and wants blur the lines between giving and receiving, such interactions are precious. They cultivate respect and understanding of the perspectives of others. They help our students to look beyond themselves and their personal interests, and to do something for others. ACS(I) currently partners with at least 24 organisations where all our students are involved in community service in one form or another. While we reach out to various groups, pertinent too are the retired and former staff of ACS who have given much of themselves and journeyed with ACS through our different seasons of growth. In the case of Ms Yong and Class 4.13, they have since formed a WhatsApp chat group where Ms Yong, an avid reader herself, shares recommended books with the boys. Ties are forged beyond the Befrienders' Programme, and our boys become beneficiaries of these endeavours.



In a year that was first greeted with high expectations as we ushered in 2020, only to witness by the end of its first quarter, an unprecedented reality struggling with the enormity of the Covid-19 pandemic, we continue to look out for each other and not allow the challenges to beset us. We have witnessed communities rallying together, stepping out of their comfort zones, and stepping up to help those in need. And despite the Covid-19 situation being a challenging one, there is much that we are thankful for. God has watched over us and kept us as a strong-knitted school family that seeks to care for each other, serve others and continue our pursuits for excellence. Our theme verse for 2020, drawn from Hebrews 12:1, is a timely reminder for such a time as this. We can and will run the race that God has set before us if we stay **Anchored** on Him, **Connected** with those who support, sharpen and guide us, and **Steadfast** to the purposes that God has called for each of us.

For while this has been a marathon, it has been a run made easier because of the many hands on deck. And a race not just for self-pursuits, but one that also puts God and others before self; one that shapes our students to be **Catalysts for Change, for God and Humanity**.

(Permission has been sought from Ms Yong to share the contents of her card for this ECHO message. This story was also shared with the school for morning devotion on 15 September 2020)