

FAQ Regarding Partnership with Charis Montessori
Zion Serangoon BP Church

On 18 February 2024, the Session made the following announcement in our weekly bulletin:

“It has come to Session’s attention that Yio Chu Kang Chapel (YCKC) will not be extending its lease to Charis Montessori to operate a preschool beyond 31 December 2024. We have been working hard to gather and ascertain the pertinent facts from all parties involved and will share what we know with you in the coming weeks. The Session remains committed to restarting a Christian preschool in Zion Serangoon as part of our TSR project and we continue to carefully discern the LORD’s will on this matter.”

We have thoroughly investigated the matter and we would like to share our findings with you, the Church.

Q. What happened at Yio Chu Kang-Charis Montessori (YCKCM)?

A. The agreement to operate a preschool was not renewed by Yio Chu Kang Chapel (YCKC), and as a result, YCKCM will cease operations at YCKC on 31 December 2024. YCKCM has been operating from YCKC since 2018.

Q. Why was the agreement not renewed by YCKC?

A. Two reasons were given by YCKC, namely, concerns over the financial health of YCKCM, and constant changing of principals which could hinder deep and meaningful relationships with YCKCM and the church

Q. When was YCKCM officially informed about YCKC’s decision?

A. This was made known to YCKCM in mid-September 2023.

Q. When did ZS come to know about this?

A. Pastor Wendell was informed about this personally through a former church member on 23 January 2024. The management of Charis Montessori did not inform or update ZS prior to this.

Q. What steps were subsequently taken by ZS?

A. The Session immediately began an investigative enquiry to ascertain the facts and details of the situation on 24 January 2024.

Q. What was done?

A. The Session met up on two occasions with the leaders of YCKC, including the Senior Pastor, Pastor, and Children’s Pastor working with YCKCM. We also met with Mr Roland Tan (Owner of CM) on 6 February 2024 to better understand the situation. Finally, we also met with a former principal of YCKCM who had worked there for two years, between 2021-2023, on 23 February 2024.

Q. What was discovered?

A. The grounds for non-renewal by YCKC were found to be valid.

Q. Were these not known during our previous rounds of due diligence?

A. Prior to confirming Charis Montessori (CM) as our preschool partner, several rounds of due diligence were conducted between January to March 2023. These included checks with other churches which partnered CM, namely, Bedok Lutheran Church, Elim Church, Pasir Panjang Hill Brethren Church and YCKC. Then, none of the churches raised any red-flags and this information was duly shared with our congregation at our Chit Chat session (4 November 2023) and church congregational meetings (16 April 2023 & 19 November 2023). The situation at YCKCM

exacerbated after March 2023, leading to YCKC's decision in mid-September 2023, but ZS was not informed.

Q. What will happen now?

A. The Session remains committed to restarting a Christian preschool in partnership with a strong Christian preschool partner. We have committed this matter in deep discussion and prayer before the LORD and have humbly sought His guidance on the matter. We have decided that we will not proceed with CM now that these facts are before us, and have mutually agreed with CM to cease our ongoing partnership.

Official Reply from Mr Roland Tan from CM:

"Thank you for the opportunity granted to Charis Montessori to restart the preschool ministry within Zion Serangoon Church.

We accept the decision made by the church board and mutually agree on the cessation of the license agreement.

Thank you for the spiritual guidance and the professional relationship we have shared, and we value the experience and learning gained from our brief partnership.

We continue to pray for God's guidance and direction in leading us.

God bless!"

Q. What can you do?

A. You can be in much prayer as we collectively seek the LORD's will concerning which Christian preschool partner to approach. The Session both covet and deeply appreciate your prayers.

Q. Will the TSR Addition and Alteration (A&A) works be affected because of this situation?

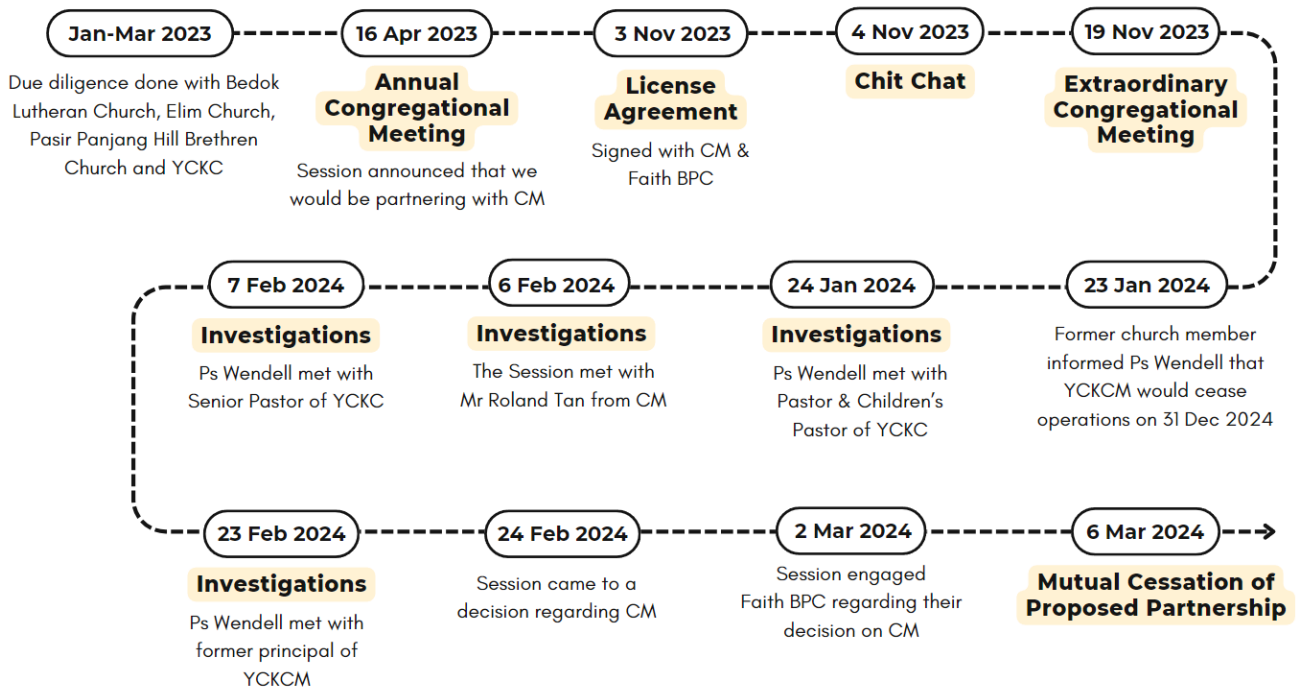
A. No. God-willing, we will proceed with the A&A works as planned, leaving the potential preschool area untouched until we are led to a new Christian partner. We have also discussed with Faith BPC about a new cost-sharing arrangement for the ground-floor toilets now that CM will not be bearing 30% of the renovations costs as previously agreed. Faith BPC is open to discussing this since the toilets need renovating in any case.

Q. How should we, as a church, move on in the right Christian spirit?

A. The Session is mindful that CM remains committed to preserving the Christian preschool space. Currently, they are still operating three other centers, namely Bedok Lutheran CM, Elim CM, and Pasir Panjang Hill Brethren CM. As informed, YCKCM will cease operations on 31 December 2024. Let's be mindful, in our conversations with one another and others outside ZS, not to cast CM in a way that would mar their reputation and affect their work and ministry. As the Scriptures instruct us, "**Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.**" (Colossians 4:6)

Also, you can encourage us, the Session, through what has been a difficult and trying season of discerning God's will. As we have been learning from Acts, doing the work of the Gospel is difficult and often fraught with obstacles that the enemy throws at us. Nonetheless, we have also been constantly reminded that the Gospel remains unstoppable. The Session is certain that our LORD is in complete control of all that is happening, and that He leads us step by step. We seek His wisdom in humble submission and commitment to do only His will for ZS.

Timeline of Events



The Session
Zion Serangoon B-P Church
17 March 2024