

The 2000 VINE

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Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Grace to you and shalom from God the Father! The year Y2K or 2000 has finally arrived.

The Millennium

What is there to be celebrated at the turn of the millennium? It will be more than a momentary observance of a rare calendar event. Like a birthday or anniversary, it is a natural invitation for us to reflect on our past and to look ahead to the future.

Why 2000? Why the third millennium? The reason is Jesus Christ. For centuries dates have been designated as "B.C." (before Christ) or "A.D." (from the Latin *anno Domini* which means "in the year of our Lord"). Early societies typically marked time by reference to their king or emperor. When Christians placed the initials A.D. after the calendar year, it was a great statement of faith: Jesus is Lord. Although secular historians use other designations today, for Christians A.D. is a

THOSE WHO SERVE YOU...



Rev. Martin Yee



Pastor Michael Christian



Dr. Daniel Bloomquist

REMEMBER THEM IN YOUR PRAYERS.

powerful reminder that Jesus Christ is Lord "yesterday, today and forever."

The Millennium, Second Coming and the End of the World

The early Christians "lived on tiptoe," peering expectantly to the future. They lived in the early glow of the Resurrection, and anticipated that their beloved Jesus would return soon. Their hope in Jesus' "Second Coming" looked for the fulfillment of history and God's final triumph over sin, death and evil. As the third millennium nears, we remember the impassioned prayer of hope that marked early Christian worship: "Maranatha", i.e., "Our Lord, come."

When Jesus was asked about his return, he said, "About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). Despite various "millennialist" theories throughout the centuries, there is no biblical basis for equating a year--1000 or 2000--with Jesus' return, the coming of the Kingdom of God, or the end of the world. When the Bible mentions "a thousand years" (Revelation 20:2-6), it refers to a period of time and not a specific date. As Christians, we live each day as if it could be the last, and embrace each new day as a gift of God. Whether "the close of the age" comes soon or millennia hence, Jesus has promised to be with us (Matthew 28:20). When that day comes, it will not be a time of fear for the Christian, but a time of completion.

Pray also for the elect...



Tan Swee Leong

Wilfred Kao



Tan Geok Wah



Khoo Teng Choon



Roy Ang

Peter Cheong



Christopher Wang

A Time to Look Back

The end of the second millennium invites us to reflect on the past thousand years of the church. There has been tremendous expansion of the Christian church since the year 1000, for which we thank God. But not all has been good; in fact, there has been much for which we must repent. Too many wars have been fostered in the name of religion e.g. in Ambon, East Timor, Northern Ireland, Bosnia etc; our sin against God has too often turned to hatred and deadly sin against one another.

For Lutherans and others, the second millennium of Christian history is indelibly marked by the Protestant Reformation, a Christian reform movement initiated by Martin Luther. In a time stained by corruption in the church, Luther sought to restore the centrality of the Gospel as the "true treasure of the church." Regrettably, the effort for reform led to divisions, and although some progress toward reconciliation has been made example in the signing of Joint Declaration on Justification between Catholics and Lutherans on Oct 31st 1999, competition and mistrust among churches remain.

This millennium also saw a great worldwide missionary effort, in response to our Lord's command to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). In spite of shortcomings and sins, millions were reconciled to God

through faith in Jesus Christ. Yet there are millions more who do not know the love of Christ. Even as we "wait for the blessed hope of . . . Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), we are keenly aware that we have urgent missionary work to do.

A Time to Look Ahead

What will be the shape of the Church's mission and JCC's in particular in the year 2000 and beyond? Many cultures have become increasingly secular. Like the earliest Christians, we are unlikely to serve and witness in a world where those in power view the Christian church as a partner or an indispensable guiding light. But whether Christianity is a central institution in society or a mission from the margins of society, the basis for our hope and our mission remains the same, "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

We know some of the challenges that lie ahead. Acknowledging the divisions and distrust between nations, religions, races--and even among Christians--we are called to work for reconciliation and peace. In a divided Church we are called to demonstrate the power of the Gospel to make us one. In a world where resources are often concentrated in the hands of a few, we are called to work for equity, justice and dignity on behalf of the poor and oppressed. As part of God's creation, we are called to be wise stewards of the earth in the face of forces that exploit, consume, or pollute the environment.

More Silly Q&A

There is much about the future that can make us apprehensive as Christians, but we are not afraid. We move into the third millennium in the confidence that Jesus will be Lord of this millennium too. We remember his assurance that even the gates of Hell (Hades) will not prevail against us as we carry out his mission (Matthew 16:18). Whatever the years may bring, we have a Lord who is faithful to his promises. May we be faithful too! Amen!

Pastor Martin Yee

Question: There are 3 frogs on a leaf. If one of them decided to jump off the leaf into the water, how many frogs are there left on the leaf?

Think, don't cheat.

Answer: THREE

Why?

Because the frog only "DECIDED" to jump! It didn't!

Ponder over this, my friends. Are you not unlike the frog; who decides to do this, decides to do that, but ended up not doing any? In life, we have to make many decisions. Most mistakes are not made by wrong decisions. Most mistakes ARE made due to indecision.

Q. Why did they have to put a fence around the graveyard?

A. Because people were dying to get in.

Q. What should you do if a dog starts eating a dictionary?

A. Take the words right out of its mouth

Q. What did one eye say to the other?

A. There's something between us that smells.

Q. At this moment everyone in the world are doing the same thing. What is it?

A. Getting older

Q. What happened when the man sat on the pin?

A. Nothing, It was a safety pin.

Q. Why was the tooth all dressed up?

A. Because the dentist was taking it out that night.

Q. Why did the teacher wear dark glasses?

A. Because the class was so bright.

Q. Where does Thursday come before Wednesday?

A. In the dictionary.

Q. What is always coming but never arrives?

A. Tomorrow.

Q. How can you drop a pizza 10 feet without breaking it?

A. Drop it 11 feet and it won't break for the first 10.

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The Y2K Bug

had a lot of bark but did not bite except for a few scattered and minor hitches blamed on it throughout the

WHOLE WORLD. Was it because governments of wealthy IT-savvy countries were all very wise in having taken preemptive strikes at the bug, or was it an attestation of the greater wisdom of poorer nations that they were not easily fooled by a grand deception and so took little or no action to combat an imaginary bug? In fact, the poor and passive “foolish” who survived the crossover to Y2K largely unscathed had actually caused the wealthy and ardent “wise” to tremble at the thought of international IT-intensive operations being put in jeopardy by the inactive state of the weakest links in the chain. The only people laughing to the banks must be the computer-related supply and service companies.

Popular face-saving statements have been made that no money was wasted because the hysteria of the world had actually brought benefits in its wake. At least, the Y2K phobia provided an easy way out for boardrooms wrangling about justifying expenditures to overhaul systems. To me, spending a fortune to upgrade a system just to snuff out a bug is like buying a sledgehammer to deal with a fly.

I can think of a better excuse: The price we paid was worth the valuable lesson we learnt about the precarious nature of our relationship with and dependency on machines. When machines decide to hold a strike, the world would be brought to its knees!

Sadly, man invariably has great wisdom only on hindsight; yet, this wisdom is often readily put aside in favour of the immediate attractions of all things new, innovative and promising. With every major awakening, we come to our senses; but, in the next moment, we lose our senses again. I feel that man is never willing or capable of taking the bull by its horns in taming the pervasive and overwhelming influence of machines that are enslaving us as they entice with the productivity carrot. We see the values of the immediate, but not the consequences that grow with the passage of time. Discernment of truths and falsehoods often gives way to Crowd Psychology, especially with the potency of the Internet.

(The Hello Kitty craze is an example of this as people, fed not by McDonald's meals but by media reports and grapevine chatters, go after the toy for potential trading gains or due to some hazy sentiment that it would be a great

loss if one does not grab it when everybody else seems to be snatching it up. Once a sizable group was gathered for the first Kitty, the demand spurred immediate imitation and magnification through the second Kitty offer, and then the third ... in a cycle of intensification that will eventually die down. Unfortunately, nobody in the crowd realises that it is very much Crowd Psychology at work or has the sagacity to recognise that interest in the toy will soon fade off as the market becomes saturated or the novelty wears off. A teenager was reported that she would consider herself mad to eat all the McDonald's meals bought; ironically, she did not consider herself mad to throw away the fresh meals without a second thought for the hungry people! What a shame! No prize for guessing who is actually laughing to the banks.)

IT experts, government leaders, business moguls, school teachers and ordinary folks we meet all sing a common tune that computers and learning about IT are now indispensable. This tune will continue spreading with multiplier effect. "Everybody else trumpets the tune, so there must be something real to it." At the macro level, we have no influence to change things for wiser options. At the micro level, as individuals, we are also hard put not to join the bandwagon and play the same tune. What can I do if my son comes back from school with a statement that he needs a computer and a new software? How am I going to work on THE VINE without my machine-partner? ... The questions that provide their own answers are endless. Man is entangled in a web he himself spins. Once upon a time when IT was at its infancy, man lived and enjoyed the little pleasures and conveniences the "thinking machines" accorded. In a space of less than half a century, we embrace IT in order to live.

Is man wise or foolish? What can I do myself at least for my own sake? I have no answer, but a Hobson's choice to jump onto the self-advancing IT vehicle or be lost in a slow-mobile chugging through a maze of criss-crossing circuits. As I travel on the speeding vehicle, passing over high spots and bumping along low valleys, I have a sense of exhilaration as the breeze blows in my face. Nevertheless, the nagging thought is: Where am I heading?

Generally, by human reckoning, those who are entrenched in the knowledge of the modern world, the IT age, are assumed to be smarter than those who just manage to glide by along the shoulders of the information highway. The brouhaha over the Y2K Bug, with the clashing of cymbals and beating of drums warning of a global disaster, finally ended in a whimper. Those on the shoulders of the highway can now afford to smile at their counterparts on the fast lanes when less than a month ago they were the targets of accusations by the smart

inhabitants of the techno-world for being weak and tardy in efforts to catch the bug. Read these from the Bible:

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.” (1 Corinthians 1:27)

“Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22)

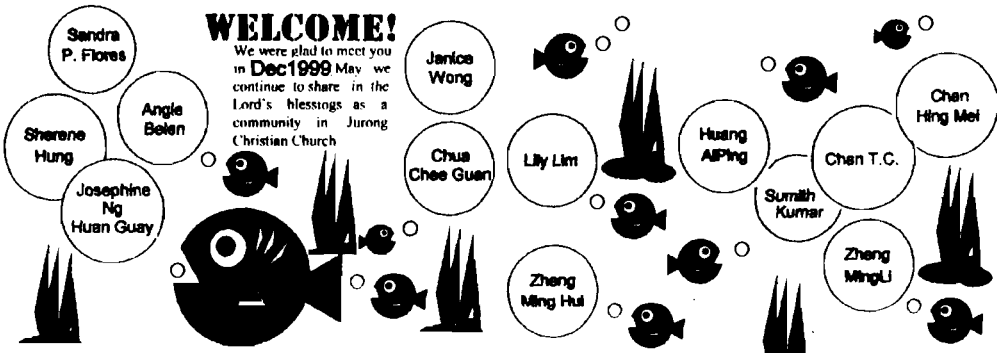
The sobering reminders of the Bible are not specifically directed at the Y2K issue, but are relevant to all spheres of human enterprise. After the Y2K, man will not stop worrying. If not the Feb 29 date, other distant or neighbourhood events will continue to ensnare us in a perpetual cycle of fear and relief. Come Y3K, the future generation will have very much a similar experience as the generations of Y1K and Y2K. Someone said recently that the only certainty in life is uncertainty. I agree. However, we don't have to worry. If we live by the Word of God, we have the assurance that the uncertainty is well taken care of.

Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become ‘fool’ so that he may become wise. (1 Corinthians 3:18)

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness" (1 Corinthians 3:19) and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." (1 Corinthians 3:20)

For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." (1 Corinthians 1:19)

John Lee



THE MISSION CALL

Introduction

Christians talk of being "called" to missions or to ministry. God can clearly call us for a particular task to use our gifts, abilities or conviction. God is able to call us in any manner he chooses, dramatically or audibly. However nowhere in Scripture do we find a call to ministry as a doctrine or even a requirement for us to move into ministry.

If we are waiting for a supernatural call, wait no longer.

All believers are called. (2 Thess 2:13 -14, Heb 3:1)

What about the missionaries in Acts?

Did they receive a personal edict (command) from God to serve Him? Most of those serving were doing so in obedience to Acts 1:8 and as a result of persecution.

Others were challenged by Paul. Some were sent by the Church (Acts 11:22) and some went because of their zeal for the Lord.

Specific calls were given only to:

Philip to go to Gaza (Acts 8:26)

Peter to minister to Cornelius (Acts 10)

Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2)

These calls were made when they were already on the field ministering. The call was for a clearer direction in ministry.

The Mandate – The Commission for Missions

Declare his glory among the nations. (Ps 96.3)

The Great Re-Commission (Matt 28: 19-20)

All God's people have already been called to go to the nations/peoples of the world.

Martin Luther admitted that although he received great insight into God's will from the Bible and from the counsel of friends, he never received a dramatic call for his life work. Often, he said, circumstances propelled him into God's assignment.

The Call is actually a process:

Curiosity:	I want to know more
Interest:	I want to keep learning more
Understanding:	I am beginning to have a heart for these people
Assurance:	I believe God could use me for this work
Conviction:	I am convicted to serve in this area
Commitment:	As God leads, I will obey
Action:	I will take a definite step in obedience.

The insistence on a specific call when God's Word does not insist on it often brings about confusion.

God's people have already clearly commanded, commissioned and called. We have to align our life's objectives of making followers and learners of every people, even our own.

The call is already there; maybe we are too busy to be sensitive to the heart of God.

Obeying the Call

Listen to the specific guidance of God. When we are living in obedience to His Word and following Him, we can hear his "voice".

God has a specific will for us. It may not be in our "Jerusalem"

We have to minister where we can make the best impact on the nations with the gifts, abilities and opportunities God has given us.

Our comfort zone can cause us to test our surroundings rather than God.

God's plan is higher than ours. He wants to place us where His glory can shine the brightest.

Tan Swee Leong

LATEST NEWS

Saturday, 25th December 1999.
 Christmas Day saw more than 20 persons joining JCC through baptism and transfer. Although we are happy for all those who have joined us this day, the one who got the most response, the one whom most of us have waited a long time to welcome into the fold was none other than Bro Chin Yew Ning.



We want to welcome all those who were baptized, confirmed or transferred on this day. May you continue to grow in your Christian faith as you journey with us along life's path towards our eternal goal. May the fellowship that you now share with us make you more loving, giving and forgiving.



Even as you have been called by the Lord, remember that you are now called to be lights to the world. So let your light shine forth in everything you do that all men may give praise to God.

Your mission in life :

To bring the Good News to everyone you meet.

ANAGRAM - a sentence formed by rewriting in a different order the letters of another sentence
 example: **YEAR TWO THOUSAND = A YEAR TO SHUT DOWN**



The graduates of the latest intake of Bethel Series (Teachers' Level) received their certificates from their teacher, **Margaret Chew**. This is the second class that Margaret has taught. The top student was Edmund Ng. ***Congratulations, now you have been blessed to be a blessing.***

The Bethel Series is based on the concept of "a picture is worth a thousand words".

With the use of over 40 beautiful paintings, the whole Bible is taught in concepts linked to the picture to help the memory.

Memorizing is the major part of this series of studies. The student must memorize the concepts and also scripture verses.

Sister Margaret will start her 3rd class soon. **Sign up now!**



To Death and Back

continued from last month's The Vine.

Then I felt myself being sucked into infinite space and darkness and the eternal series of playbacks. I could hear, feel miserable, but was impotent. The most horrifying thing was the knowledge that I was condemned to spending eternity floating, and experiencing agonising and taunting flashbacks of the life I had left.

Then I felt someone touching my arm as I struggled to get back ...as if I was awake. But it was again an illusion and I relapsed into the uncontrollable spiral of death.

Again I felt a hand holding my arm. I opened my eyes and saw that it was my wife. I was unsure, fearing that it was yet another illusion. But this time...it was real. I had got back. I don't know how. I was awake, and alive!

My wife, Rose, was holding my arm and she said I was muttering in terror: "It's not real! It's not real!" I was afraid that that awakening was yet another illusion. Rose tells me my body was icy cold, and there was a look of horror on my face as I kept repeating "It's horrible!" Some people tell me I was merely hallucinating. Some even think I am mad when I tell them about my experience. But I know it was real. I saw it, felt it, and remember it vividly. I even had flashbacks of those experiences at least three more times - while awake!

Did I really experience death? I know I did, but does it matter? All I know is that since then I have really experienced life! Real life and living! And I don't need money, position, worldly pleasures, or anything this secular world can give me to experience joy each day of my life.

I know now that there is God. And he is my God. And He is looking after me everyday, making my life better, and watching over me even when there are problems.

But why did I have those two experiences? I believe God in His infinite mercy allowed those things to happen to me because I had earnestly sought him, and honestly wanted to know the meaning of life, and perhaps because at some point in my life I had been faithful to Him, despite the profligate life I had led.

God was giving me a final chance. After my second out of body experience, I talked to a number of people for an explanation. I also talked to my Christian friends and, together with one, we prayed to God for help, and for forgiveness for the life I had been living. I invited Jesus Christ to come into my life, and felt a great burden being lifted from me.

I began to worship God daily and to read the Bible again, but this time with an open mind. I stop intellectualising with God. I also stopped teasing

Christians.

Never have I read a book as remarkable or as wise. No man could have of himself written that book, i.e. the 66 books that make up the bible which were written over a period of 1500 years. If I could read but just one book in my entire life, it would be nothing but the Bible.

For a year a Christian friend, who incidentally is a senior executive in a major local bank, led me in Bible study each Tuesday despite his heavy schedule.

Wonderful things began to happen in my life, and are still happening today. I joined the Christian Business Men's Committee, and recently became its general secretary.

Last year, I rejoined the Brethren church that I used to attend as a boy, and am now involved in its Adult Bible study classes. I have also become an officer in The Boys' Brigade and spend each Saturday afternoon helping to train children in discipline and lead them to Jesus Christ.

I am also on the organising committee of Sharity Gift Box 1996, where my services, including that of PR consultant, are offered free. I spend a lot of my time each day in prayer and reading the Bible, sometimes a few hours in the morning before going to work. I estimate that more than half my day is doing work that is Jesus Christ centred.

I have found great joy and comfort in doing all these. I can feel God's presence, and nearness. He speaks to me and touches my life in ways unimaginable. He shows me signs. Once, in answer to my earnest prayer for help and direction in my life, He led me over a period of five days to two particular verses in the Bible. Coincidence? No way! Sometimes, I get goose pimples, my hair stand, when inexplicable things happen.

Everyday, new truths and wisdom are being revealed to me.

My life has become so much richer...and happier. I gave up beer completely more than four years ago, though I have the occasional wine. I am now healthier, and a calmer and more loving husband and father, and an unbelievably patient boss compared to that foul tempered person I used to be.

My wife and I are very close. When she goes away to be with our daughters in the States, I miss her terribly - and have absolutely no desire to stray, even when ex-girlfriends call.

God is constantly changing my life, preparing me to serve Him, to tell people about His great love and mercy and His gift of eternal life in Heaven for all who are prepared to listen and open their hearts to Him.

He has given to me and offers freely to everyone else who does not have a closed mind, a more joyful and meaningful life on earth. It is not our good works or trying to do good, that

saves us and our soul. We can never do enough good to measure up to God's high standards. God asks us only for faith and obedience to Him. We only have to accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and follow Him to be saved.

God has taken away my worries over tomorrow. I am no longer concerned over whether I have money or not, or how things go in my business and daily life. I no longer plan my business activities. I just leave it to God. Whether I gain or lose business does not bother me. If I lose one account, something else happens.

I have lost a \$500,000 account and will soon lose a \$1 million account. But it does not bother me. My God will provide. Somehow, He always makes things work out right. He does that for everyone who loves Him and have faith in Him. He always answers my prayers, when I pray according to His will. Once, when we failed to meet a client's 3pm presentation deadline, He actually caused a power failure, at exactly 3pm, in my client's office, to help my company in that difficult business situation. Unfortunately there is not enough time to tell more about it and other miraculous things I have experienced since I came back to serve God.

Everyday, as I read the Bible, I receive such joy - and heavenly wisdom. I hear His voice, and feel His loving presence, a love that no one else can match. The more I seek to do His will the happier my life becomes.

I believe wholeheartedly in God, His goodness, and love for me and everyone else who is prepared to accept His love. I also know He hates sin, and punishes

sinners in a frightful way. But He is a merciful God, prepared to forgive even the most 'hopeless' sinner. I am an example of that wretched person who refused to believe in God and who now has an unshakeable faith in Him.

Living daily as a Christian, in love with God, and striving to be holy, is not a dull and boring experience. It is a very interesting life!

After my experience I decided to devote my life to serving God, and telling others about Him and His love, and His free gift of salvation.

I am no longer afraid of death or dying. In July 1995, when I was told by my doctor that I had advanced cancer of the bone, I had a shock but was not as worried as my orthopaedic surgeon. I first asked God 'why?', and then prayed: 'Praise the Lord!' My doctor and family were more worried than I.

Again I went into hospital. This time for chemotherapy and further tests. My pastor prayed for me, my wife, relatives, and Christian friends prayed for me. I prayed, too. I asked God, if He wanted me to do His work on earth, why was I being allowed to die from cancer, and requested Him to heal me, physically and spiritually. But we do not tell God what to do. So I also told Him that whatever happened, His will be done, and I thanked Him for being so good to me.

One morning in hospital, while awaiting the results of further tests before beginning chemotherapy, I had my quiet time with God. I read my Bible and prayed. I must have dozed off. For I had a dream. I saw

my doctor walking up to my bed, and smiling. He said: "Mr Yeo, your bone scan shows no cancer."

That woke me up. I realised I must have fallen asleep, and thought that in my wishful thinking and hope, had dreamed that the MRI scan that had shown extensive cancer all over my bones was a mistake. Minutes after, my doctor walked in, smiling - just as he had appeared in my dream. "Mr Yeo," he said, "your bone scan shows no cancer. You may go home." My doctor looked a little puzzled when I did not appear elated. I merely showed him the universal OK sign (GESTURE). His news did not come as a surprise - for God had already told me minutes earlier I had no cancer.

No one can explain how the widespread cancer that first appeared on the MRI scan could disappear within days. I do not question how that came about. I just believe God had a hand in it.

I do not know why I have been given so many chances and unusual experiences by God or why He has been so good and merciful to me. But I know He has a purpose. God has a purpose for everything. Nothing happens without His knowing.

When I tell people my experiences some find my story incredible, and think I am just a colourful story teller with a wild imagination. Some, who do not question my story, still will not accept God as their Lord and Master, and the joy He promises us. Some persuade themselves that life will go on and they may ignore God, and that they are all right and can leave such matters of their spiritual life and God till later.

Some of you may be familiar with the story in Luke chapter 16 of the rich man and the sick beggar Lazarus who used to pick up crumbs of food at the rich man's gate, and what happened to both of them after they died.

If you are, you will remember that the rich miserly man who had a good life materially on earth went to hell, and the beggar who led a wretched life went to heaven. You may recall this verse from Luke 16:31 when the rich man pleaded with Abraham, while in hell, to send Lazarus back to warn his brothers so that they would not end up in hell like him.

The reply he got was "... if they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

There is documentary proof that Jesus Christ was born, crucified on the cross, died, and rose from the dead, and spent another forty days on earth teaching his disciples and explaining to them why He died and rose again.

Jesus has told us in no uncertain terms that unless we believe, we will lose our soul. He has also told us about God's gift of eternal life and paradise, which we may have right now, if we believe in Him and open our hearts to Him. We only need to want to believe, and God will make things happen. Yet I and so many of us refused to believe.

Today I believe everything God tells us in the Bible. Today, I know with certainty God lives and there is life after death: **I have been there and back.**

Finally in 2000!

Email from: jerrylam

Sent: Friday, January 07, 2000 4:44 PM

Dear friends,

HAPPY NEW *KEAR!

(* All our calendars are now Y2K compliant. All Y to K !!)

We trust that you all had a blessed Christmas season and a smooth transition into the new millennium.

We apologise for being so silent for the past few months. Our travels have somehow squeezed all our time for getting a newsletter out.

OUR WANDERINGS

We came back from our week's ministry trip on 3 Aug 1999. On 20 August, Jenny travelled with Poh Suan (OM Malaysia leader's wife) to Holland for the OM Ladies Conference and General Council. Thanks to our husbands who took care of our kids to make this 'wives outing' possible. They had a great time there. This was followed by a 2-day trip to Sweden to visit a good friend of Poh Suan. One thing that really encouraged Jenny at the Ladies conference was to see some of the wives of the early OMers who are still serving the Lord after over 30 years! That's inspiring to Jenny, "Lord I want to be found serving you in 30 years time!"

Arriving back in Kuala Lumpur on 2 September, Jerry and the 2 kids also flew there. It was good to see the kids but also appreciated having a trip away from the kids for a period of time. We as a family spent some time in West Malaysia and Singapore with our supporting churches. We all also had a week in a golf resort in Johor while Jenny attended an OM finance Forum.

We came back to Kuching on the 20. Sep and had a week to unpack and prepare for a trip to Miri. In Miri we had our OM Sarawak staff retreat, attended our co-worker's engagement and had some ministry together with Daniel, OM Malaysia leader.

Coming back on 5th Oct, it was full swing with re-entry programme for 3 returnees from the Doulos, preparation for Global Exposure '99, arrangements for Arab World Presentation team, and helping the line-up of Doulos in Bintulu. Jerry spent one week in Bintulu at the beginning of Nov with the line-up team in Bintulu.

We drove to Bintulu on 8 Dec and spent 4 days on the Doulos before proceeding to Sibü for Global Exposure '99. We have just come back to Kuching after GE'99 ended on 20 Dec. We are encouraged by what the Lord did at GE'99 in spite of the small numbers we had. Pray with us that the ones whom the Lord had touched will find that their lives will never be the same again as they live for Him. We hope to see some going out into missions in the coming days.

1999 Kuching Christmas All the churches in Kuching had a Millennium Jubilee Celebration at the State Stadium on Christmas night. In spite of the rain, about 20000 were there. One of the highlights of the evening was a reconciliation of the churches, symbolised by the feet washing of the churches' pastors/leaders. Mathematically-inclined Jenny calculates that even if 5% of those present that night could be mobilised into missions, that would be 1000. "...but many churches in the interior lack pastors", she hears objections. Well, if half of them become pastors in interior churches and the others in the missions fields of the world, it would be a great thrust of labourers into the harvest field. Let's ask the Father to send them forth!

THE KIDS

JD has turned 5 and we are glad that we managed to persuade him to stop drinking milk from the bottle on his birthday. Parents are happy - one bottle less to wash each night now! We must have washed thousands of bottles in his first 5 years with a milk lover like him! Jeswyn had a memorable 3rd birthday on the Doulos before we left for Sibü after a simple celebration for her during the ship's lunch. The only thing she did not have was the chance to blow the candles, as candles are not allowed to be lit onboard. A few days ago she has also discarded her diapers for the afternoon nap. We shall not attempt to count how many diapers we have changed.

We shall stop for now as you might still have a hangover from the loads of Christmas mail read, so we shall burden you no longer. "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us" 2 Cor 4:7

This verse truly keeps our ministry in perspective and encourages us on - it's by His grace alone!

Let's keep on being the jars containing the Treasure,



Jerry, Jenny, Jedidiah & Jeswyn

The Gift



A perfect match, Mr Lim Yeou Fang's bone marrow will help a sick Norwegian teenager. SONIA TAN

When people think of Christmas, they cannot avoid the thought of gifts. What gifts did you give or receive last Christmas?

Our brother Lim Yeou Fang did not merely give an expensive gift wrapped in ribbons. He did not satisfy himself with merely giving money that came easily out of his pocket. When the call came that someone far far away was in need of a gift of life, Yeou Fang decided immediately, "Yes, that is the Christmas gift I can give which money cannot buy and hard work alone cannot earn." Indeed, he was most likely the only person around the world who had that precious gift to offer — a perfectly matching litre of bone marrow, a gift of life to a 16-year-old stranger.

Well done, Yeou Fang! We rejoice with you for your selfless act of love. You brought true Christmas cheer to someone you did not even know and set a fine Christian example. May God continue to enrich you by his blessings!

Gift of life to stranger

By GERALDINE YEO

HE HAS been on the bone-marrow donor registry for more than three years, and never thought he would have the chance to save someone's life.

After all, the chances of a perfect match are about one in 20,000.

So, Mr Lim Yeou Fang, 26, was very surprised when he received news in July that his bone marrow was a perfect match and suitable for a 16-year-old Norwegian boy, who is suffering from leukaemia.

After more tests, the mechanical and production engineering graduate from the Nanyang Technological University finally went through a 45-minute procedure yesterday at 9.30 am.

One litre of marrow from his pelvic bone was extracted, bagged and sent off in the evening on a 14-hour journey of hope.

Speaking at the Singapore General Hospital, where he was warded for observation, Mr Lim was hopeful that he has given a stranger an early Christmas gift.

He said: "I'm praying that I can help alleviate his pain and give him a chance to enjoy life again."

Although there was a dull ache in his hip after the procedure, he said it was "very bearable", adding that the pain had disappeared by afternoon.

A regular blood donor, he registered when the Singapore Bone Marrow Donor Programme came to the NTU campus in February 1996.

There are now more than 26,000 people on the registry's list.

Mr Lim is the 43rd match for the donor programme here, since the first transplant in 1995.



GLORY TO THE NEWBORN KING

Advent, 1999

Dear Family and Friends,

In the Church Year, Advent is a time of waiting. We wait anew for the celebration of the birth of Jesus and we continue to wait for the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess him as King. May your time of waiting be filled with rich blessings.

The giardia, which was the cause of our coming home, seems to be gone. Yet my health continues to be a concern. It now appears that I have Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. A friend responded to this news by asking: Does that mean that you are tired of seeing doctors? Our present strategy is to try to determine whether the cause of my continuing problem might be a food intolerance. I have seen some improvement since going on a diet relatively free of carbohydrates. We hope that it will continue.

We shall be retiring on February 1, 2000 and don't intend to let even Y2K stop us! We expect to live somewhere in northwestern Ohio where our bishop wants us to help the synod in its relationship with the Dodoma Diocese in Tanzania. At first we shall commit ourselves only to mission presentations and helping with that relationship. We might increase our commitment if my energy permits it. Our present address will work until you hear further from us because our mail will be forwarded. We certainly will send out our new address when we have one.

We have been taking advantage of every opportunity to be with our family. Hans and his wife, Karen, and their two daughters, Brittany and Katie, live in Indiana. Kurt and his wife, Pam, and their two children, Abby and Ben, live not far from us here in Pennsylvania. We were together with both of those families for Thanksgiving. Tim and his wife, Barbie, are in Niger, West Africa, where Tim and Barbie are preparing themselves for work as Bible translators. We enjoyed being with them when they were home earlier this year for the birth of their third child, Hannah Corinne. Barbie home schools their two older children, David and Beth.

We now look forward to a new experience: deciding where we want to live and finding a house. In some ways we find this more difficult than going overseas. We hope to let you know where we are and how we got there in our next letter.

May the glory of Jesus, the King, fill your home and life this season and in the new year.

Carol joins me in wishing you a blessed Christmas and New Year!

Ralph Kusserow

BIBLE VERSIONS

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)	Careful translation of the Hebrew and Greek, some attention to gender-inclusive language.
Revised English Bible (REB)	Elegant English, designed to be read at public worship. Traditional order of the text has been changed in some sections.
New Jerusalem Bible	Originally the work of French scholars, this version gives a good sense of the Bible's ancient cultures. Contents follow the Roman Catholic sequence.
Contemporary English Version (CEV)	Extremely simple English (grade 5 reading level). Communicates well.
New International Version (NIV)	Good modern English. Comes out of Evangelical protestantism.
Today's English Version (TEV)	Simple, readable English. Also called the "Good News Bible"
Revised Standard Version (RSV)	Until recently, this was the best available 20th Century English Bible. High standard of scholarship, but English is archaic. Replaced by the New Revised Standard Version in 1989.
King James Version (KJV)	Sixteenth Century text, translated into beautiful but difficult English. Also called the "Authorized Version."
New American Bible (NAB)	Roman Catholic. developed in the 1960's, with a New Testament upgrade in the 1980's.
New King James Version (NKJV)	Evangelical project which retains the King James Version's treatment of the Greek and Hebrew while upgrading to modern English.
New English Bible (NEB)	No longer "new." Precursor to the Revised English Bible.
Living Bible	A "paraphrase" of the Bible. Sometimes marketed under other names, such as "The Book."

There are many versions of the Holy Bible available in the many bookrooms in Singapore. Above is a summary of some of the more famous versions as extracted from an Internet source.