Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies, Advisor to Jurong GRC Grassroots Organisations,

Mr Ng Kwan Meng, Citizens' Consultative Committee chairman,

Mr Ong Kian Chew, Community Club Management Committee chairman,

Mdm Edna Goh, CCC Vice-Chairman,

Ms Ng Ming Min, Constituency Director,

Bishop Rev. Lu Guan Hoe, Rev Anthony Loh.

distinguished guests, principals and teachers, fellow management committee members, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to all of you.

The first person I would like to appreciate is our guest of honour, Mr Tharman.

In preparation for this event, we wanted to better understand his contributions and so we checked our records and reached out to those who served back then.

Now, let me share with you 3 things you may not be aware of:

**Number 1.** Many of us know that Mr Tharman has been supporting many of the preschools here in Tharman Jurong for quite a while. He is one of the popular faces at graduation ceremonies.

Do you know when did he first attended our DGP or JCCK graduation?
Since 2004. Almost 2 decades ago.

**Number 2.** We didn’t reach out to him. We probably didn’t have the audacity to invite him. He was the one who reached out to us first.

Back then in 2004, Mr Tharman took the initiative to buy moon cakes for our staff. He also linked up a few preschools in the area to hold a special combined event for the community.

**Number 3.** Yes, Mr Tharman participated in many of our school’s graduations. I think he makes it a point to attend despite his busy schedule. In fact, I read from this morning’s paper that Mr Tharman just signed the EAEU FTA last night. And here he is this morning.

There was one occasion when he couldn't attend. Guess what happened? What would you do if you were him and you cannot attend?
Well, Mr Tharman sent his wife to represent him.

**Talk about initiative and dedication.**

And I can go on and on about the support he extended to our school as well as our parent organisation, Jurong Christian church:

a) He assisted us in getting an alternate site to relocate our preschool and our church during our church rebuilding
a) He supported us in our ground breaking ceremony,
b) The fundraising dinner for our new church building,
c) The JCC Charity Golf at Jurong Country Club,
d) The Opening Ceremony for the new church building,
e) And in between all these, the various dialogues and support when we engaged SLA, NEA, HDB, CCC, and JTC. Yes, a mouthful of abbreviations.

I do not stay in Jurong so unfortunately for me, Mr Tharman is not my MP, but I certainly had a lot more insights on his people ministry more than any other MPs, including my own MP. Pls don’t tell my MP I said this. From all these records, testimonies and personal encounters, I know Mr Tharman, who despite his very high profile locally and internationally, is very willing to roll up his sleeves and get his hands dirty to make an impact on his people.

But Mr Tharman is not just a leader; he is like a father to this community. Fathering is different from leading. It is leading with love and desire for the next generation to survive and succeed. Later, we will be presenting to Mr Tharman a token of our appreciation. This gift has the word ‘Love’ on it and the management committee feels that it is not just his ability and foresight, but his heart for his people, that makes him such an outstanding and endearing leader.

Thank you once again Mr Tharman. I wish you many many many more good years to come. Jurong and Singapore really need more leaders like you.

<Next Photo pls>
This lady is Mdm Ang. She taught me GP in college 20 years ago. And this was one of our last outings 1 year before covid.

I cannot remember what she has taught me in GP. But I remember her fondly because she didn’t just teach. She cared.

You see, I was a very average student, not good enough academically to be considered the typical pet student but through her actions, Mdm Ang impressed upon me that grades weren’t everything; she was concerned about me as a person. She cared.

And this is something I will always remember; her legacy has left an imprint on me.

This morning we have 23 DGP teachers and staff with us. Most of you have stayed with us for an average of 12.4 years, says Mr Microsoft Excel. To stay with us for this long, it must mean that you see this as a long-term profession and you probably have developed greater passion along the way.

Now, on this important milestone, may I ask you to just take a step back, and savour this moment, because, this is your moment. This opening ceremony would not be possible without your consistent hard work and contributions. DGP is your legacy. Today is your day.

Now, I would like to invite all the teachers and staff to stand. Let us give them a well-deserved round of applause. <Thank you. Pls be seated.>

Many of us would be familiar with the campfire song that has these catchy lyrics: ‘it only takes a spark to get the fire going’. Teachers and staff, if I may have one request on this special occasion it would be that you continue to help us pass on your spark to the next generation.

Our world is bereft of this spark that many of the pioneer generation leaders bring with them. It is not just about skills and knowledge, but also the intent and commitment to your craft, and importantly, the sacrificial love that you have for people, and in this case, children.

An elder once told me, ’You don’t have to pass on this ‘spark’ to many people. Just focus on 1 person’.

So, this is my humble request, that you would pass on this spark, to a child or a fellow teacher, or someone close to you. Just like how my GP teacher Mdm Ang impacted my life, and made a difference beyond grades, don’t underestimate the positive impact you can bring about, and probably have.

May your legacy live on, not just in this building or even our preschool, but in these most impressionable lives you have touched. Thank you once again.

**Tharman’s Speech (ad lib):**
I’m very happy to be here with my grassroots leaders, to meet you after several months and to take part in this meaningful ceremony to launch the new preschool – David & Goliath Preschool. I always regarded it as a privilege to be here in Taman Jurong and to have constituents that go back so many years, as with the case of JCC from the 1960s. Such a rich history.

But it’s not the rich history of any particular building. It’s a rich history of a community. I’ve been very appreciative and respectful of JCC’s contribution to the community in this small corner of Singapore, though Singapore is really a country of many small corners. I appreciate what you’ve done over the years, so thank you very much to JCC, the former JCCK, and all the teachers and parents of David & Goliath Preschool.

As I was walking around the school a short while ago being introduced to the new features by your principal Dolly Teng, I was struck by how spacious and airy it was, and how light was coming into the building. But the most important thing that Dolly mentioned to me was the focus on developing the social skills of our children.

When the kids are young, that is the most important thing for them. At this age in life, they develop the skill of interacting with each other - playing, being friendly, being patient, and having a liking or love for other people. What I always found in education and in life is that through our interactions with other people, we become more ourselves. It is not as if being an individual is different from being part of a group or community. We become a stronger individual and we have more of a sense of our own special identity, through our contributions to others. We become better people.

That is what we must encourage little kids to experience and to grow into becoming – more respectful and enjoying others’ company. Everything else we do, whether academic or physical or sports or dance, should build up each individual to become a better person because of the way we treat others. I’d like to commend our teachers and parents for doing that for so many years.

Once again, thank you to JCCK, and now DGP, for what you have done to help people become better people.