

A Chinese New Year that is Different

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Over the years, Chinese New Year had been to me an exclusive celebration among my immediate family members and relatives. The Reunion Dinner on Chinese New Year's Eve was particularly significant to me as I considered it the most important meal of the year with my own family. It was only when I joined Malaysian Care (Care) in 2011, that I began to befriend an increasing number of people who were either without families or unable to return to be with them—people recovering from drug addiction or living with HIV, orphans, the homeless, foreign workers and ex-prisoners.

It began with my own family

One year, I broke my family tradition by inviting an orphan boy to join our reunion dinner. My family were welcoming of the idea until I revealed his HIV status. In response, my elder brother and sister-in-law were very concerned. Initially, they suggested that we have separate

dinner but I disagreed. Upon further discussion, we agreed that I would take the boy out immediately after dinner to avoid having him play with my nephews. Saddened, I committed this matter to God in prayer.

When the day of the reunion dinner arrived, somehow my nephews were quick to befriend the boy and were having a fun time together. After dinner, I asked my sister-in-law whether she would like me to take the boy away to which she replied, "No need." This was a breakthrough moment for me, as I experienced how my own family had demonstrated God's love in such a situation!

Since then, I have been encouraging the families in my church to be more inclusive by opening their homes. As a result, various families have invited the residents of Care's Rumah Petros and Rumah Kepercayaan to their homes for Chinese New Year each year! These gestures mean a lot to the lonely, rejected, abused, disabled, sick and broken, regardless of race. I pray that churches and families will be inclusive and welcoming to the needy, just as God has demonstrated such love through our Lord Jesus Christ. ■

■ Frederick Foo serves and journeys alongside people living with HIV, people recovering from substance abuse and juveniles from the prison.