

The Ties that Bind

Concordia Partners with Malaysian School

by Kate Morgan

When Ben Freudenburg, director of Concordia University Ann Arbor's family life program, answered the phone seven years ago, he could not have imagined the conversation he was about to have would lead him halfway across the world.

Answering the call

Matthew Ling of Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia had just finished reading one of Ben's books, "The Family Friendly Church." As pastor of Calvary Family Church, he wanted to discuss philosophy and implementation of ideas with the author.

The shared passion for family life ministry fostered a relationship between the Lings and the Freudenbergs with each family visiting the other.

Although Pastor Ling had earned a master's degree in business, he felt God leading him to attend Concordia to earn his certification in family life education that would certify him with the National Council for Family Relations.

A blossoming partnership

As a result of the Freudenbergs' and Lings' continued relationship, Concordia has partnered with Tadika Rhema, a kindergarten of nearly 600 students. Concordia has been commissioned to provide a world-class curriculum.

"Working with Tadika Rhema allows Concordia to extend its influence of ministry," says Dr. Dennis Genig, vice president of academics. "It also provides the School of Education with an opportunity to involve its education students in a professional

development project that is ... a practical and professional learning experience for them."

During the Freudenburg's recent visit, Tadika Rhema hosted a ceremony to announce the joint venture.

Tadika Rhema was just one stop the Freudenbergs made. As they continued through Malaysia and Singapore, they could glimpse how God was setting the path before them.

Potential opportunities with Malaysia Bible Seminary and the HELP University College could support an increased desire for family life ministry in that country and bolster the value of a Concordia education. While partnerships are still in the proposal stages, Ben is optimistic of the long-term impact of such work.

How many Matthews?

In Kuching, Matthew Ling's Concordia connection remains strong. Calvary Family Church has welcomed their first Concordia intern, Anna Zieroth, and the Freudenbergs will visit Kuching again in June of 2011.

Ling is reshaping his congregation to be an intentional marriage- and family-forming center, and training his educators to work within the family friendly realm. Additionally, he is being sought out by the Malaysian



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government to work with them in the area of family life.

As Pastor Ling continues his work, we know he is just one example of alumni impacting the lives of those around them. With Concordia carrying out its mission locally and throughout the world, we wonder: How many potential 'Matthews' are there?

Kate Morgan is the communication manager at Concordia University Ann Arbor. She enjoys working in Christian higher education, believing in the mission to prepare young people for service to the Church and the world.