



Update on Search for the Baptist Centre for Convention Office & BTS (08 August 2011)



Knowing that several Baptist churches were considering purchasing property for worship services, the Convention Office sent out invitation to member churches for partnership to search for a site or building to share facilities and integrate services in early 2007. New Life BC (NLBC), Redeemer BC (RBC) and Baptist Theological Seminary (BTS) responded.

The Convention Executive Committee & BTS Management Board endorsed the partnership and the Convention Council subsequently approved it on 31 July 2007. A Memorandum of Understanding among NLBC / RBC / Convention / BTS was signed on 18 Aug 2007.

At a prayer meeting on 15 Sep 2007, Rev Lai Soon Loy in his exhortation to the Baptist Centre Task Force said,

“The Baptist Centre is not just about a building, but a living testimony of Baptist unity, ministry and future. It is a small step for God, but a giant step for the Baptist community”

Vision Remains but Structure Changes

The Vision of finding a permanent home for the Convention / BTS that belongs to the Singapore Baptist Community since then has not changed. However, after several years of search, the original Structure of shared ownership with church(es) to maximise utilisation of space requires re-shaping for the following main reasons:

- Religious site is very rare because of zoning restriction
- Public tender for religious site has gone above \$10m (3000 sqm; 30 years)
- Project cost exceeds \$20m or \$62,000 per month

Hence, a realignment of the search strategy is necessary in keeping with the ground realities. Some of these are:

- Primary aim remains to find a permanent home for BTS and the Convention Office if space permits)
- Secondary aim is to share space with church(es) on religious site
- Further delay increases project cost
- Consider commercial / association / institutional building. Over the years we had explored several potential sites. Some of these were:

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| ❖ Vertex | ❖ Joo Chiat Road |
| ❖ Dickson Road | ❖ Aljunied Road |
| ❖ Yio Chu Kang Road (2 sites) | ❖ Guillemard Road |
| ❖ Sims Avenue | ❖ Mountbatten Road |
| ❖ Geylang Road (3 sites) | ❖ Balestier Road |
| ❖ Jalan Besar | ❖ HDB tender of religious land (2 sites) |
| ❖ Lavender Rd | |

None of them were found suitable due to either regulatory restrictions or prohibitive costs. Along the way, we made some mistakes and learned valuable lessons. Meanwhile, the four MoU partners gave unqualified blessing for any of the party to pursue a particular site if it meets its requirement.

Impetus for Action

The original \$5m budget was insufficient as the current market rate for average non-industrial property costs around \$1,000 per sq ft. Other impetus for action includes:

- Interim operation at Calvary BC. Hope BC and BeTime Building is only a temporary measure
- We must treasure our qualified and committed BTS faculty & Staff – cannot take them for granted
- Growing BTS ministry and accomplishment as seen in:
 - ❖ 20 graduates at recent Commencement Service held on 21 May 2011
 - ❖ 56 students in new term (July 2011)
 - ❖ New initiatives: DMin and Graduate & Advance Diploma courses
 - ❖ Strategic advantages integrating Convention Office and BTS under one roof

Recommendations

The Convention Executive Committee and BTS management Board members met and decided to seek a renewed mandate from the member churches through the Convention Council. The proposal was to:

- Increase the project budget to \$10m (+10%)
- Empower the Convention Executive Committee & BTS Management Board members to lead the initiatives and make decisions in the best interest of the Baptist community
- Step up our corporate prayers for God to provide us with the Baptist Centre
- Support and encourage next phase of giving

The proposal was approved at the Council Meeting held on 31 May 2011 and a dialogue session with Baptist Pastors and Leaders was held on 1 August 2011.

Swinging into Action

The Executive Committee & the BTS Management Board members met to deliberate on the potential site at 1023, Upper Serangoon Road and agreed to consider the purchase of the property only if the following are complied with:

- The building zoned 60% Residential / 40% Commercial must have approval from the authority to allow BTS to operate at the building
- The final offer price at \$6.8 million from the Seller must be checked against an independent valuation of the property
- The building must have sufficient space to house the Convention Office and BTS for the next 10 years



The Search is Over! This is our Baptist Centre, God's gracious gift to the Baptist Community

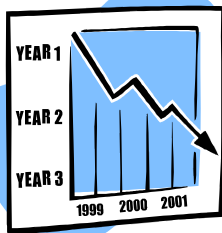
Location:

1023, Upper Serangoon Road; at the junction of Upper Serangoon Road and Lim Ah Pin; easily accessible by public transport; 5-minute walk from Kovan MRT Station

Area

Freehold GFA 8,500 sq ft; Land Area 4,000 sq ft; sufficient for Convention Office and BTS. distinctive facade; 4 1/2 storey + basement and own elevator

Price is Right



When the property was first released, the listed price was \$8.2 million. Initial negotiation reduces the price to \$7.3 million. The final offer went down to \$6.8 million. We obtained 2 independent valuations of the property and offered to purchase the building for \$6.6 million. The owner agreed.

Project Costs

The initial estimates for the entire project cost are:

Property Price:	\$6,600,000
GST (7%):	\$462,000
Stamp Duty (3%):	\$198,000
Renovation & Furnishing:	\$350,000
Total:	\$7,610,000
Cash received and pledged:	\$3,500,000
Balance needed:	\$4,110,000
Sales proceed of Conv Office:	\$850,000
Funds needed:	\$3,260,000
Contingency:	\$240,000
New Project Funds Needed:	\$3,500,000

Baptist Centre Task Force

The search for the Baptist Centre is over. The journey to turn the Vision into reality has begun. Let us walk together and be in step with the Spirit as we continue to trust and rely on Him to lead us forward. Thank God for the following Baptist Leaders who volunteered to lead and manage the project from negotiation to occupation:

- Rev Edwin Lam
- Daniel Soh
- Dr Sun Poling
- Rev Lim Swee Kee
- Richard Lee
- Tan Kim Tian
- Peter Tang

The 1% Option Money was paid on 18 July 2011 and the balance 9% was paid on 2 Aug 2011 to complete the Option to Purchase. The Project Completion date is 22 Dec 2011.

Baptist Theological Seminary



Queenstown BC allowed BTS to use its adjacent building for more than 11 years without rental



As of July 2011, the building was torn down to make way for the church redevelopment



BTS library, faculty and staff offices are housed at BeTime Building for the time being

- 1983: BTS operated as an extension of the Malaysian BTS at Calvary BC
- 1988: BTS moved to Singapore BC and was registered as an independent seminary registered with the Ministry of Education in 1989 and operating as an agency of the Singapore Baptist Convention
- 1998: BTS moved to Kay Poh Road BC
- 2000: BTS moved to Queenstown BC
- 2011: BTS moved to Calvary BC, Hope BC and BeTime Building
- 2012: BTS has its permanent home at the Baptist Centre @ 1023 Upper Serangoon Road

BTS has been growing under the care and support from Baptist Churches and individuals. Student enrolment has grown from 22 in 2004 to 56 in 2011, with 27 new students for the new term commencing July 2011.

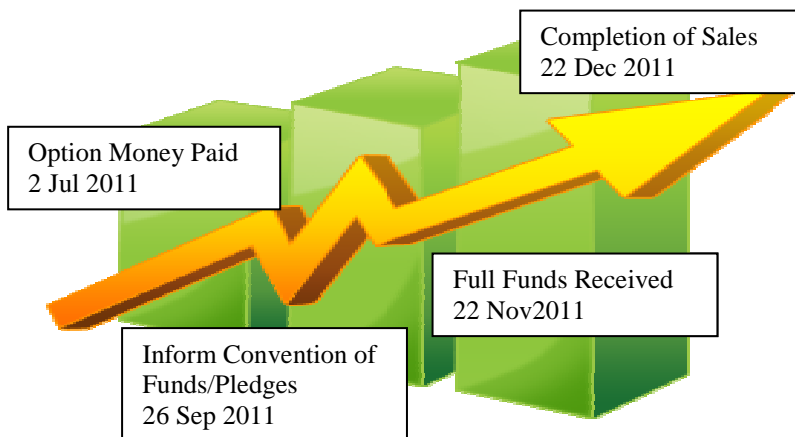
The Chinese programme with its focus on equipping Pastors and Leaders from mainland China began in 2007. The DMin programme offered in partnership with Union University (Jackson, TN, USA) started with its first intensive course held at BTS in July 2011. New Graduate Diploma courses are now available.



“When God continues to bless us with students and opportunities of ministry, we have to ask ourselves where and how could we house the students, and most of all, how do we work with God?”
Dr Sun Poling; President, BTS

Financial Challenge & Opportunity

We need another \$3.5 million to complete the purchase by 22 December 2011. Our first appeal for financial support from member churches is to challenge church members to give \$350.00 each. With more than 10,000 worshippers in our 36 member churches, raising \$3.5 million is doable and achievable. The Baptist Centre really belongs to the Baptist community.



We believe that there are Baptists who will give much more than \$350.00.

Member churches may want to consider topping up what church members gave to either meet or exceed the target of \$350.00 per member.

“Baptist Theological Seminaries in the region operate from their own properties, except Singapore, the most affluent nation amongst the lot. The opportunity is now right at our doorstep to make amend and turn the vision of a permanent home for our own BTS into reality” *Daniel Soh, Chairman BTS Management Board.*



This is Our Baptist Centre – to God be the Glory!