

HEART WORK

NEHEMIAH 3:6-29 | Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Gate of Yeshanah. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. ⁷ And next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, the seat of the governor of the province Beyond the River. ⁸ Next to them Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths, repaired. Next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, repaired, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall...

¹⁰ Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired opposite his house... ¹² Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters... ²³ After them Benjamin and Hasshub repaired opposite their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah repaired beside his own house... ²⁸ Above the Horse Gate the priests repaired, each one opposite his own house. ²⁹ After them Zadok the son of Immer repaired opposite his own house.

Enthusiasm spreads. Momentum builds: *And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built* (3:2). And on it goes all around the city: *Next to him.... Next to them.... Next to him....*

It's an extraordinary manifestation of diversity in unity. Priests and laymen. District rulers and temple servants. Goldsmiths and merchants. A father and his daughters. A perfumer with scented hands. All lay aside their differences and work together. Some 40 sections of wall go up more or less simultaneously. Each section is fitly joined to the next, leaving no gap for the enemy to exploit.

Nehemiah wisely allows or assigns workers to build next to their own homes (-10, 12, 23, 28, 29). This makes perfect sense. If you build a wall with prison labour, what do they care if it crumbles in a year? And if one stretch of the wall is weak, the whole city is at risk. But if you build with love for kith and kin, every stone has meaning and each one supports the

whole. The breach you fill secures the entire city, not just your block. Love of family translates into love of community. Your neighbour is safer and sleeps better too. Nehemiah didn't leave the royal palace to hedge up a campground. He came to rebuild Jerusalem *as a city that is bound firmly together*, block by block, from the ground up (PS 122:3).

Diversity in unity is not a licence to do our own thing. After the Covid years of social distancing and virtual gathering, will we rediscover and rebuild authentic community? Will we all work together, shoulder to shoulder, neighbour with neighbour, church with church? Will Anglicans work with Methodists? Lutherans with Catholics? Baptists with Orthodox? Will Pentecostals build next to Presbyterians? Brethren next to Charismatics? Salvation Army with Evangelical Free? We are established, not by what we take, but by what we give (SAINT-EXUPÉRY).

WALL OF DUTY

■ Amazing! God never said it would be easy. But unity has its rewards: *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity... For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore* (PS 133:1, 3).

■ Amazing! The pandemic has given the Body of Christ another chance to look far, pivot forward in beautiful unity, disciple our nation, and define the times. Pray for your church, denomination, or alliance. Are we building next to others? Does our edifice connect to theirs? Pray for more conversations in circles of friendship. For more consultations and collaborations across church streams. Pray that we will not be so preoccupied with our own thing in our own little bubble that we miss this God-given opportunity to make salvation history together.

■ Amazing! Long before the pandemic, God birthed a dream. A *LoveSingapore* unity movement with a purpose: *Loving Singapore together, Turning Singapore Godward*. God made the call: *Love God by loving Neighbour*. God gave the strategy: *Loving Singapore Block-by-Block*. A whole-of-church approach,

loving our nation strategically and systematically, zone by zone, block by block, neighbour by neighbour. No church can achieve this alone. We need each other. We need every church of every kind. This is *personal evangelism on a mass scale*—from the ground up, right where God has planted us. We need every believer to do their part. Pray.

■ Amazing! Ninety percent of our population lives in high-rise dwellings. Ask God to open our minds to understand that this housing plan in land-scarce Singapore was his design for the Gospel all along. Ask God to open our eyes to see each housing block as a vertical kampong of precious souls in search of hope and peace. Last year, there were 452 suicides, *the nation's highest count since 2012, amid the isolation and psychological distress brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic* (CNA | 8 JULY 2021). Watch and pray.

■ Amazing! God speaks. Are we listening? God beckons. Will we come home to love? There are over 600 churches in Singapore. Can we work together to ensure that no unsaved household is left out or left behind? Ask boldly in faith:

- That each church will own the vision, adopt the blocks in its zone, and compassionately pastor its community, block-by-block.
- That each church will equip their members to seek the welfare of their adopted blocks: Pray for their neighbours. Befriend them. Love them in word and deed. Look out especially for the lonely elderly. Keep asking, seeking, and knocking until something happens: Open heavens. Open hearts. Open homes. Open harvest!
- That each church will pioneer home groups in their adopted blocks to disciple new believers as fishers of men. That these in turn will win and disciple many more. Imagine, an infrastructure of homes with hope and heart all over our city—loving Singapore Godward, block-by-block!