



## OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY CARITAS SINGAPORE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

‘How beautiful are those cities which overcome paralysing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development! How attractive are those cities which, even in their architectural design, are full of spaces which connect, relate and favour the recognition of others!’  
 – POPE FRANCIS, *EVANGELII GAUDIUM (THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL)*

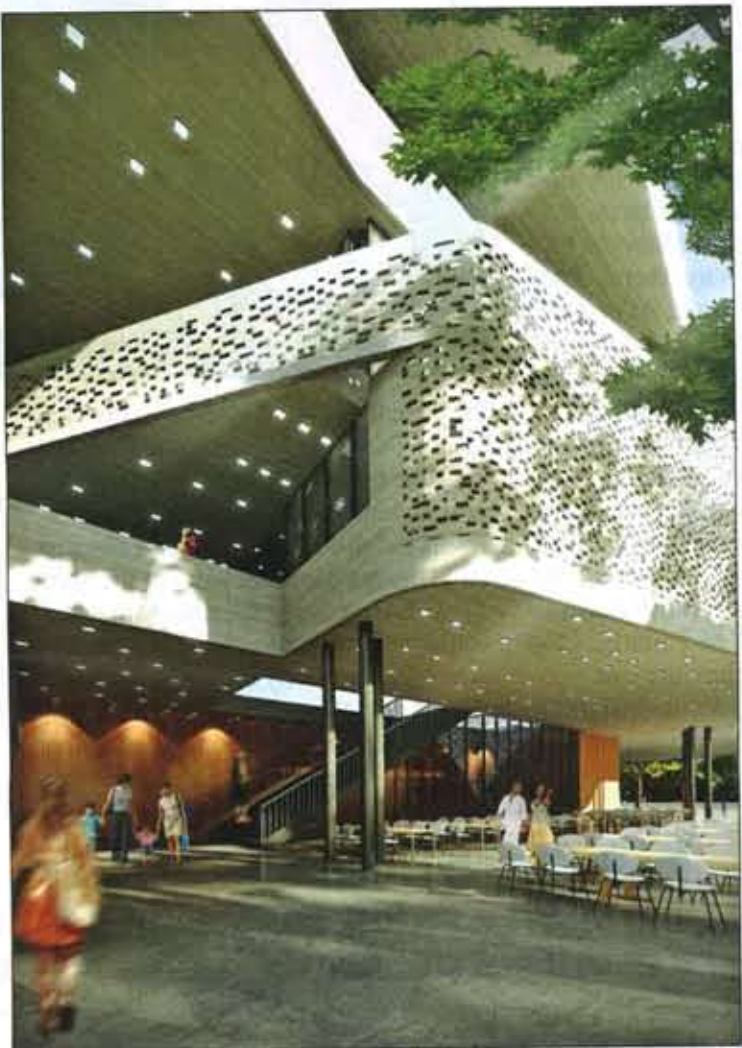
# Agape Village: Building God's Kingdom on Earth

The world today may be a far cry from our Christian ideal of God's kingdom – a paradise where everyone is loved and cared for, where those who mourn are comforted, and where there are no divisions between rich and poor. But could we still make this happen in our own small ways? Could we work together to build a little piece of God's kingdom here on Earth?

These were some of the questions we asked ourselves when Caritas Singapore embarked on our biggest project – building a one-stop social service hub that will connect the community to the services of our 23 Catholic charities. We see Agape Village as a concrete expression of Jesus' love for us and a place where we can share Jesus' love with others.

When we conducted our Study of the Poor in 2011 in partnership with Catholic Welfare Services and the Society of St Vincent de Paul, we found that disadvantaged families often have multiple problems and travel around Singapore to seek assistance from various agencies. Many have to repeat the accounts of their hardship and family situations to social workers at different agencies.

This can be hard to do, especially when people are physically challenged or not well informed of the numerous government and non-governmental avenues of help. Imagine yourself in the shoes of a friend we know – a blind busker with kidney failure who supports himself and cares for two blind roommates. It takes



time and effort to seek help. Our model for serving the poor can be more holistic. It also needs to be more dignified. At the heart of Caritas Singapore's vision for Agape Village is the belief that those in need should not have to go from place to place for help. Having a one-stop hub reflects our commitment to care for those in need while respecting their dignity. It is a commitment to be a listening ear to their needs and a bridge to integrate the services provided by the 23 charities under the Caritas Singapore umbrella and other agencies.

**Everyone is a VIP**  
 If a Very Important Person came to your office and asked for a service provided by someone else, how would you treat him? Would you just give him a phone number to call? Or would you go the extra mile to make a referral and follow up to ensure that he is attended to?

At Agape Village, everyone who walks in will be a VIP, because we believe that everyone is equally dignified in the eyes of God. Responding to Pope Francis' call to "integrate those who are different" and "connect, relate and favour the recognition of others" (*Evangelii Gaudium [The Joy of the Gospel]*), we want to create a space where there are no barriers between rich and poor, the able-bodied and those physically challenged, or between those of different nationality, race or religion.

Our belief in the Dignity of the Human Person prompts us to care for each person in his or her entirety – a mission exemplified in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. When the Good Samaritan found the injured man, he "bound his wounds, pouring on oil and wine" and also "set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn" where he told the innkeeper: "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back." (*Luke 10:35*) The Good Samaritan not only met the injured man's immediate needs, but also enlisted the help of the community to provide long-term care to put the man back on the path to wholeness.

In order to provide people in need the best possible care, Agape Village's case workers will rely on a network of Catholic social service organisations to assist in the diverse needs of the individual. Some focus on enabling the disabled, others promote mental health, and yet others deal with family issues. Agape Village will be a platform for our charities to work together to provide holistic care to those most in need.

Agape Village is also a place for the entire community. You too can be a part of Agape Village by offering your skills and talents to conduct personal development programmes or to operate a social enterprise that will benefit the community.

### \$10m raised, \$6m more to go

We've been busy raising funds for the upcoming Agape Village and would like to thank the many generous donors who are making this project possible. Fundraising activities over the past year included an Advent collection, a Love Gala dinner event, and two charity art exhibitions. A third art exhibition featuring Peranakan fusion art is currently on show till July 7 at the Pan Pacific Hotel.

So far we have raised \$10m and we need to raise \$6m more before the estimated completion of Agape Village in May 2015. We need your support and participation. Please see [www.caritas-singapore.org](http://www.caritas-singapore.org) for more information on how you can help.



At the Love Gala fundraising event held on Feb 13 are, from left, Caritas Singapore chairman George Lim, chairman of Agape Village Fundraising Committee Lim Soon Hock, Chief Justice Sundares Menon, chairman of Viva Foundation Theresa Foo, Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas Chia, Governor Emeritus of Lien Foundation Margaret Lien and chairman of Agape Village Steering Committee Janet Ang.

### Social enterprises to partner the poor

"We believe that each segment of society has the potential to empower another. We would like Agape Village to be a platform that partners social enterprises with the marginalised through employment or purposeful programmes. We are keen to be in touch with any social enterprise that shares this vision," said Agape Village general manager Gordon Pinto.

We plan to open a social enterprise cafe at Agape Village in mid 2015 and we invite social entrepreneurs to operate this cafe.

In addition, if you have a social enterprise idea or programme to share, connect with us at [agapevillage@caritas-singapore.org](mailto:agapevillage@caritas-singapore.org) or through our Facebook page "Agape Village – Caritas Singapore".