

Singapore: A Fine City

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In the past few years I have heard so much about Singapore. This small country, 14 miles by 27 miles, receives a lot of attention from the world in general and our church in particular. So Dale Vink, a member of Grandville PRC, and I decided that a trip there would be necessary.

The title of this article reveals a lot about the government of the country. Singapore, a 'fine' city everyone says – fines for many things one might do. Fines for littering, throwing cigarette butts on the ground, huge parking fees, etc. Chewing gum is no longer sold in the country. The government certainly tells the citizens what to do.

Home, while we were there, was Pastor and Mrs. Kortering's apartment. After seeing the "Happy Mansion" address on the top of all their letters, I had imagined in my mind this huge mansion. But when I first arrived I was a little surprised at the outside. After looking at the building I decided that it was not a mansion and it really did not look all that happy. Kortering's apartment on the other hand was really nice and a very happy place to stay so maybe the building is appropriately named after all.

For Dale and me this was the first time to visit a country in the far East. I thought we might suffer from a major shock entering this country, but it does seem surprisingly Western in some respects. This is probably due to the long British rule over this country.

The major reason for visiting the country was of course Pastor and Mrs. Kortering's presence, my uncle and aunt, and the desire to meet the people from the church there. For those of you that are unfamiliar with Singapore, there are two churches that we have contact with, those being First and Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. Pastor Lau is the minister at First and Pastor Kortering at Covenant Church. Pastor Kortering is a minister-on-loan from the P.R. Churches. Covenant Church has a small building like a store front church. It is a small building but it is convenient and has a nice sanctuary. Since it is very hard to find buildings for sale, the people there are delighted that they found this building and are able to worship there. First Church has recently completed building their church and is currently waiting for government approval, so that they may occupy it.

Dale and I had heard that we would have a great time there and would enjoy meeting and talking with the people from the church. We were not disappointed. We happened to be there over the Chinese New Year. The majority of the people there do not celebrate the calendar New Year but only the Chinese New Year. Everyone had several days off from work and the Chinese section of town was mobbed with people. It sure seemed strange wishing people a "Happy New Year" in the middle of February.

The members of these churches are all younger people. The majority of the people are from 25 to 35 years old. There are quite a few children now in the church as some of the members are marrying. The people of the church there went out of their way to show us a great time. One day, three members of First Church took us into Malaysia. After looking around the town for a while, we noticed a huge windmill in the center of town. It came out that the Dutch had taken over this part of Malaysia and had ruled there for over 100 years. The Dutch sure get around.

Although for the most part, we as well as the saints there struggle with the same problems, it seems that there is an area that we cannot comprehend. It is hard for us to imagine

having almost all of our family and friends worshiping other gods like Buddha. For the majority of these young saints they may be the only Christian in their family. While sight-seeing one day with members of First Church we went into one of these Buddhist temples. People were lighting Joss sticks and putting fruit by an altar. It struck me when one of the members said that this is exactly what their family does. Bringing food and lighting sticks at a Buddhist temple seems like nonsense to us but the Christians there are looked down at for not doing this. Many are slighted by their family on this account.

One important thing that we must learn from them is their great burden for the lost. Unlike most of us, this burden for the lost propels the saints there to be actively involved in doing mission work. This burden or desire to tell others about Jesus makes them go to their neighbor in love. They tell others about their church, inviting them to come and take part in their fellowship groups. They tell them about their faith. We certainly could learn a lot from them, in this respect, about personal mission work.

Pray for the saints in Singapore as they must be lights in a dark world, and for the Korterings as they labour with them!

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