

Dear Team

When Gideon a volunteer architect asked a family of 6 what they wished for in their apartment they remained silent. The family live in a simple L-shaped flat and when Gideon suggested personal space and a dining area, the children exchanged glances briefly and then continued to look at him incredulously. Gideon persisted, “I know you don’t have much space but we can arrange things a little differently and make a few changes.” Gideon then proceeded to draw the L-shaped space on the wall and stressed, “There is always room for improvement!”

We had the privilege of using a meeting room provided by Far East Organisation that had walls we could write on. They had an enamel paint finish and doodles with a white board marker were easily cleaned off with a cloth. Just watching Gideon drawing and writing on the wall was already a little show for those of us who were raised never to write on the wall. Eventually, a teenager in the family said that she would like a mirror and that got mother asking for storage space for the children’s books, bags and clothes.

Although this was a discussion the family had wanted, someone looking in would have thought that they were not interested. They had to be cajoled to offer their suggestions and opinions but it would be more accurate to say that they had to be cajoled to believe that there was indeed room for improvement. Despite reassuring the parents that a group of volunteers will be covering the expenses incurred, they remained silent. But as their children took turns to contribute to the floor plan on the wall, they relaxed, smiled a little and father even stepped forward to show Gideon where the washing machine could be.

A family where its members are at odds with each other may not need space away from each other. Instead, they may need a space where they can be cooperating. Gideon’s support was not just creating space in the family’s apartment but also space in their relationships for a shared purpose and happiness. As the parents got into the discussion, mother expressed that she wanted the apartment to be bright and father said that he wanted the windows unobstructed. Though expressed in different ways, it seems liked the parents agree that “happiness is letting the light in.”

Wishing everyone a bright and cheerful weekend as we usher in Deepavali, the festival of lights.

Gerard

*“We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.” – Plato*