

# The Vine

2002

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Greetings to all the saints in Christ Jesus. Well, the year 2003 is almost at an end. If you did not realize it, maybe the Christmassy cover of this issue may remind you. Soon, I will have to redesign The Vine masthead again for next year lest people find it boring after seeing it for the past 12 months. Are people so easily bored, I wonder? Do we always have to find new ways to present the Christmas story, new songs to sing, new liturgy to worship an Unchanging God? Do we actually try to express our love to our spouses in new ways every week, month or year? Think about all these as the year draws to a close and the leaders plan more changes for the New Year.

The Treasurer is dreaming of a Blue Christmas, blue is the accounting tradition for a surplus and red for deficit. Unfortunately, it is only a dream because the reality of the situation is that the collection has been very low the past few months and a deficit seems inevitable. *"We do not learn character in times of ease and prosperity, but in times of difficulty." The greatest lessons of life are often the product of our most serious heartaches. If we really believe that God is working all things for our good, then one of the great challenges is to allow hard, painful, and fear-filled experiences to be our teacher in the classroom of life.*<sup>1</sup> Yes we believe in the God of the impossible. May He do the impossible for JCC.

The words of a song goes as follows: "Christmas isn't Christmas till it happens in your heart!" The editors and writers of The Vine wish all our readers a truly God-blessed Christmas and may Jesus find a place in your heart this year and forevermore.



The Editor

<sup>1</sup> Joseph: Overcoming Life's Challenges by Bill Crowder.

To  
**Glorify GOD** through a life of **True Discipleship**  
and **Disciplemaking**

# Peace on earth, good will toward men

What peace? – Think about terrorism fears in the hearts of many in the world who are curtailing their Christmas travels, or have become very selective of ‘safe’ destinations.

What good will? Think about the seemingly perpetual contests of wills between the Palestinians and Israel, between Iraq and the United Nations, between India and Pakistan, between nations embroiled in arguments over

each other’s rights or lack of, between the lovers and haters of peace ...

The economic clouds should cast a pall on traditional Christmas celebrations founded on merrymaking spending sprees. Festive decorations will be reduced and likewise the cheerful countenance that usually adorns the faces of sales managers and bosses this time of the year.

However, the kind of traditional *Xmas* celebrations founded on the letter *X* should still fill us with peace and good will springing from within us in full strength, steadfast against tempests around us. I am not referring to the small *x* that stands for an unknown in algebraic equations, but the big *X* that stands for *Xristos* – the Greek word for Christ, someone who is well known as our Lord and Saviour. I always remember that Christ was born in Bethlehem and not anywhere else because Mary and Joseph had to obey human will to go there to pay their taxes and enroll in the census, yet the event perfectly fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy of the Messiah (Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12) approximately 700 years before the Nativity.

Whether the terrorism fear unleashed around the world was an act of man or the will of God or the twine combined in perfect synchronization is interesting for us to ponder. We may think differently, but our contemplative energy will not be wasted as it leads us to understand that there is a lot we cannot understand by human faculties alone. Why a good God permits evil is just one of countless questions that people like to ask and attempt tackling by creature intelligence alone without giving faith a chance to work wonders for a good comprehension of life.

If anyone asked for a sign from heaven to solve some mental puzzles in these trying times, this would be the perfect response from such a well known Christmas personality who is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ:

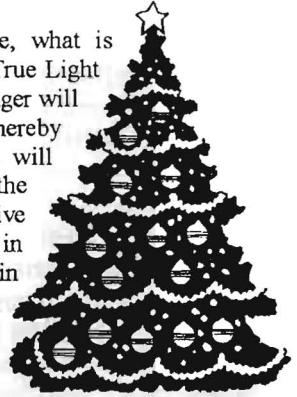
*He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." (Matt. 16:2-4)*

In life, times of fair weather and times of stormy weather have their turns, and we are presently facing the latter. Dark clouds will float away and the sun will have its day. You may be one of those who like to admire the beauty of a Christmas tree in the home during the yuletide season. There is an ancient belief that the evergreen is a symbol of life and a sign that sunshine and spring would soon return, and the decorative lights placed on it by people signifies the light of spring triumphing over the darkness of winter. Though this is but a legend, may I still wish for your life sunshine and spring, as God's will would have it.

Another legend about the Christmas tree has it that Martin Luther cut down a small fir tree after being amazed by the sight of twinkling stars seen through the gaps between the tree branches in the woods, took it home and decorated it with candles in small holders to represent the stars, thus starting the custom of a glittering tree every Christmas. Anything touted as a legend should be left as such, unless we discover some authoritative factual basis to it. Nevertheless, symbols do play a useful part as concise memory receptacles for us to have easy recall of truths we learn as Christians. While we ought not worship the tree or treat it as an indispensable part of our Christmas celebrations, we can always use the tree as a conversational piece or as a springboard to contemplate Christian truths. For example, the imagery of the Paradise tree (where the first man brought sin into the world) that the Christmas tree brings up in legend may just be a good reminder of the tree on Calvary where upon the last Adam (i.e., Christ) our sin was buried. I am not

merely being fanciful to do all the “tree-talk” linking the Garden of Eden, where man became accursed by sin, to the old rugged Cross. Note that the Cross is referred to as “the tree” in both the OT and NT. (See *Deu. 21:23* and *1Pet. 2:24* in both *NIV & KJV*.) And in so speaking, the thread that joins Eden and Calvary must pass through the Nativity scene in Bethlehem where hope for redemption shone bright. Hence, Christmas is a time of hope.

As people behold the bright lights on the Christmas tree, what is immensely more significant is for us to be reminded of the True Light of the world. The Light Divine emanating from a humble manger will vanquish the darkness in the hearts of those who believe, whereby peace and good will exude naturally, and the unbelievers will marvel at the power of faith we possess that makes the difference between us and them in the same world that we live in. The consequence is that, as we make our second petition in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy Kingdom Come”, we can be honest in our hearts that by our testimony of the peace we derive from Christ indwelling us and the strength for good will we have by the power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel will be preached to all and be embraced by all who subscribe to the promise given in His Word.



Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Lk 2:14 KJV) Verily, a Saviour born to us reflects God’s glory in the highest and His goodwill to men, for how else can we hope to be delivered from eternal damnation caused by our sin. This goodwill flows to us who have received Christ and His promise, and guides our feet into the path of peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all. (See Lk 1:78-80 & Acts 10:36). And this peace is not as the world gives. (John 14:27)

Wishing you a Christmas blessed with lasting peace in your hearts because Jesus has overcome the world (John 16:33) and has made peace through his blood shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:20) Shalom!

*John Lee*

**‘Shalom’ is the Hebrew word for ‘peace’, but its full meaning is “nothing missing, nothing lacking, nothing broken, everything complete”.**



*For my dear brothers and sisters in December ...*

## **My Thoughts On Writing**

by Charlotte Sam

I was asked to write something with a Christmas theme. I find this a bit difficult. I am no Charles Dickens, as you know. However, this will not stop me from contributing to the Christmas issue of the Vine. My admonishment to the rest of you who are still deliberating over the Vine ministry: you begin by first penning your thoughts down. You organize those thoughts on paper later.

For those who have read my writings, it will not take much for you to realize my writing style. It is incidental and situational. I organize my thoughts under a particular header. Each header and its paragraphs comprise a mini story or an anecdote. I read with great pleasure Brother Swee Leong's insights on 1 Samuel in the November issue. I said, "Wow, this is like his commentary on the book. It reminds me of Matthew Henry and his commentary of the Bible. Instead of gawking with envy (like I did), why don't we just praise God for men/women who though blessed with 24 hours a day (like you and I), can live to the share the powerful testimony of Hebrews 4:12 (NIV):

*"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."*

I firmly believe in the family of Christ, we are gifted in different ways. God has blessed us with varying insights and varying abilities to read and interpret. So I am often amazed at God's wonder in my brethren who study His Word so well to bless the lives of others.

### **Teaching the Little Ones**

Just right after Kids' Church one afternoon, I remembered passing some instructions down to Ryan. I was taken aback when his first reaction to me was "I only listen to God, not you."

Of course, Ryan has used that out of context but can you imagine children in our midst who have unbelieving parents? While you and I see an evangelical element to their kids in our Sunday School/Kids' Church, these parents may have just intended the sessions to be extension of childcare/day care services. Can you imagine the shock such parents will get upon hearing Ryan's declaration from their kids?

As a fellow helper in the Sunday School ministry, I think it is so important what we tell the kids. I feel we should make every effort to explain to them the why, how, when, and who to what we tell them. This brings to mind the verses of this song. "Be Careful Little Eyes, What You See":

*Be careful little eyes, what you see.  
Be careful little eyes, what you see.  
There's a Father up above, looking down in tender love,  
So be careful little eyes, what you see.*

*Additional Stanzas:*

*Be careful little ears what you hear  
Be careful little mouth what you say...  
Be careful little hands, what you touch...  
Be careful little feet, where you go...*

Truly, it may well be what the kids see and hear of us right in the Church. Even once a week is sufficient to create the right or wrong perception in them.

Likewise in scripture-reading. While a lot of attention is given to the more quoted verses, how much attention do we give to the verses prior and even after these "famous" verses? Take for instance, do you recall what comes right before and after Philippians 4:6-7?

### **A Back that Never Breaks, a Net that Always Holds**

We are all familiar with John 21:1-11 when Jesus in post-crucifixion helped the disciples haul a net filled full with fish. This is like an overflowing cup, don't you think?

I had lunch with Shen a few weeks ago and she told me how in her many moments of weakness, she asks God to bless her at all times with a minimum sum of money so she can fulfill her prevailing financial commitments. Has it ever occurred to many of us that we limit God's grace by imposing a dose of "kiasu-ism" in our prayer requests? We are kiasu because:

1. We assume God will give us lesser than we ask for; and
2. The outcome or things we ask for is more important than He – the source of *all* things.

## **In the Zone**

Dr Gary Chong from the Singapore Bible College shared a very timely message on 24 November. The correct perspectives to worship such as:

1. Who ought to be the audience of our worship (vs. focus on comparative styles different worship leaders bring, or the oratorical skills of the Bible-readers) as well as
2. What we bring to the worship (vs. what's in it for me).

In sports, there is a term known as "in the zone." It is a description of a person executing his skills so well that total concentration is taking place, and the athlete is performing flawlessly. However, this is still focusing on self.

Obedience in the Christian life is being in the zone. In the early Church, the Hebrews gained wisdom through obedience. Later, the Greeks were characterized as gaining wisdom through reason and analysis. Think of the contrasting outcomes: faith gained vs. faith earned (or so it was thought).

Today, we live in a very Greek-influenced Church. Many Christians determine if they will obey based on whether the outcome will be beneficial to them. Guess if these would have happened if the early Church had adopted this perspective of faith-building:

1. Fallen walls at Jericho? (Joshua 6)
2. Parting of the Red Sea? (Exodus 14)
3. Coins found in the mouth of a fish? (Matthew 17:24-27) Etc.

Reason and analysis would not have led to making the obedient decision.

Reason and analysis would have made us more skeptical and critical of one another.

Reason and analysis would not have given us the right focus to worship.

Reason and analysis would have taken us away from the purpose of JCC's existence.

## **Epilogue**

... More like the end of my lunch hour. I think I should submit this to Martin Cheah. This article has gone through multiple iterations since I started writing. I shall not look for a perfect piece for publication. I shall look to God to perfect its meaning for our dear readers.

Finally, here is a chronological listing of my Christmas activities:

- 1992: I had my customary wedding.

- 1994: I saw earthquake remnants in Italy and had snowy Christmas in Austria as part of my (belated) honeymoon.
- 1995: Ryan was 2.5 weeks old.
- 1996: Ryan was 1 year old and his parents were wondering why he had not taken his first steps!
- 1997: Winston was 3.5 months old. He rolled for the first time and fell off the mattress.
- 1999: I was retrenched on Christmas eve, just minutes before noon.
- 2001: We shared Ryan's enthusiasm to begin P1 in Jan 2002.
- 2002: Ryan and Winston are getting baptized.

Have a blessed Christmas!

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*The following is excerpted from VANTAGEPOINT, a publication of Eagles Communications. For the full article by Peter Chao, you may refer to that publication, Aug-Sep 2002 issue.*

## DEFINED BY COMMITMENT

Our attempts to define ourselves are an exercise in discovering the meaning of our lives. Some of us are so wrapped up in our careers that our identities are defined by our job titles. Others find in their possessions a definition of who they are. Defining our identity reveals the path we have taken so self-fulfillment and contentment.

If we sense that our careers will bring us ultimate contentment, we will live for our jobs. Who we are will be defined by our job positions and our worth weighed by our remuneration. Consequently, when we retire, we lose our self-esteem and our meaning in life. In an economic downturn, we discover to our horror that the company we have given our lives to serve rewards loyalty by cutting our jobs to save the bottom line. After sacrificing accumulated family time for our careers, we find that the leaders of our organization are not there for us when we are in deepest need. We feel betrayed and sense that life is meaningless.

Finding our purpose in life is the flip side of discovering our place in God's world. In the biblical narrative, when God's people were in crisis, Mordecai pointed to Esther's privileges as Queen and suggested that it could well be that

"you have come to royal position for such a time as this." In fulfilling her role, she realized her potential and found contentment.

## **To find contentment, then, we need to ask, "For what has God prepared me?"**

We look at the successes we have enjoyed, the failures we have suffered, and the hardships we have endured. We match our unique endowments and allotments in life with the challenges of the times. A seamless fitting of the two may constitute a Divine calling, the fulfillment of which can bring unparalleled ecstasy and contentment.

Responding to Divine calling requires taking risks. Esther knew that doing what she was uniquely positioned to do did not guarantee the results she desired. But she made a commitment at the risk of her life, declaring, "If I perish, I perish." Commitments without risks are cheap. Commitments without a price are shallow.

We prepare for the future from young. We urge our children to do well in school so they can be prepared for the future. We discipline ourselves in saving for a "rainy day". But very few of us know what we have been preparing for.

However, if we want to lead fulfilled lives, we have to pour ourselves into a cause that is greater than and beyond ourselves into a cause that is greater than and beyond ourselves. We need something that will mean everything to us. We will be consumed by it, and it will be a priority on our schedules.

**So, if we desire to know who we are, we will have to look to our commitments. We are defined by our commitments. Our commitments reveal our allegiance, our standards and our methods.**

Our natural endowments, our inclinations, our experiences, our gifting, our interests and our abilities are the ingredients that shape us for specific commitments that will glorify God, fulfill Kingdom agenda and bring contentment to our lives. When we discover that we have been prepared for such a time as this, we can stake everything we have in a committed declaration, "If I perish, I perish!"

# CAMP Jesus LOves You 2002



As I sit here beginning to write about the recent Camp Joy that I had participated in, I struggle as there are so many wonderful things that I recall. The art-and-craft session, the walk in MacRitchie reservoir, the fishing port, the treasure hunt in Jurong Garden. There were just too many. The camp committee has truly done well to make this camp an enriching experience for us campers. Not only have we enjoyed all the activities, we also wished the camp lasted longer. We loved every minute of this wonderful camp.

On the first day, after registration, we moved into our rooms and were introduced to our group leaders, as well as our fellow group members. After that, we had some Bible study. Following that was the art-and-craft session. I never knew that sand art was actually that simple. We did not use real coloured sand, but instead, we made it by rubbing chalk into salt. The result was a beautiful jar filled with different colours of "sand". The next excitement was the night activities. The jungle walk at MacRitchie reservoir was marvelous. It was more fun when it turned dark.

After the walk, we proceeded to the Senoko Fishing Port where we had a light supper. Then we went to watch how fish and other seafood are being unloaded from fishing trawlers. It was a wonderful experience.

We slept late that night but rose early the next morning. After breakfast, we proceeded to Jurong Garden and had an outdoor Sunday worship and message. Following that was the treasure hunt. We trudged all over Jurong Garden in our groups and raced against each other to find the "treasure", which was actually slips of paper with questions about the Bible. My group, Moses, came in second.

When we got back to church we had lunch and proceeded to prepare for the Night of Stars that evening. Then we rehearsed on the stage before bathing and having dinner. After that, we had some last-minute preparation before proceeding to the Night of Stars.

It was fun both performing on stage and watching others do the same. Each skit taught us something about Jesus and we loved every moment of it. Following the skits were the refreshments. Then came the sharing and prayer for each group. We reflected on the day's events and shared our feelings about the camp. After that, we proceeded to the Fellowship Hall where we danced to the song, "A New Friend Found". It was fun.

I never regret joining the Jurong Christian Church camps every year. The activities arranged for us were fun, especially the night walk at MacRitchie Reservoir. It was exhilarating. The talk by Dr Khoo was knowledgeable. I also enjoyed the sing-along sessions and making new friends. The teachers were caring, friendly, helpful and supportive. Most of all, I got to learn more about God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. I hope I will be able to join the camp again next year.

Ang Yue Li (Pr 6)

\* Ang Yue Li accepted Christ at the Camp.

The last day of the camp came around quickly. After morning devotion and breakfast, we proceeded to the Worship Hall for praise time. Then after group sharing, we cleaned up the whole church. We all enjoyed cleaning.

It was time for lunch. After clearing up, we departed for Clarke Quay. Upon reaching our destination, we all took the river taxi cruise around Clarke Quay. We enjoyed the cruise tremendously.

When we got back to JCC, we had our afternoon tea before proceeding to discuss in our groups to give feedback on the camp. Then we did some letter writing in which we had to write to a friend about the camp. Following that was the much-anticipated prizegiving. After giving out all the prizes, the camp was dismissed. As it was raining at that time, most of us and our parents stayed for a while and chatted with one another. This camp was certainly a wonderful and splendid experience.

Genevieve Leong

From (camper):  
Koh Jia Ying  
To: Koh Jia En

I have much fun and meet many friends. Also the food is nice, I like the concert and I learn the word "Maligaya" which means Joy in Tagalog (Filipino). So I am very happy. I can come again next year.

Dear Jocelyn,

This is about the camp I went to. My teacher forced me to write this.

I enjoyed the first day sing-a-long and arts and crafts but I did not like to bathe in the small toilet. The night walk at MacRitchie reservoir and the visit to Senoko fish port was fun and exciting.

We had a fun treasure hunt at the Jurong Gardens. Then concert time in the night and the following day, Auntie Persis gave us a talk. It was very funny.

We went on a River Taxi cruise and then after that we came back to have tea and prize giving.

By the way, I wrote to you because I wanted you to join. If you want more information, just call me.

Jolene Lim

Dear Sze Wei,

Do you know what I have been doing these three days? I attended a kids' camp! Let me tell you what I enjoyed most. I enjoyed the night jungle walk which was in total darkness. I also enjoyed the Singapore River cruise. The Singapore waterfront is very beautiful. I saw the Esplanade and the Merlion.

I hope you can come next year.

Caleb Lee

The camp is over!

I thank God for good weather, meeting new friends and eating delicious food. I enjoyed walking in MacRitchie reservoir.

This will be my last kids' camp and I will join the youth next year!

Joel Wei



# More Letters from CAMP JOY Campers

I had always dreaded camps before I attended 'Camp Joy' this year. From my point of view, camps were only for children to suffer. So, I was actually having second thoughts when I set off for church on that fateful Saturday morning. But come I did, and not only did I find it not in the least 'suffering time', it gave me joy.

The first day was very eventful. We attended the opening ceremony and other procedures before starting on the first activity-'sandcraft'.

I was not very sure what it was, but I did my best. When I found I was supposed to fill my enormous bottle up to the brim with salt, and that I was supposed to colour it with as many colours as possible, I was shocked. How was I going to finish in such a short time? But thankfully, with everyone's help, and after many attempts, I finally finished the artwork.

Later, we had Sing-a-long, sharing and prayer, and presto! it was dinnertime. All of us then departed for MacRitchie reservoir. The walk through those tall trees in the dark made me feel like a small and insignificant being. However, it was exciting and time passed quickly there. When we were going back, we actually saw a snake! How interesting! I will never forget that eventful moment. We then visited Senoko Fish Port, where we saw frozen fish, squid and other marine animals loaded from fishing trawlers. It was a very informative visit. We then returned to camp overcome by fatigue.

Surprisingly, the next day, everyone woke up early in the morning. We set off for Jurong Garden soon after. We then had an outdoor Sunday worship sitting on the canvas, which was laid on the grass. I did not really like the experience of sitting on the wet canvas though. Later on, we enjoyed a competitive game of Treasure hunt. All the groups were racing against time. Our group, I am proud to say came in second. When all the groups had assembled, we took group photos and headed back for church.

We spent the afternoon preparing for the concert. Everyone was having the time of their lives. We were all half playing, half rehearsing. Finally, the big event came. All of us did our best, I must say. It was a frightening moment, with all the parents looking at us. However, the night of stars was a success. We all enjoyed ourselves immensely and the MC was great. Eventually, night fell and we returned to our dormitories.

From (camper): Chan Jia Ying  
To: Ang Yue Hua (another camper into another group)

Hello Yue Hua. Are you having fun in the camp? I am. It is very fun and wish to come to camp next year. Did you enjoy the concert? I love the show very much. I think you will also enjoy the show. Do you find the message funny? I love the last message. It is so funny and interesting. The night walk is fun but I feel tired.

It suddenly dawned on my newly acquired friends and I that it was the last night we were spending at the camp and everyone was feeling reluctant to part so soon. We wanted to chat more but it was lights out soon and we did not have much time to talk. We basked in each other's company while we could before slipping into slumber land.

We had praise and worship time in the morning. There was definitely the 'last day' mood in the air that day. We then cleaned the camp of the dirt we had coated it with in the last few days. Finally, we set off for our last trip - Clark Quay after lunch.

It was a most enjoyable ride across the Singapore River. I will not hesitate to elaborate the details, but this journal is turning out longer than I expected, so I have to keep this short. Our group leaders had bought us some crackers out of their own money. That was very nice of them and we savoured the salty, finger-licking taste of the crackers while enjoying the salty breeze. It was a pity the waves weren't big enough, though...

As there was some time left, we set off for the arcade (we did not play any games) to wait for the bus. The rest of the day passed by quickly. We did some letter writing and feedback for the camp before the prize giving ceremony. With that, the memorable camp was closed and we all headed back to our own lives, briefly joint together by this camp.

In conclusion to this camp filled with interesting memories, I must say I acquired a great many new friends and understood why Christians worship Jesus. It, too, diminished my dread of camps. I want to express my thanks to those in the camp who took the bother to be my friends and the teachers and assistants who were great.

Jane Quek

Dear friend,

The "Night of Stars" concert was silly. Don't like singing Chinese songs. Good thing the microphone had no power. The song was silly. I don't know why Uncle Teik Keat choose this song.

Hope to see you at the camp next year. Hope we are in the same group again.

Ai Lin

Dear Jolene,

I like the boat ride but I do not like the bath time. I also don't like cleaning the toilet. I like playing with you. I will always remember the fun times I had with you. I hope you enjoyed coming to this camp. Hope to see you next year.

It was tiring on the walk because the weather was hot. Your jokes were very funny. I enjoyed coming to this camp. Do you?



From (camper):  
Samuel Chong  
To : Nurman (friend)

I am in a camp. Today is the last day of the camp. It is in church. It is very fun. I had a cool bath. It was very cold. I had a jungle walk, visit to Senoko fishing port and concert. I took the river taxi. If you are interested, please call me.

## AN ODE TO CAMP JOY

Camp Joy  
The best camp to join in  
Camp Joy  
The happiest camp of all JCC camps

Camp Joy  
The camp filled with 60 over children of God  
Camp Joy  
The camp that has 6 Great Groups  
Noah, Elijah, Moses, David, Daniel and Abraham  
Each has a special character in them  
That's why we use their names as our groups' names

Camp Joy  
Everyday is filled with fun and exciting activities  
Activities like jungle tracking, acting, treasure hunting  
And More.....

Camp Joy  
Having Uncle Young Kwang as Camp Leader  
Jason as the famous guitarist in the camp  
And good and responsible group leaders.

*Lee So Yan*

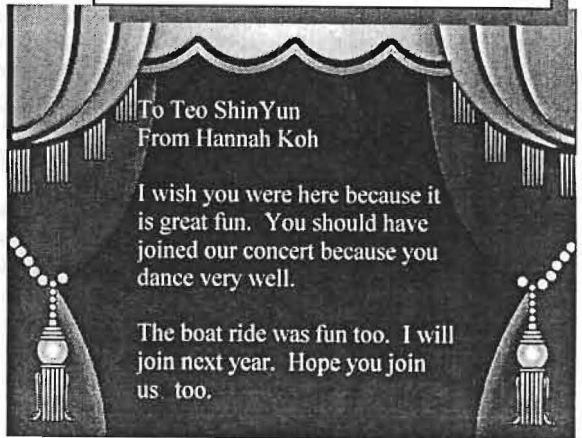
From (camper): Justin  
To: Jonathan Goh (another camper)

I am glad that I have made friends with you because I can play with you. Sometimes you are funny. I hope we will be friends forever. Thank you for being my friend!

To Teo ShinYun  
From Hannah Koh

I wish you were here because it is great fun. You should have joined our concert because you dance very well.

The boat ride was fun too. I will join next year. Hope you join us too.



## My Holiday Trip by A Family of Campers

On 16 November 2002, a group of 62 children forked out S\$30 each for a 3-day, 2-night camping trip to an 'ulu' site in Taman Jurong. Taman Jurong is located along the borders of Boon Lay, Jurong West and Jurong East on the island of Singapore.

### < Our First Day >

We boarded our dad's express car from our basement car park at about 8 am, and spent the next ten minutes picking up our two friends from the nearby residential estate of Dover. After which, we spent the 'long' 15-minute drive chatting away and teasing one another.

### < The start of the Camp >

We arrived at the campsite before 8.30 am and reported promptly to the camp coordinators. We were divided into groups and then taken to a big hall at the base camp, and were briefed on the camp rules and programs. Later we were taken to our assigned 'bunks' where we tried to make do with whatever little amenities there were to make ourselves comfortable. Fortunately, all 'bunkers' were air-conditioned, mattresses were provided and even washrooms came with buckets of water and shower heads! We almost thought that we had to draw water from elsewhere and sleep on the floor.

### < The Classrooms >

We thought that there would be no lesson since school was out, but oh no! there were lessons. However, these lessons were different – somewhat more interesting with some experiments, games and craftworks. The teachers were so enthusiastic. We

also heard from our pre-Christian friends that their teachers were even more dynamic.

### < Meals >

The first lunch was so yummy and so were most of the rest of the meals. The aunties and uncles in the mess hall were ever present to provide us with snacks and drinks for our 'growling' stomachs.

### < Sand or rather 'Salt' Art >

An aunty taught us the art of making coloured sand and then filling these into little bottles. Our mummies and daddies would be proud of us when they see our beautiful craftwork made by using the humble salt and chalk.

### < The Start of a Long Trek >

Later in the evening, we took 2 snail-buses to the MacRitchie Reservoir, and started on a long undulating trek with our local guide who was also our camp commander. After an hour and a half, which seemed like an eternity, we finally completed the course, which aimed to build up our confidence in the dark as well as our stamina. Everywhere we turned, we saw children with aching legs and tired faces – some were even bitten by mosquitoes and one or two looked sick! But this so-tiring experience was not marred by the wonderful experience of seeing fireflies among us. More fireflies could have been seen if only all flashlights were turned off!

### < The Fish Port at Senoko >

We resumed our night journey with a visit to a fish port. After a late-night snack followed by a 'fishy' talk, we climbed onto the bus, barely able to

keep our eyes open and knees from buckling, and reached base camp just after midnight. Very few cleaned up and all slept shortly afterwards.

#### < The Second Day >

We were all taught to do this first thing in the morning and in this particular order – first, Clean-yourself-up; second, pack-up-your-things-and-mattress; third, get-ready-for-devotion.

#### < The Garden Walk >

Before we could fully recover from the long trek the night before, we were taken on another long walk on the fringe of a beautiful garden and park. Finally, we came upon a shady spot and started to settle down. But the ground was moist having rained the day before. Most of us could not bring our pampered selves to sit on the ground and therefore had to squat, while waiting patiently for the poncho to arrive. Thank God, it did arrive, or else we would be have been 'attacked' by small ants!

#### < Sunday Service & Treasure Hunt >

The uncle's sharing for the day was very long but it was quite funny. Later, we had a wonderful time discovering clues in the treasure hunt, and soon we trekked back to base camp, tired and hungry.

#### < Night of Stars >

It rained and rained in the afternoon but it was good because the rain kept us all indoors and we practised and practised for that night's concert. Without this rain, we would not have been able to give a production that was of Hollywood standard. Soon, the night came and we had a wonderful time of

singing especially that song "O, Magnify the Lord". We gave our best especially knowing that our parents would turn up that night to watch. It was such a wonderful night of singing, acting, eating and meeting up with our parents – which I would never forget!

#### < The Last Day >

Like our commander said "So fast – last day already!" On top of our usual morning routines, we did a thorough cleanup of the whole camp – including the toilets!

#### < The River Cruise >

In the afternoon, we visited the home of the biggest durians in the country. Although the boats smelled of diesel fumes, we nevertheless enjoyed the beautiful sights of the river – the 'spiky' Esplanade, the 'drooling' Merlion and such. We joked and also waved happily to everyone by the riverbank on sight, and some waved back in return! It was such a wonderful cruise!

#### < Home Sweet Home >

Upon returning to base camp, we spent the rest of the day evaluating the camp and writing a letter to a friend. At the end of the camp, we saw many of our fellow campers receiving prizes, then later headed for home despite the heavy post-camp downpour. We have certainly enjoyed this trip immensely, and hope you have enjoyed reading about our adventure. Perhaps we will write you another travel story of our next trip – maybe to Changi or Sentosa Campsite.

(Ed. The above is an anonymous contribution from a participant in Camp Joy.)



A candy maker wanted to make a candy that would be a witness, so he made the Christmas Candy Cane. He incorporated several symbols for the birth, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ.

He began with a stick of pure white hard candy. White to symbolize the Virgin birth and the sinless nature of Jesus, and hard to symbolize the Solid Rock, the foundation of the Church, and the firmness of the promises of God.

The candymaker made the candy in the form of a "J" to represent the precious name of Jesus, who came to earth as our Savior. It could also represent the staff of the "Good Shepherd" with which He reaches down into the ditches of the world to lift out the fallen lambs who, like all sheep, have gone astray.

Thinking that the candy was somewhat plain, the candymaker stained it with red stripes. He used three small stripes to show the stripes of the scourging Jesus received by which we are healed. The large red stripe was for the blood shed by Christ on the cross so that we could have the promise of eternal life.

Unfortunately, the candy became known as Candy Cane, a meaningless decoration seen at Christmas time. But the meaning is still there for those who "have eyes to see and ears to hear." I pray that this symbol will again be used to witness To The Wonder of Jesus and His Great Love that came down at Christmas and remains the ultimate and dominant force in the universe today.

*(Story from email, Original source unknown)*

#### **CAMP JOY by Zachariah Yeap**

##### **First day (16<sup>th</sup> Nov)**

I was very excited as it was my first overnight camp. My mother fetched me to Church and we registered my name down. I bade my mother goodbye and I went on my own. My group went to the MacRitchie reservoir. Our group trekked through the jungle and after long long time, the group leader told us that it was too far for us to walk to the end of the trail! What a waste of my energy. Luckily, we took the short cut back. From there, we went to the Senoko Fishing Port. We saw the ships unloading lot of fish. Soon after that, we went back to church, tired but happy.

##### **2<sup>nd</sup> day (17<sup>th</sup>)**

I woke up and quickly washed up. We had our breakfast. After breakfast, we went to our own discussion groups. At the end of the message, we practised for the concert, followed by our bath time and our free time. Then we went to the worship hall to do some last-minute rehearsal. We waited for a while before the concert started and soon we sang some songs. Then we did our act. When the concert was over, we had some refreshments and talked with our parents. At the end of the day, we were so tired that we slept early.

##### **3<sup>rd</sup> day (18<sup>th</sup>)**

I felt very refreshed after the night rest. We quickly washed up and walked to the Jurong garden to have our Sunday service. After the message, we had a treasure hunt. Our group was almost the last to find the treasure but at least we got it! We returned to church and listened to a message. As the church was messy, we cleaned up the church and packed up our belongings. Finally, it was time to go home, we had the prize giving and I felt very happy. Although I did not win anything, I was really happy and tired. I am looking forward to next year's camp.

# Reflections on Acts

by Tan Swee Leong

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The book of Acts has a number of characteristics, which makes it a unique and fascinating part of the New Testament. The dominant literary form is narrative. In contrast to the Epistles, which contains direct expositions of the author's thoughts Acts has less explanatory materials than in the other NT books. In the Gospels, although there is narrative, this is closely interwoven with the teachings of Jesus which explain their significance. Thus Acts is different from other NT narratives.

Narratives can teach theology. How do we detect and interpret the theological messages of the narrative? The narratives are certainly inspirational and uplifting. The speeches interspersed throughout the narrative of Acts are evangelistic and didactic. Narrative materials can be understood better when its purpose is kept in view. However the purpose of Acts is not as clearly discernible as that of the Gospels or epistles. What then is the purpose of Acts?



Why was Acts written? An author may provide the reason for writing a narrative in the introduction. Acts is complicated by the fact that it is the second of a two-volume work and opens with a statement of continuity rather than of purpose. The introduction in Luke could be applicable to Acts. Luke states that he uses eyewitness information and that he was careful to present an orderly and historically reliable narrative. His account was made up "of the things that have been fulfilled among us," (Acts 1:1). This would include the fulfillment of OT prophecies as in Luke 4, in the synagogue at Nazareth, and Luke further uses the phrase "I must..." in the words of Jesus to give a sense of a determined fulfillment of what God had planned. From the beginning of the gospel, Luke makes it clear that there is a destiny awaiting Jesus and his disciples. This destiny is still in effect in Acts that is the continuation of the unfolding of God's plan in Christ to the Church. Luke's purpose in writing to Theophilus was "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." (Luke 1:4) Luke's strong and repeated



evidence that the Gentiles had indeed received God's salvation would also encourage Theophilus, presumably a Gentile to have confidence in the truths he has learnt. There is probably a wider readership represented by Theophilus.

The plot in Acts reveals the purpose of Luke's narrative. The plot opens with Jesus responding to the disciple's question, "are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Jesus in His answer not only instructs them of their mission but declares their strategy for the Gospel, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8). Acts is written to trace this progressive mission. Peter's speech at Pentecost explains the importance of the coming of the Holy Spirit, relating it to OT prophecy of Joel and affirming the divine plan of the crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation of Christ, ending with a call to repentance. Peter's speech introduces the theme of salvation. Chapter 3 and 4 attests to the significance and power of the name of the resurrected and ascended Christ (3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30). Jesus is the only name by which all men must be saved (Act 4:12). The name of Christ is a predominant theme throughout

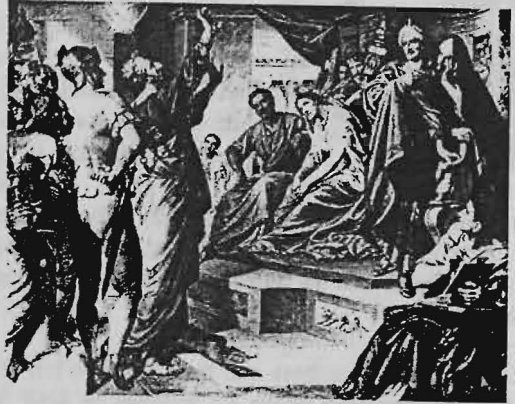
Acts. Chapter 5 describes several miraculous events concluding with a resounding statement of the proclamation of Christ in spite of persecution. Stephen's speech and martyrdom portray the tension between the early Church and the Jews.

The narrative following Stephen's death introduces Saul and renewed persecution ensued. "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went." (Acts 8:4). This recalls Jesus mission call in Acts 1:8. We see a deliberate unfolding of the progress of the gospel mission Jesus commissioned. The conversion and subsequent missionary journeys of Paul certainly fulfill this mission. Paul's missionary travels and the various events converge on the issue of the Jewish refusal to accept Paul's message. The fateful outcome of this response was the acceptance and spread of the Word among the Gentiles.

Luke devotes considerable attention to Paul's trials. The trial proceedings justify Christianity and is an apologetic for the faith as a legitimate religion in the Roman Empire. Paul stated before Festus, "I have done nothing wrong against



the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar" (Acts 25:8). In the concluding chapter of Acts, Paul calls together the leaders of the Jews and repeats his protestation of innocence, "My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors" (Acts 28:17). Paul failed to convince the Jewish leaders about Jesus and concludes by quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10, "Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' Acts 28:26-27. The concluding statement of Paul carries this one step further, "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"



The last verse of the book, "Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 28:31) shows that in spite of unbelief and opposition, the Gospel true to the words of Christ has indeed reached the ends of the earth - a demonstration of the sovereignty of God in missions.

### The Vine Committee

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**CAMP JOY Kids**

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*Martin inviting colleague to church, "Want to come to church this Christmas?"*

*Colleague, "No, I am going to Barbeque!"*

*Martin, "Oh, that's the other place!"*

*Man can climb the highest mountain, swim the widest ocean, fight the strongest tiger, but once he's married, mostly he takes out the garbage.*

Sam Levenson

# JURONG WEST CELL GROUP OUTING AT SELETAR ISLAND



Jurong West Cell Group's first outing on 6th December 2002 was on the deserted Seletar island, somewhere in the north of Singapore. It was indeed an adventure that many of us may not



have expected. We faced tall grass, hot sun, monsoon rains and also lack of conveniences. However, we had fun! The Lord protected us from danger and injury and we grew closer together. Everyone brought extra food for the others that there was so much left over that we must remember next time not to bring so much.

The cell group members and their families left JCC in a bus and traveled about 45 minutes to SAF Yacht Club in Woodlands. After that, it was 25 minutes by speedboat to Seletar Island. Four trips were required to bring all of us across. After deciding where to set up, we began to play games followed by dinner (a mariner's term for lunch) and then free



time for all to do crabbing, wandering over the island, playing ballgames and wading in the water. Then the rains came. Soon, we were all drenched and waiting for the boat to come and fetch us back to civilization.



It was one of the heaviest rains I have come across and parts of the roads were flooded as we

made our way back to JCC by bus. By the time we reached JCC, the rain had reduced to a drizzle. Thank

God for all His blessings.

*by Martin Cheah*

