

In Loving Memory of Deacon Yat Cheong Leung



Tuesday, March 20, as I was getting ready to check in on a flight from Taipei to Houston, I received an unexpected text message informing me that Deacon Yat Cheong Leung had gone home to be with the Lord at about noon at a hospital in Macau. When I read the news, my heart was filled with a deep sense of loss. I had known Deacon Leung since 1967, and I had always been referred to by him as his “younger brother”. He had always taken care of me, providing me with opportunities to minister with the Lord. He was my brother in the Lord, my co-laborer in Christ and a friend.

Deacon Leung was a kind, loving and compassionate 90 year old elder who lived a long, illustrious and productive life – a giver who energetically went busily about sharing God’s love and kindness to everyone that his Lord brings into his life. He always quipped, “My joy in life is to care for my community, that’s how I keep young!” How true is the wisdom of these words: “Age is but an attitude whether you are eighty or eighteen!”

In the last 60 and more years, Deacon Leung had, among other ministries, served on a volunteer basis as the Executive Director of the Macau Baptist Convention, an Executive Committee member of the Macau Christian Council, Board Member and Chair of the Macau Chapter of the Chinese Coordination Center of World Evangelism (CCCOWE), the Honorary Secretary of the Transworld Chinese Baptist Mission, Trustee of the Chinese Baptist Press International and Group Leader of the Chinese Gospel Mission, Chairperson of the Board of the Macau Baptist High School, and the Administrator of the Macau Baptist Church.

Deacon Leung was one who was filled with thanksgiving in his heart. He proudly declared that he hailed from Guangzhou but had his roots in Macau. When he settled in Macau in 1948, he worked at a bank. Two years later, he started his own business selling office supplies and books. In the seventies, he immigrated to the US emptyhanded but through his diligence and sheer hard work, he overcame many hardships and difficulties, and he did quite well. Starting from nothing, he eventually saw his business prosper and he started a wonderful family. To all these, he was eternally grateful to God.

The life of Deacon Leung was marked by accomplishment and success but he had his challenges. On October 17 1989, a 7.3 earthquake hit the San Francisco Bay Area. Through the earthquake, he understood the frailty of life. He recalled later that had the quake lasted a few more seconds, he wouldn’t have come out of it alive!

In 1991, he had a scare of his life. When he went to Taiwan for a routine medical check-up, they discovered a cancerous growth in his stomach. He immediately went back home to San Francisco and retired. He disposed off his business thereby reducing the stress of owning one. He learned to relax and went on trips and focused on the healing of his body and to do things that were more meaningful than just having a fat bank account! That proved to be the sweetest medicine of all. When he returned to Taiwan to have a more comprehensive and detailed check-up later, they discovered that the cancerous growth had mysteriously disappeared.

Later, he met with a serious driving accident in San Francisco when he was hit from behind by a big vehicle. His car was totaled and he lost consciousness for a moment. When he came to, he discovered that he was not hurt at all. He had walked through the “valley of the shadow of death” and he survived! That experience taught him the purpose and value of life. And as he laid in bed, he came to realize the feeling of helplessness of being unwell and thus was able to empathize with and encourage those who were sick and to be thankful for all that he had.

In 1992, he returned to Macau and served in various capacities as a volunteer and gave of himself fully and unconditionally to those around him and for the things the community cared about. He said, “Macau takes care of their senior citizens really well and with my retirement money from the United States, I have no worries about how I will live the rest of my life.” And with that, he stepped onto the path of sharing the love and goodness of the Lord.

Deacon Leung might be up in years but his sense of sight and hearing was still very sharp and his health was relatively good. He did not show the signs of age. For him, aging had never been an issue as he kept on sharing the goodness of the Lord. He was as busy as ever and even more so when up in years, bringing hope to the elderly.

In order to help seniors have a strong sense of emotional well-being, he started a senior center in Macau, teaching seniors that a cheerful heart is good medicine and laughter is good therapy. Activities at the Center sought to help seniors to be lifelong learners and to experience the joy of living and included calligraphy and reading, among other activities. He hoped that through these, seniors might discover a new sense of hope and purpose for their lives. Deacon Leung penned these words in reflection: “In days of yore, it was uncanny to live to be seventy, But now, it’s so ordinary to be eighty; To be strong and healthy even at ninety, and a hundred? It’s not too old nor wacky!” That has always been his goal in life and for this, he never ceased to give of himself.

Deacon Leung was a person who loved much. He left his footprints on many parts of China – Beijing, Guangzhou, the Northeast among other places – spreading kindly the message of love and hope of the Gospel through words and deeds. When he saw his compatriots suffering through floods and earthquakes, it stirred in his heart a compassion that was expressed through the giving of himself financially and in kind because he firmly believed that it was only through loving one another that we could stand shoulder to shoulder with them in their trials. He loved China because he was a Chinese. Loving his homeland was a given for him.

He proclaimed love one for another. He said, “Children are to honor their parents so that they will live long on earth. Parents are to nurture their children and to teach them so that when they are old, they will not depart from the way they were taught.”

He cared for youths as they grow up. He had served as the Chairperson of the Board of the Macau Baptist High School and used the three virtues of the Christian life – faith, hope and love – which he embodied, to bring up the next generation of the leaders of Macau. He was a kind and compassionate senior. He said, “Giving back to my community brings me much joy and it makes me feel younger.” And by loving others, he was loved in return. He was blessed with many children and grandchildren and he enjoyed them all. When asked when he would retire, he replied, “I never really retire!” For him, life never ends, giving of self never ends. That was his goal in life and that was his faithfulness in God.

“Big Brother” Deacon Leung, your leaving us is just temporary for when that Day of Glory at the coming of our Lord comes, we will meet again and enjoy eternal life together.

Rev. Peter Leong

Rev. Leong is a retired pastor and had served as President of the Chinese Baptist Fellowship (1998—2012).

Announcement: The Macau Baptist Church will hold a Memorial Service for Deacon Yat Cheong Leung on Sunday April 15 2018 at the church. Everyone is invited to attend to honor and celebrate the life of this faithful servant of the Lord.

