

PREFACE

There are many ways of giving. Apart from donating money, we can contribute our time and skill, or express the spirit of giving through the arts. Even giving our opinions on important issues can help make a difference.

I think Singapore has progressed to a stage where thousands can now, in one way or another, contribute to society. Last year, I was persuaded to produce a book which will encourage all Singaporeans to give. I gathered about 100 individuals for inspiration.

When I was in kindergarten and receiving pocket money of \$5.00 a month, 10% would be taken by my mother and given to the Baptist church. By the time I was 12, I disagreed that it should be given to the church. After a year, I was permitted to give in whatever way I felt appropriate. This is interesting as it shows that a child should be encouraged to exercise independence of thought. As life's most important lessons start young, if the government and charitable organisations want Singaporeans to give, they should advocate that a child's spirit of giving be nurtured from an early age.

It is important to recount stories to encourage Singaporeans to put in time and effort, without expecting anything in return. And this is the essence of this publication – that giving should be an act of love, kindness and generosity – we should not expect any returns when we give. We give because we believe it is wonderful to help others.

Let us remember that it is a privilege to be able to give. It is an honour to serve our nation and our university; and what greater value can we have if our money and our professional skills are used to help the less fortunate?

The massive international changes and the global financial crisis remind us that all nations will become poorer and millions in the poor rural areas of developing nations will not have food, shelter or medical care. Those of us who are fortunate to be only slightly affected by the financial crisis are blessed with the wonderful opportunity to do something by giving to the less fortunate.

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