FFWPU UK: Members' Spotlight - Peter Kong: A Seed Planted Thirty Years Ago

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Some experiences stay with us long after the work is finished. We remember the people, the conversations, the feeling of belonging somewhere we had only just arrived. For Peter Kong, a service project in Birmingham nearly thirty years ago has remained one of those experiences. Today, it still shapes what he hopes to create in Wales.

Peter lives in Barry with his wife, Sufang, and their sixteen year old son, Michael. He and Sufang were Blessed in Korea in February 2000. He speaks warmly of their life in the seaside town, the countryside and coastline around them, and how easily he has built relationships locally.



Within FFWPU-UK, he particularly enjoys supporting young people and young adults. He helps organise

badminton, football and pickleball, as well as local service projects. Each offers a reason to come together, and an opportunity for friendships to grow.

"For me, these activities are not just about having fun or completing a job. They are a way of bringing people together, building friendships and creating opportunities to serve the wider community."

That understanding of service took shape through Religious Youth Service (RYS), which Peter joined in Birmingham in 1996 and 1997. During the 1996 project in Saltley, young people from around twenty nations and different religious backgrounds spent approximately twelve days working together. His group restored an abandoned tree nursery. Others helped turn an old bus garage into a recycling centre or worked on a nature trail and picnic area.

There was practical work to be done, but what Peter remembers most is the life they shared around it.

"We worked together, ate together, learned together, laughed together and sometimes struggled together. Although we came from very different backgrounds, those differences seemed to matter less. We became like one family."

He remembers the atmosphere created by coordinator David Earle and the rest of the staff. He remembers how understanding grew as they worked alongside one another. Even now, the mention of RYS is, in his words, "music to my ears".



"I think RYS planted a seed inside me. Nearly thirty years later, that seed is still there and is one of the main reasons I organise service projects in Wales today."

For years, Peter wanted to recreate something of that experience. His first local project took place on 25 February 2023, beginning with a simple idea: bring a few people together and find something useful they could do for their community.

On 19 September 2026, that work brought the group to Cosmeston Lakes Country Park. Under the guidance of park ranger Sharon, they cleared vegetation around a wooden bridge and information signs that had become difficult to see. Light rain gave way to sunshine. By the time they finished, the bridge entrance and signs were clearer and more welcoming for visitors.

As they worked, conversation came naturally. For Peter, that time together was as valuable as the task itself. The group stayed to chat after finishing, then continued their time together over a meal.

These are the moments Peter returns to when reflecting on the day: time to talk without forcing a conversation, and the pleasure of seeing what a few people have managed to do together.

"The work brings us together, but often it is the conversations and relationships that you remember afterwards."

Participants also learn about the places they help care for. Rangers explain how vegetation can overwhelm young trees and why particular tasks matter. The work becomes easier to understand when people can see its purpose.

Over time, the projects have helped Peter build a good relationship with the park team. He reports encouraging local recognition, including from the local MP, and has spoken with Sharon about organising a larger project. He hopes to bring young people from across the UK, and perhaps Europe, to Wales for service, environmental education, activities and sightseeing.

That hope feels like something moving: an experience that gave him so much might now become something he can offer others.



Before



After

For members who would like to begin in their own communities, Peter's advice is simple.

"You don't need fifty people or a huge project. Find a local park, nature reserve, community organisation or charity and simply ask, 'Is there something we could help you with?'"

A few people can be enough. So can a small task. Peter knows from experience that it is difficult to predict what will stay with someone afterwards.

"You may begin by wanting to change a small part of your local environment, but along the way you may find that the experience also changes something inside you."