

Pastor Kong Hee Facing Up to 12 Years in Jail

Singapore Pastor Kong Hee is facing up to 12 years in prison following his recent conviction for diverting funds to bolster his wife's singing career, *The Strait Times* reports.

The Public Prosecutor has requested maximum sentences for six City Harvest Church leaders, including a sentence of 11 to 12 years for Kong.

Last month, the six church leaders were found guilty of misusing about \$50 million in church funds, including \$24 million to bolster the musical career of Kong's wife, singer-pastor Ho Yeow Sun.

The prosecution submitted its sentencing recommendations to the court on Nov. 6. Kong and the others are due back in court Friday for sentencing.

So far, Kong, 51, and CHC fund manager Chew Eng Ham, 55, have indicated they plan to appeal the sentence.

"I think it's likely (for Kong to appeal), but I can't confirm right now, realistically we have to see what happens on Friday," Kong's lawyer Jason Chan told *The Strait Times*.

Chew told the newspaper that, "I am standing by my defense and what I testified during the trial, and will make an appeal."

Defense attorneys have argued that the church suffered no financial losses and that Kong and the others did not profit.

Regarding the conviction, the church's management board said in a statement that they were deeply saddened. The statement included the judge's remarks about the case.

"I have no doubt that they loved CHC and had no wish to do any

harm to it, and I accept that, in using CHC's funds for the Crossover (project), they believed that they were using church funds for an evangelistic purpose that was not just permitted but positively mandated by the vision and mission of CHC, and which was supported by the vast majority if not the entirety of the congregation," the judge wrote.

"But saying that they believed they were using 'church funds for church purposes' is not an answer to the charges; so long as they intended to use CHC's funds in such a manner that amounted to a wrong use in the knowledge that they were not legally entitled to do so, the element of dishonesty would be made out."

In their statement, church board members said they recognized that the judge had "acknowledged that the motive of the six was their love for the church and that they believed they were using church funds for an evangelistic purpose."

"As the board, we want to assure everyone that we will not let this trial happen in vain," the board members wrote. "Over the past three years, the board has taken significant steps to improve our governance, to fulfill the purpose and mission God has placed upon this church in wiser and lawful ways. And we will continue to do so as we journey toward our future."