



Financial advisers Li Wei Ming and Jacqueline Ho with their sons, five-year-old Zhongkai and five-month-old Yikai, at their Ghim Moh flat, where the family ushered in their first Easter with Yikai yesterday. The baby has a rare heart defect where the two main arteries leaving the heart are reversed.
ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

GRATEFUL FOR HELP RECEIVED

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MR LI WEI MING

Easter holds special meaning for family dealing with baby's health issues

Malavika Menon

During an ultrasound scan in May last year, expectant mother Jacqueline Ho found out her baby might have a congenital heart condition.

Along with husband Li Wei Ming, the couple, who have an older son Zhongkai, now five, spent the next few months preparing for the birth of their second child amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

When baby Yikai was born last October, he stayed in the hospital for about 40 days, undergoing critical treatment. The couple relied on family, friends and their church community for support.

The family ushered in their first Easter with five-month-old Yikai at home yesterday, giving thanks for the help they have received and praying for his smooth journey towards recovery.

Ms Ho, 39, said: "As parents, this Easter had a special meaning to us as it was a time to reflect and share our gratitude for the support we have received."

The couple currently attend virtual church services and are waiting for the day they can introduce Yikai to their church community in person.

Like them, Christians across Singapore marked Easter yesterday, with many attending on-site and virtual church services.

Easter services last year were held online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This year, services were conducted on-site with a cap on the number of attendees and stringent measures in place to prevent the spread of infection.

When the pandemic disrupted their daily life early last year, Ms Ho and Mr Li, who both work as financial advisers, were thankful for the time it gave them to spend at home with their firstborn and prepare for Yikai's arrival.

Yikai was born with transposition of the great arteries (TGA) – a rare heart defect where the two main arteries leaving the heart are reversed. The newborn underwent a medical procedure and two major opera-

tions in the first month of his life.

Mr Li, 38, recalled: "Before Yikai underwent one of the major operations, he was in a very critical condition. The doctor told us the night before (the operation) would be very critical, either he would make it through or not. Our hearts sank."

The couple's family, friends and church community rallied around them, praying for Yikai to pull through.

The next day, his condition was deemed stable enough for him to undergo surgery to correct the TGA issue.

Even though Yikai arrived home a few days shy of his elder brother's birthday in December, he had to be rushed back to the hos-

pital on New Year's Eve due to breathlessness.

Mr Li said: "We put our trust in our team of doctors and healthcare workers at the National University Hospital, who were so committed to Yikai's care."

"We were also thankful and grateful for the emotional and mental support of our parents, friends and church members. Without it, we would have found it difficult to pull through this period of time."

At Zhongkai's school, which is run by Presbyterian Community Services, teachers established a close bond with him, and his classmates' parents reached out to help care for him when his parents had to stay at the hospital for

extended hours.

While there have been plenty of challenges since last October, Mr Li and Ms Ho cherish the moments of joy they have experienced as a family since Yikai's birth. "During Chinese New Year, we were able to take Yikai to meet his grandparents on both sides. They were so happy to see him," Ms Ho said.

They will return to the hospital later this month for Yikai's next – and hopefully last – operation.

"We don't know what the future looks like but we will hold on to our faith and hope our story can be encouraging for other parents like us," Ms Ho said.

m.mala@sph.com.sg