

The Vine

2002

for internal circulation only

Aug 2002

Greetings to all the saints in Jesus Christ at JCC. This month we celebrated our 35th Anniversary and also Singapore's 37th National Day. Can you imagine it? We are only 2 years younger than Singapore but look how fast Singapore has advanced. How did they do it? Through a collective mindset (one Body), CPF (tithing), strong leaders (shepherds) and of course persuading foreign companies to invest (evangelism). Can we do it too? What do we lack? *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31b).

Even now, the evil one is hampering our efforts to rejuvenate JCC by attacking the family members of many of the church leaders and members. In a recent Emergency Prayer Meeting on 1st August, there were listed 15 persons who were sick, some seriously. When the Jurong West Care Group organised an outing on National Day, many of the invited "guests" were stricken with illnesses and thus unable to join the gathering. What can we do? Let us come together and pray and say as David, "All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's" (1 Sam 17:47)

An encouraging word extracted by Pei'en: "We too, can know the hand of God in 'impossible situations'! For God will either change the circumstances miraculously, or He will show us how to change the circumstances, or He will leave the circumstances as they are - and change us! Yet it is so unwise of us while praying, we always ask for a change of circumstances, but seldom for a change of character. Are we willing to change? Are we willing to come out of our comfort zone? The situation may seem 'impossible', but God is in control."

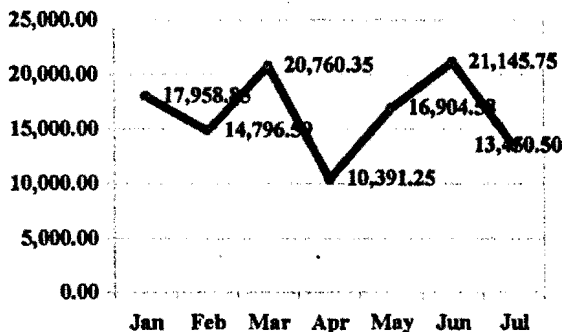
In a couple of month's time, JCC will re-launch the Care Groups. It will be called Cell Groups and many of the existing Care Groups will be changed. Are we willing to move with the church vision? The leaders and shepherds have been very busy preparing for this paradigm shift and we pray that God will be with us and so will you.

In this issue, you will find an article by Tony Koh, our latest recruit into The Vine ministry. Thank God for my co-workers and contributors that I am relieved from having to write any articles or reports. To think that in April, I thought The Vine was closing down but now I believe that even if

I was to step down, there will be others to carry it on. Indeed, God has changed the circumstances.

Last Sunday, 18th August, the Treasurer presented the state of affairs of the accounts of JCC. He concentrated on the one line of the chart beyond his control, that is, the collection from the worshippers. The Treasurer and council can control the expenditure, how much to spend and what to spend on. However, they have no control over how much the worshippers give. Thus the Treasurer highlighted the erratic trend of the collection line. He is concerned about the drop in the July collection, which is the 2nd lowest collection (April, being the lowest) in the year. He is hoping that it will change direction for the better.

JCC Monthly Collection



Hey, I still need some articles from the Youth Ministries. How about some reports for all to know what's happening. What time is it? It's time to sign off for now.

The Editor

A PSALM FOR BUSY PEOPLE

The Lord is my Pacesetter,
I shall not rush.
He makes me stop and rest
for quiet intervals.
He provides me with images of
stillness, which restore my serenity.
He leads me in ways of efficiency,
through calmness of mind,
And His guidance is peace.
Even though I have a great many things
to accomplish each day
I will not fret.

For His presence is here;
His timeliness, His all-importance
will keep me in balance.
He prepares refreshment and renewal
for me in the midst of my activity.
By anointing my mind with
His oils of tranquility,
my cup of joyous energy
overflows.
Surely harmony and effectiveness shall
be the fruits of my hours.
For I shall work in the pace of
my Lord forever.

AMEN.

Journey of 5 Passages

Passage 1

Why I Write for The Vine

I have always noticed the call for more writers for the Vine but deliberated because I was never sure if you needed to be very, very “spiritual” (the “halo” effect sort) and know the Bible inside out to do this.

I must say in the past 2 years, I had been put through many gruelling writing assignments. I completed writing assignments (many of these were speeches, news releases and briefs to prepare managers for interviews on short notice) under ridiculous deadlines and nearly every piece of writing requires me to research extensively on the subject. After all, what do over-the-air billing issues have in common with a communications plan or media schedule??

You can definitely say it is by God's grace that I delivered all those assignments on time and met expectations. Writing too many of those have become one of the hardest things on the soul (I lose sleep and hair!), but it has also prompted me to re-look at my priorities and I was reminded of what another Christian friend once aptly said to the congregation,

*“Do you prioritise your schedules; or
Do you schedule your priorities?”*

I have always thanked God for how He saw me through each and every of those corporate writing assignments; and finally it dawned on me that if I am writing for God's family, His grace will even be more bountiful. One thing I always say in half (or three-quarter) jest is that no one can make money by writing in Singapore, whether you are trained to do it or not. However, I have also learnt to view my writing skill as a gift that God has endowed for His designated areas of work – and The Vine could well be one of them.

Passage 2

Men in Singapore: I Just Cannot Stand Them! (well, at times)

And I am not even talking about the scruffy-looking ones!

One day, I gave up my seat in the train to a pregnant woman (she was obviously pregnant) and before she take up my offer, the young man who was

standing next to me snapped it up! How deplorable and this is not even the first of such incidents that I have encountered!

I was peeved while the woman just smiled awkwardly. I was going to get feisty when I was uncomfortably reminded of the verse *"In your anger do not sin ..."* (Ephesians 4:26). The guy was spared from my tamed demeanour – someone up there just pulled my brakes.

*"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing
some people have entertained angels without knowing it."
-- Hebrews 13:2 (NIV)*

Passage 3 Service

Ephesians 4:28 says, *"He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, **that he may have something to share with those in need.**"* Work is part of God's plan for mankind, but more importantly, I believe service and the attitude behind this work are both important considerations.

Here is a Korean folklore:

"A soldier died in a battle and was standing at the gates that could lead to heaven or hell. A gatekeeper came up to him and introduced him to a tour of both places.

The soldier decided to start the tour with the visit to hell. In it, he saw a banquet table laid out with the finest foods, but its inhabitants were forlorn-looking and malnourished. Each of them merely held on to the pair of 5-foot long chopsticks assigned to him.

The soldier then visited heaven. Therein lies the same lavish banquet but its inhabitants were blissful, well fed. Each of them was using his 5-foot long chopsticks to pick up food from the table to feed another person. This was modus operandi for harmonious living in heaven."

I once used this story in a manager's speech to illustrate the link between business viability and co-creation of collaborative opportunities. I am sure many among us will relate this story to different learning points. As for me, this story always brings to mind 1 Corinthians 12-14:

1. Chapter 12: A variety of spiritual gifts bestowed to different people. No one's gift is too inferior over another's.
2. Chapter 13: Love is always the basis for practising the gifts, no matter what they are.
3. Chapter 14: Practise God-given gifts in an orderly manner, for the purpose of edification. To be able to edify, one begins with the needs of others in mind, as opposed to looking inward to one's own.

Passage 4

Of Animal Farm and Other Fables



George Orwell's book, "Animal Farm", was a satirical account of the Russian revolution and makes for interesting read partly with Orwell's harsh and cynical view of the Church, which even more interestingly, exists in some of today's post-communist societies, pointing to a misguided reason for belief. This is not the appropriate place to further this discourse, but may well serve as food for thought for some of you interested in mission work. © (Hint: There was a raven named Moses in this book, check out its relation to the pigs

and their leader Napoleon)

I really love stories and I was really glad when Wee Khin, my cell group leader, touched on the characters from "Alice in the Wonderland". I cannot remember the exact dialogue, but there was one part where Alice was lost and sought for directions from the Cheshire cat. Cheshire asked where Alice wanted to go but the latter indicated she had no idea, so Cheshire then said it did not matter which route Alice chose since she did not have a destination in mind.



Likewise, to non-believers and many self-proclaimed atheists, it does not matter that they "go with the flow" in many of the things they do. They neither identify with a cause for eternal life and heaven nor commit to accountability in God.

My cell group was discussing the topic of whether spiritual birth is by itself an end or a means to an end. One of the verses discussed was

*"Then we will no longer be infants,
tossed back and forth by the waves,
and blown here and there by every wind of teaching
and by the cunning and craftiness of men
in their deceitful scheming." -- Ephesians 4:14 (NIV)*

Some of the issues discussed were:

1. How do we know someone is born again? How do we demonstrate that we are born again?
2. What is the meaning of being born again (John 3)?
3. What is a Spirit-filled and Christ-centered life? Are we consciously aware of such a life and how do we conscientiously live it?

Other Scripture passages pertaining to these issues are: Matthew 7:15-23; John 15:1-8; 2 Peter 3:14-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:11-14; and 1 Peter 2:1-5.

Passage 5

Stem the Talk: Back Off!

"The tongue of the wise brings healing." — Proverbs 12:18 (NAS)

"... a time to heal ... a time to shun embracing ... a time to give up as lost ... a time to be silent ..." — Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 (NIV)

*Keep your opinions, warnings, lectures and I-told-you-so's to yourself.
And don't pry. —Marion Bond West*

In closing, I would like to share some excerpts from Charles Swindoll's book, "Come Before Winter and Share My Hope". I believe these have profound meaning and application in our everyday relationships and circumstances. *(kindly note the following is copyrighted stuff)*

"When the time is right, things flow very naturally, very freely. To rush or force creates friction-scars that take years to erase. Intensity leads to futility. Like the little boy who plants the seed and then nervously digs it up every day to see if it is growing. Waiting is as necessary as planting and fertilizing.

Remember, the Bible says there is a "time to shun embracing" just as there are times to embrace. "Giving up as lost" may, on some occasions, be the wisest

response, though extremely painful. Sometimes that means simply being silent and allowing God to work. In other words, **back off** so that God can move in. Allowing some slack in the rope is, at the right time, a mark of real wisdom.

What difficult pill for uptight parents to swallow! Kept edgy by impatience, rigidity, and unbending determination, they foolishly rush in where angels loathe treading. The result? Exasperated kids. Rooms choked with threats and irritating pressure.

People need time to reason, freedom to forgive without being hurried. To push for a quick closure is like a hard-sell salesman pressing me to buy when I am trying to decide what's best. The faster he talks and the harder he pushes, the less interested I become in buying – even something I *need*. The wise salesman knows when to allow me the privilege of deciding for myself – when to back off and leave me alone.

Think first about my family. Am I being wise or foolish? Am I using force or providing freedom? Am I being pushy or patient? Am I intimidating by my intensity ... or backing off and relaxing?

Keep a tight bridle on my tongue, relax and settle for a good night's sleep. Otherwise, I'm going to get pushy, I'm going to get caught with my tongue in the wrong place ... and I'm going to get burned."

By the way, Charles Swindoll writes many good, thought-provoking books and if you have not had the habit of reading, his books may give you a kickstart!

by Charlotte Sam

Well, my trip to Algeria was very fruitful. It was a time of challenge and encouragement to my walk with the Lord.

Jenny's dad passed away last Friday, 21 June. He was hospitalized on the 5 June, one day before I returned from Algeria. He was in the hospital for 16 days until he passed away. He had gone for two operations on his head. His condition was very weak and in and out of coma. Thank God that he's a believer and all the brothers and sisters were able to see him before he passed away. He could not talk because of an operation on his throat. Well, we are slowly trying to get over it. Pray for us as we encourage Jenny's mum who felt the loss the most. Anyway, do send our greetings to all in the church. Will look to the Lord for opportunity to visit the church and fellowship in the near future.

Sending our Love to you.

Jerry Lam & Family
28 June 2002

"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE" – John 6:48

Talking about "FOOD", we are bombarded with food outlets everywhere in Singapore and it seems that we hardly go hungry.

Food also serves as a common denominator, both borderless and cross-culture, taking centre stage in most social gatherings these days.

While we enjoy good food, we must take heed of the need to feed our soul with Spiritual Food too, lest we become spiritually deprived of nutrition and develop into malnourished souls.

I often wonder what kind of Spiritual Food we will have in heaven. Certainly, there will be an abundance of Heavenly Manna for us feast on. So, while we are still on earth, let Jesus take the centre stage and be the Daily Bread of our life that satisfies our hunger, spiritually! Jesus is the Living



Water that quenches our spiritual thirst too! – So no worries on NEW Water, spiritually. It is LIVING Water that should get our attention!

Let us take time to feed and nourish ourselves spiritually daily by looking to JESUS, our Lord and Saviour, the Great "I AM...the BREAD OF LIFE, I AM....The Living Water!"

This is certainly "FOOD" for thought!
Tony Koh

If the Devil were to write his Beatitudes, they would probably go something like this:

Blessed are those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend an hour once a week with their fellow Christians in Church -- they are my best workers.
Blessed are those Christians who wait to be asked and expect to be thanked -- I can use them.

Blessed are the touchy, with a bit of luck they may stop going to church -- they are my missionaries.

Blessed are those who are very religious but get on everyone's nerves -- they are mine forever.

Blessed are the troublemakers -- they shall be called my children.

Blessed are those who have no time to pray -- they are easy prey for me.

Blessed are the gossips -- for they are my secret agents.

Blessed are those critical of church leadership -- for they shall inherit a place with me in my fate.

Blessed are the complainers -- I'm all ears for them.

Blessed are you when you read this and think it is about other people and not yourself -- **I've got you!"**

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Gal 5:22 provides a recital of the qualities of the fruit of the Spirit. Popular Christian author, John Stott, calls this a portrait of Jesus, who exhibited such balance and perfection of these qualities.

Stott categorises these qualities into three triads, depicting our relationship with God, others and ourselves:

1. In our relationship with God, the Spirit puts God's love in our hearts, God's joy is in our souls and God's peace in our minds.
2. In our relationship with others, patience brings about forbearance to unkindness and rudeness and refusal to retaliate; kindness goes beyond negative tolerance to positive benevolence to all and goodness turns wish into deed, taking the initiative to serve in concrete and constructive ways.
3. In relation to self, faithfulness invites others to rely on us; gentleness is strength under control and self-control is the mastery of our tongue, thoughts, appetites and passions.

This is a portrait of the balanced Christ-like Spirit-filled Christian.

How can the fruits be developed?

In using fruit as a metaphor, we can derive a number of important truths.

Firstly this fruit is supernatural in origin, it is of the Holy Spirit who indwells and transforms us.

Next, fruit speaks of natural growth. This can occur only when conditions are right. We reap what we sow. We cannot expect to reap the fruit of the Spirit when we are sowing to the flesh. Sowing refers to the whole pattern of our thought and habits, our lifestyle, life's direction and life's disciplines, and everything that absorbs our energy and dominates our minds. Sowing to the flesh, we reap corruption; sowing to the Spirit, eternal life and a deepening fellowship with the living God

Fruits mature gradually, it takes time for the Holy Spirit to produce a ripe Christian character. Understanding the progressiveness of God's work should spur us in our life in the Spirit so that we may grow in grace and that the fruit of the Spirit may mature in us.

The Gifts of the Spirit

The New Testament speaks of the gifts of the Spirit which give the Church unity and the gifts of the Spirit which give the Church diversity. The gifts are diverse but there is only one giver. Paul in 1 Cor 12:4-6 states that all three Persons of the Trinity as the giver. Spiritual gifts is defined as certain capacities bestowed by God's grace and power which fits people for specific and corresponding service.

How many gifts are there? Based on the five lists in the Scripture, about 20. Is this exhaustive? Peter speaks of God's varied gifts, and Paul speak of varieties of gifts, from a God who loves variety and is a generous giver. He will bestow many and varied gifts.

What is the relationship between spiritual gifts and talents? Talents can be used by God in the spiritual context, God may give such endowment where they are lacking to fulfil His work.

Are all spiritual gifts miraculous gifts? Certain gifts are clearly ordinary such as teaching, encouraging, giving, acts of mercy and service. Some hold the view that everything God does is miraculous; God's work is primarily in nature not the supernatural. He causes the sun to rise, the rain to fall and the seasons to come and go. Behind all activities in nature is the divine hand. Some contend that God intends for miracles to be a regular feature of life and ministry as was in the time of the Lord and the Apostles. Miracles are not be as common today as revelation is complete. God in his divine sovereignty and wisdom may choose to perform miracles for a particular situation.

Are all spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible given today? To answer, one needs to approach the question of whether there are 'apostles' and 'prophets' today. In passages on spiritual gifts where apostles are mentioned (1 Cor 12: 28-29, Eph 4:11), it is to be noted that in both instances they head the list. One need to note that such precedence must infer that it refers to a small special group of men who were unique, being eyewitnesses of Christ, personally appointed and authorised by Him and being specially used by the Holy Spirit for ministry. This would refer to the Twelve, Paul, James the Lord's brother and possibly one or two others. In a primary sense they have no successors. There are apostles today in a secondary sense of missionaries, as those who are sent. (Greek 'apostolos' meaning sent out)

What about prophets? Based on a Biblical understanding of prophet as "an organ for God's revelation to whom the word of the Lord came and who therefore spoke the very words of God", there are no more prophets as God's revelation is complete. Some may

view prophets as predictor of the future or as political or social commentators as were the Old Testament prophets., or as a gift for exposition and preaching the Scripture. John Stott views all these as subsidiary meanings and ministries and based on the high Biblical view of prophecy as the mouthpiece and organ for God's revelations, prophets no longer exists in the Church today.

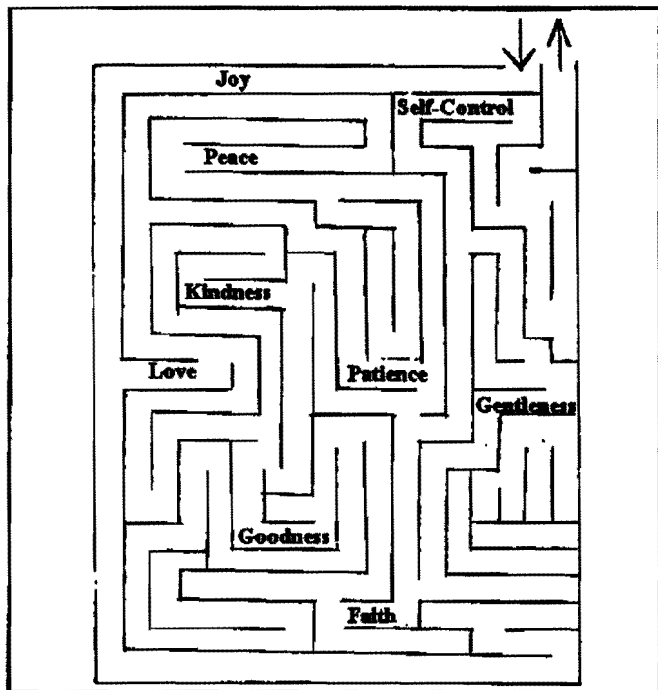
Spiritual gifts are given to all believers, we need to encourage the use of gifts within the body and be alert to ways God is equipping and calling people to service. Spiritual gifts are to be used for the common good and must be exercised in love, without which gifts are worthless. Paul urges us to seek the more excellent way of love. "... Yet the greatest of these is love."

We need to thank the Lord each day for the gift of his Spirit and that He dwells in us. We need to seek for even more of the Holy Spirit's fullness by repentance, faith and obedience and to keep sowing the Spirit so that this fruit may grow and ripen in our character. We must remember and rejoice in the variety of gifts God has bestowed in His body for the common good, to build into maturity Christ's body.

Let us employ our gifts for one another as good stewards of God's varied grace in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. He ends with a doxology, "To him belongs glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Per 4:11)

by **Tan Swee Leong**

Children may like to try out this maze and learn about the fruits of the Spirit.



HAPPY 37TH BIRTHDAY! HAPPY 35TH ANNIVERSARY!

Anniversaries are observed, but not always celebrated. However, whether people commemorate a solemn occasion like Good Friday, a mournful event like the infamous Sept 11 terror, or joyous experiences of weddings and birthdays, there is one common thread that runs through the variety of anniversaries, one word that pronounces a common purpose – “commemorate”. Yes, an anniversary (whatever nature of it) gives us cause to keep in mind things that came to pass, their significance to our current life and the lessons or inspirations we can draw and apply for our continuing well being. Thus, an anniversary is not just a fad or a tradition that we observe to wax poignant over times gone by, but an opportunity for us to contemplate the deeper meaning of the event.

This month, Singaporeans rejoice in the country’s 37th year of nationhood. As the celebratory crowd at the National Stadium took a swig of Newater, the traditional National Day message could not have been lost on the people that even if old challenges and survival pressures of Singapore’s early years of independence fade away, we have a continual need to maintain both hope and tenacity in facing up to new challenges and pressures that will always evolve with time, including current confrontations with the exasperating economic uncertainties of a changed world and the strain on social fundamentals. It is a joyous anniversary to reminisce what we have accomplished along the long and arduous journey of nation building and how we have always demonstrated resilience against immense odds. While we are not contented to rest on our laurels, nobody should drown in any self-imposed misery of only fretting over the negative facets of life seen around but conveniently shooing out of sight or taking for granted the positive blessings we have been bestowed with over 37 years. As in all things, there are always two sides to a coin, and positive and negative attributes always have their place in a proper mix so that one may feel satisfaction with the good things but not complacency; the constructive yearning to better one’s lot as less-satisfactory matters are encountered, but not the abject despair over temporary setbacks. This is balance! National Day for Singaporeans is a time for us to be thankful and joyful in celebration, and it is also a time for us to contemplate our history and learn the deep lessons from our survival instincts.

I know that many in JCC are not locals. Nevertheless, they are still my lovely brothers and sisters in Christ and I know that non-Singaporeans among us, especially those well connected with Singaporean life, share the happiness of Singaporeans on the occasion of the nation’s birthday. As Christians and fellow worshippers in JCC, I can say that our secular citizenship aside, we are all one in our spiritual citizenship as

members of God's Kingdom. We too can rejoice with thanksgiving to God for a wonderful time of celebrating our 35th anniversary of church building. Jurong Christian Church is 35 years old, only two years younger than the nation Singapore. If you have nostalgic recollections as a 'citizen' (member) of JCC to share with me, do so quickly – I am eager to hear from you! Before that, let me share with you my thoughts.

I have been a member of JCC for a period about half her age, only about four years shorter than my attachment to the Lutheran Church. Both my wife and I were baptized in different charismatic churches, but all our three children were baptized in JCC. My wife and I were married in Bedok Lutheran Church. I left my previous charismatic church, in which I had a great fellowship, to join BLC not because BLC had a more charming pastor in Rev. John Nelson (retired) or that it had more colourful and exciting programmes waiting to welcome me or that it had a grand building with a well-polished façade and opulent interiors to inveigle my senses. That was in the early 1980's well before the BLC's current building extension was erected. In fact, the only thing attractive to me was that it had none of these and not even a newsletter from which I could read up on some Christian writings for information, encouragement or edification. Being lacking in something that I wished for was itself not a bad thing to me because it actually presented me with something – a challenge and an opportunity! BLC was different in many ways from my charismatic church and this somehow led me into feeling that God had placed me as a visitor to the Lutheran Church to see an opening to put my writing equipment to some use. So, following a casual conversation with Rev. Nelson about setting up a newsletter publication, it came to pass that the BLC's inaugural newsletter was launched in March 1982 as a monthly. This is based on my memory, plus and minus a bit of detail that I may not recollect comprehensively. Thankfully, BLC provided me with capable and hardworking co-labourers who lightened my share of the ministry's workload. In the course of my service in the newsletter ministry, I became attached to the Lutheran Church and came to appreciate the interesting Lutheran heritage. As God's will would have it, the lease of my HDB flat in Jurong came in 1986 and that was the year when my eldest son was born. My wife and I migrated from BLC to JCC with my son in tow as a natural move from one Lutheran congregation to another.

Singapore – My Country, My Home!
JCC – My Church, My Spiritual Home!

In a way, I was a voyager who sailed from a charismatic congregation to BLC and then to JCC. Compare this with the movement of emigrants to yonder lands. There is something in common. When each move means a change of home, it is very serious business and nobody should trivialize it. When I moved to BLC, my thought was focused on the opportunity for me to do something in His service; otherwise, my stay in BLC wouldn't be meaningful and satisfying. Whether to the country or to the church, we must always have a sense of belonging, a sense borne out of a mutually meaningful

and productive relationship that cannot be broken at will. Yes, at times there may be a valid justification for one to move away from home, but no wise person would move his domicile the way he changes clothes and nobody would select a new home based on external appeals alone without doing careful calculations on the hidden terms. Furthermore, no one will really enjoy the prospect of changing home without end to live a nomadic existence – physically or spiritually!

Back to my sense of belonging to JCC, it must be due to the fact that for the most part of my spiritual growth, the nurturing has come from the Lutheran Church. By this, I don't mean that all through the years there is always someone tagged to me and physically following me every way I turn in case I should lose my spiritual way. No, the ultimate nurturer must be the Holy Spirit who led me safely through the struggles in my service to God. (God is the potter, I am the clay. Does God understand how my body feels with His relentless kneading and pressing so much so that if I had a voice that mattered, I would have protested and got out of His way?)

It is very true that personal hands-on service plays a major role in reaping spiritual blessings for oneself. My experience bears this out. I cannot remember very clearly, but perhaps Rev. Martin Yee can help fill you in on some detail regarding what I am to say now. There was a time when I felt very miserable because I found myself not involved in any ministry in JCC. At that time, I had a sharing with Bro. Yee (who was then not yet a pastor, I think) but I cannot recall how it went. Anyway, voicing my burden to someone did help me through my misery of non-service and God had caused events to take place whereby today you are able to read this testimony of my dependence on the Church for spiritual unction generally as well as in times of specific needs. On hindsight, I feel that God had a hand in guiding my move from the charismatic church to BLC to JCC because I could see a consistent pattern of objectivity that easily passes the checklist test as suggested by Bro. Leong Kok Hwa in his article "LISTEN TO GOD, DO AS HE SAYS" in last month's issue of The Vine:

- Does the action glorify Him?
- Is it Scriptural?
- Can I tell a matured Christian without embarrassment?
- Pray about it and do I have peace if I do, etc.?

Since 1982, I have been at peace with God, with myself and with my previous charismatic church over my decision to move to LCS. Occasionally when I have to attend a charismatic service as a guest, I would not feel uncomfortable with the service style and the tongue-speaking/interpretation environment because I had the experience of speaking in tongues myself. Hence, if I have to introduce someone to a charismatic church, I will have no unwillingness provided that I am satisfied that the person will find it to be the best church for him/her to be a servant instead of a pew warmer who

just wants to go there to soak in a “spiritually-charged air”. It is an absolute fact endorsed by any true blue charismatic pastor that a tongue-speaker is not necessarily a better Christian than a non-tongue speaker and, of course, vice versa, especially noting that speaking in tongues is not a pre-requisite for salvation.

Since my move to the Lutheran Church was justified by service needs, I did not end up like flotsam floating aimlessly in a sea filled with colourful and material attractions that inveigle my senses and feed my yearning for some non-spiritual and short-term gains that will not stay when strong winds blow. I feel sad as I think of a brother who took his family from JCC about the beginning of this year to a charismatic church far away from Jurong, even singing praises to me about that church in a coffeeshop talk. I was not sad because of his intention to move and, incidentally, that church’s senior pastor is our common old friend. I feel sad because he did not have a meaningful objective of moving and I expected him not to last over there. I was proven right. Only this month (August), I met him at a bus-stop and he told me that he and his are no longer attending that church because “it is too far”, and now they are attending another church. I would be relieved of my sadness if he would stay put and serve God where he is now and so reap meaningful spiritual rewards. I also feel sad as I recall meeting another couple at Lot 1 Shopping Mall some time last month. They left JCC and joined another church. However, in the brief greetings and conversation we exchanged, I sensed no joyful spirit in them regarding their new spiritual home.

It is with deep feelings that I commemorate the 35th anniversary of JCC. This is the time I feel a burden to share my joy in being part of the congregation for close to half her age and having benefited from God’s gracious blessings through my association with brothers and sisters in Christ not just in JCC but in LCS; and also my sadness in seeing the changing world, the changing times, when sinking a spiritual anchor into home ground (to stay firm amidst the winds and the waves) is not seen by many as a wiser alternative to aimless movements. The Bible advises, “... seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matt. 6:33) Surely, seeking after the kingdom of God does not mean waiting around to be served, but going out to serve and thereby derive the spiritual benefits in their natural courses. I feel very inadequate that there are a lot of things I cannot do and a lot of things I am doing slower as age catches up. But for what little I can do (even if it is just playing a small, single role in the Church), I cannot imagine seeing myself doing nothing because this would be the surest way to spiritual atrophy just like a retiree from active employment who sits at home and bores himself to death as his mind and body degenerate. Can you connect this analogy with the fact that a Christian must work in order to grow healthily and lead a more meaningful spiritual existence? Anyway, do we have to depend on our might instead of on a little faith like the mustard seed, putting whatever little talent we have to its maximum investment, working with the Holy Spirit to bring about personal spiritual growth and blessings to others? I have been encouraged by these words from Rev. John Nelson, writing in the second issue of

"THE LUTHERAN" (BLC's newsletter, April, 1982) about some opportunities open to church members:

"These are a few of the obvious opportunities open to you. Don't hide your light under a basket but let it shine for the world to see in order that God may be glorified by your life. Set a goal for your ministry."

In the context of JCC, what are "few of the obvious opportunities"? Perhaps, you are IT-savvy and can serve God by using your expertise to help the Church office troubleshoot hardware/software problems or tend to the JCC's website. Perhaps, you have a natural flair for handling children and can serve the Little Lambs or K.I.D.S. Perhaps, you can find some niche for 'irregular' service if you have irregular job schedules involving Sundays. (Better 'irregular' service than nothing at all!) If you have the skill as an electrician, you may assist with simple tasks in this area so that the Church may save on exorbitant costs from using outsiders and better utilize the savings in Church ministries. Perhaps, you are a photographer. Perhaps, ... Really, the opportunities are many, not "a few"! It is impossible for you not to find a single suitable niche.

As we celebrate the 37th birthday of Singapore and the 35th anniversary of JCC, let us remember to reflect on the parts we have played in sharing the 37 years and 35 years, and open our spiritual eyes to see the reasons to praise God for His action in our lives. **BETTER A STAYER THAN A QUITTER!**

John Lee

BEING A BLESSING

I knelt to pray when day was done
And prayed, "O Lord, bless everyone,
Lift from each saddened heart the pain
And let the sick be well again."

And then I woke another day
And carelessly went on my way,
The whole day long I did not try
To wipe a tear from any eye.

I did not try to share the load
Of any brother on the road.
I did not even go to see
The sick man just next door to me.

Yet once again when day was done
I prayed, "O Lord, bless everyone."
But as I prayed, into my ear
There came a voice that whispered clear,

"Pause now, my son, before you pray.
Whom have you tried to bless today?
God's sweetest blessing always go
By hands that serve him here below."

And then I hid my face and cried,
"Forgive me, God, I have not tried,
But let me live another day
And I will live the way I pray."

Author unknown

A Beautiful Mind, Part 2

by David Smith

"...whatever is true... think about such things."
(Philippians 4:8 NIV)

We live in a very false world! Sometimes it seems like there is no end to the production of things that are fake. We constantly find ourselves leaning on things which are hollow and which let us down. Is there nothing that isn't "plastic?" Indeed, if you dwell on it a bit, it's easy to become jaded about it all and conclude that there is nothing in this world that's truly genuine.

And nothing could be more false!

For the Christian mind has the potential to see the false for what it is in fact. The Christian can know "the true" is out there because God is out there and He is true. It is the Christian who believes that it is God who created the truly "real world." And it is the Christian, the one in touch with the Creator, who is enabled to see the things that are solid and enduring.

The Christian mind knows that there is one who deceives who walks through this world as if it were his own. The Christian knows that Satan is the master of deception, but realizes the deceiver creates all that is false only because he can imitate, albeit for a corrupt purpose, what is true. The Christian knows "the true" is out there; it needs only to be seen.

And so the Christian mind is an inquiring mind that is on a ceaseless quest for what is true. It is not a mind content to remain naïve or confused. It is a mind fully aware of Satan's devices. It is a mind sensitive to the fact that appearances can be deceiving for:

"...Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." (2
Corinthians 11:14 NIV)

Consequently, the growing Christian strives to grow a mind that is not quickly taken in by anything. The quest is for a reflective mind that doesn't fall for smooth words or slick promises. "Who" believes it or "how many" follow after it is not the standard for the Christian mind. Instead, the truly Christian mind realizes it has the

standard by which it can gauge what is real and true – and what is not. And that standard is the word of God.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous... By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:7-9,11 NIV)

Accordingly, the Christian mind is an honest mind which refuses to lie to itself, but which thinks about itself legitimately. It refuses to deceive itself or to live in the land of illusion. It doesn't think more highly of itself than it ought to think, but sees itself for what it is – a gift of God saved from destruction and transformed into a servant in the house of God. It is a mind that is, therefore, ever contrite and humble, yet ever vigorous and active. For it knows that if anything is true, it is that God will judge its thoughts and attitudes.

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Hebrews 4:12-13 NIV)

"...let your minds be filled with everything that is true..."
(Philippians 4:8 NJB)

For:

"Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth." (1 Corinthians 13:6 NIV)

Father in heaven, you are what is true. You are love. Make me, therefore, your servant and your child, into one who is loving and true. Give me eyes to see the things that are real and give me a heart that embraces what is genuine. Deliver me from mindless agreement with the herd who live without thinking, but save me from thinking I am smart enough to steer my own life without your aid. Help me to transform my mind into something that is not spiritually plastic, but into something that is eternally true. True to you in every way. This I pray in Jesus name. Amen.

MATTHEW 25:40



A young lady named Sally related an experience she had in a seminary class, given by her teacher, Dr Smith. She says Dr Smith was known for his elaborate object lessons.

One particular day, Sally walked into the seminary and knew they were in for a fun day. On the wall was a big target and on a nearby table were many darts. Dr Smith told the students to draw a picture of someone that they disliked or someone who had made them angry, and he would allow them to throw darts at the person's picture.

Sally's girlfriend drew a picture of a girl who had stolen her boyfriend. Another friend drew a picture of his little brother. Sally drew a picture of a former friend, putting a great deal of detail into her drawing, even drawing pimples on the face. Sally was pleased with the overall effect she had achieved.

The class lined up and began throwing darts. Some of the students threw their darts with such force that their targets were ripping apart. Sally looked forward to her turn, and was filled with disappointment when Dr Smith, because of time limits, asked the students to return to their seats.

As Sally sat thinking about how angry she was because she didn't have a chance to throw any darts at her target, Dr Smith began removing the big target from the wall. Undemeath it was a picture of Jesus. A hush fell over the room as each student viewed the mangled picture of Jesus; holes and jagged marks covered His face and His eyes were pierced.

Dr Smith said only these words: **"In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."** (Matthew 25:40)

No other words were necessary; the tear-filled eyes of the students focused only on the picture of Christ.

Handwritten Bible

Sister Wang resides in a rural village of China's Henan province. She is thirty years old and has spent more than three years to complete the task of handwriting the Bible to fulfill her promise to God. Sister Wang has secondary education and came to know the Lord in 1991. Her mother was already a believer then, but not her husband. At age 23, whilst working at a jade carving factory, Sister Wang befriended a 68 year old calligrapher. She helped him in house chores after work; in return, he taught her calligraphy during free time. This laid the foundation of her subsequent desire to hand-copy the Bible.



After becoming a Christian, Sister Wang's heart hungered for God's Word. In her diligent study of the Bible, she discovered that reciting and handwriting scripture leave stronger impressions than merely reading it. Subsequently, Sister Wang's mother contracted an incurable illness. Many brothers and sisters in Christ came to visit her and prayed for her. Sister Wang was deeply moved and silently prayed a vow. She asked God to give her strength to hand-copy the entire Bible, so that more people would be motivated to read the Bible.

In February 1997, Sister Wang commenced handwriting the Bible in small-print calligraphy. The project continued until its completion on Bible Day, 25 December 2000, taking more than three years.

Sister Wang and her husband are farmers without fixed income. As she had to work in the farm everyday, she used her afternoon breaks to copy the Bible. Her husband gave her a lot of pressure because he was not a believer, but she never gave up her task.

In May 1998, she contracted a major illness and was at the brink of death, her family even purchasing a coffin for her. However, she prayed to God in her heart, asking God to prolong her life so that she could complete copying the Bible. Amidst the severe sufferings of her illness, she persisted in handwriting the Bible. Her work brought her faith, joy, comfort, healing and hope.

In total, the completed handwritten Bible used up 250 sheets of paper (each of 12K size) and more than 40 calligraphy brushes. The time for copying one page was approximately 80 minutes, but could take up to 2 hours if there were errors. Due to financial constraints, Sister Wang had to borrow money to purchase stationery. To cut down expenditure, she even split each calligraphy brush into two for use. Upon completing her project, she owed friends about 20 dollars. Sister Wang took the completed pages to a printing press for binding.

The owner of the printing press offered to purchase her handwritten Bible for \$3,000, but she refused to sell it even though her family was in need of the money. Her painstaking work was just not a commercial commodity.

The handwritten Bible was bound into four volumes: the Old Testament in three volumes totalling 1,520 pages and the New Testament in one volume of 481 pages. In May this year, Sister Wang went personally to Nanjing and handed her gift of the handwritten Bible to the China Christian Council for their keeping.