

# Jan

# THE

# 2003



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Vol 1/2003

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus. Indeed between the writing of the December issue and this January issue, many events have taken place which brings sadness to my heart.

Firstly, the loss of our brother Mak Ban Kit on Christmas Day, then the injury to Wei Yang, son of brother Wong Mui and lastly, I got a call from brother Sussyam on 18 Jan, telling me of his decision to return to India for good. Surely Jurong West CG will miss this young man who although armed with a MBA is quite humble.



Brother Sussyam, picture from JW album.  
e-mail: sussyam@yahoo.com

What have we got in store for 2003? Well, I am hoping that we will be able to start a section of The Vine to cater for our younger readers. I hope to be able to get writers from our younger brothers and sisters so that The Vine can truly reach out to all sections of Jurong Christian Church.

How do you like the new masthead? I think there is room for improvement and I may change it even before the year is out. If you have a good design, please share it with us.

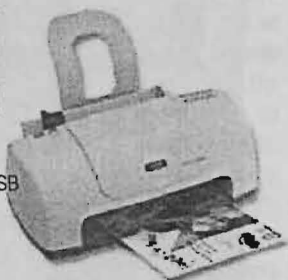
Have you not heard, this Good Friday, JCC will be staging a dramatic resurrection musical called "The Power of His Love"? The singers and actors have already started their practicing. There is still a great shortage of singers and actors. All those who are willing, please come forward. We need you.

But most of all, we need all of you to pray for friends that you want to bring to listen to an evangelistic message. Pray for the salvation of many souls. Start now - don't wait!

**The Editor**

# FREE

Epson C20UX USB printer.  
For more information see inside.



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

# Baptisms



Ryan Neo  
Joel Tan



Faith Teo  
Siew Feng



Dec 25, 2002.

While many are celebrating Christmas Day, this is the day that our Brother Mak Ban Kit went home to the Lord. Returning from church service that afternoon, I noticed a funeral van parked below Ban Kit's block. The thought flashed through my mind that it could be him but I refused to accept it and prayed that it was not so. However, at about 4.00 pm, we received a call from Pastor Yee informing us of Mak's death. Slowly the reality of the situation sank in. Being his closest neighbour, we were the first to be there.

There were no words of consolation for the bereaved wife, Bee Yan. This is one time all words seem trite and cliched. Yes, we could say that it is God's will, that all things work for good, that God's answer is "No\*" and that Mak has gone to a better place. All these are true but it will not help to console a grieving wife. We just sat there in silence.

I met Mak and Bee Yan when they were assigned to me for nurturing. I am very grateful for this opportunity to meet this wonderful couple. Even though he was suffering from cancer, Mak was a very positive person. Throughout our nurturing sessions, he was always so positive that I never thought he would be going home to the Lord so soon. Even the last time when I spoke to him, when he first got out of Gleneagles, he sounded so positive.

As his condition got worse, I worried that the short time of nurturing may not have given him enough depth to hold on to God's promises. However, I am glad to hear from the pastor who presided at his funeral service that Mak had clung on to the Lord till the end. Even as we will not meet again in this world, I thank God that by God's grace we will meet again one day forever.

**Martin Cheah**



*From right:*  
Juliana Tan  
Kenton Lee  
Joshua Tan  
Jonathan Tan  
Ian Lee  
Darren Ng  
Gilbert Neo

## Looking back at 2002

2002 was an eventful year for JCC. As I look back I thank God for His leading throughout the year. I thank the Lord for each one in the body that He has used and ministered to and for various godly people He has brought to teach and guide us. The Church vision and core values were crystallized and communicated to the congregation. More importantly, our rallying call is for each and every one to emphasise living the vision and core values. The leaders committed themselves to be equipped as shepherds and went through a 6-month preparatory training for the new paradigm cells. A series of seminars were held in place of the cell group program. 29 Sept. 2002 saw the installation of the shepherds and the launch of the cell group with a new paradigm. In case you are still unaware, the cell paradigm comprises 3 key imperatives: -

- Cell Group is a way of life not about meetings
- Cell Group is living our Vision
- Cell Group is living our Core Values

The key emphasis is on life. The early church was called followers of the Way. The same call is given to us to live out the Way of the Lord. The early Church gathered in homes for worship, ministering and living out their faith. We similarly want to gather not for a meeting but to worship, study the Word

and live out the Word. (WALK) in accordance to the Word (Acts 2:42).

Our lives are in the Lord and we want to live in close, constant communion with Him. This speaks of spirituality, which is "about the cultivating of the inner life. It is to become sensitive to the Spirit's stirrings, to become aware of the Spirit's presence and work in one's life." The goal of spirituality is intimacy with God, Christ-centredness and authentic Christian living. This was the message Mr. Chong Ser Choon shared with us at the church fellowship on 21 Sep. 02.

Spirituality is living a human life in union with God (Lawrence Richard). It is so integrated to our Christian living, thus the emphasis on spirituality in the cell.

Another significant milestone in the life of the Church is the initiative towards giving the youth in JCC a "life of its own", with their own worship, cell groups, ministries. Youth ministry is an integral part of the body life, sharing a common vision and the core values. The youth have responded well and are more visible in Church life and ministry. By faith and God's grace we plan to renovate the void deck as a multi purpose hall to provide space for growth in the life, ministry and activities in JCC. Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, 02 is yet another significant date, for on that day the youth leaders were installed and committed for the Lord's service.

The close of 2002 saw us expressing love to the community through various camps - the GB, BB, Camp JOY for the Kids Church and the community and the Christmas outreach. Hearts were ministered to, lives shared and the love of God expressed in deed and truth.

2002 ended with a time of thanksgiving and testifying of the Lord's goodness, during the New Year's Eve worship and thanksgiving service.

### **Looking to 2003**

Vision, core values, paradigms, we are in a process of building. We want to be engaged in life change, value and attitude change but most of all, heart transformation.

Heart transformation demands supernatural means and a proper understanding of the spiritual life. Only the Lord can transform hearts. We can be transformed as we walk with the Lord and learn His ways. Only as we draw close to God and learn the lessons He is teaching us, do we then allow God to work in us and to transform us. God has provided the spiritual means and spiritual disciplines to mould and transform us. This involves:

**Discipline of drawing near to God, through prayer, study and meditation, listening, solitude and silence.**

**Discipline and surrender, through repentance, confession, yielding and submission, fasting and worship.**

**Discipline and service, in fellowship, service and witness.**

Through discipline, we constantly connect with the Holy Spirit for the purpose of being transformed into the likeness of Christ. Spiritual disciplines are the only means by which we can grow in relationship with Jesus through conformity of our hearts and minds to His life and character. The journey into true spirituality requires transforming power of the Holy Spirit; our part is to yield to the power and influence of the Holy Spirit through the spiritual disciplines, giving Him time and space to speak to us, guide and fill us, empower and transform us.

Through the spiritual discipline, the Spirit of God is working out the will of God to make the children of God like the Son of God (Tan Sian Yang, Discipline of the Holy Spirit)

How exciting, how enriching! Are you prepared to respond to the call and to the invitation to this spiritual journey with God? In 2003, we would want to continue to emphasize spirituality in our lives.

The transformed heart becomes evident in action – Our hands reveal the hearts – Hands need to be trained to be equipped to do the work of ministry.

JCC is undergoing a process of change through building of certain key areas, to revitalize and grow the Church. These are in:-

- I) Inspiring worship – for a fresh encounter with God through worship in the corporate body, and in cells and in one's personal walk.
- II) Holistic small groups – cells are an expression of body life living out the Vision and Core Values.
- III) Passionate Spirituality – living our life in the Lord and group in intimacy with God and Christ-likeness.
- IV) Love Relationship – practice of genuine practical love in caring and loving each other and those who do not yet know Christ.
- V) Gift oriented ministry – Helping members to identify their gifts, develop them and to use them to glorify God.

We have placed much effort in these areas. The objective is growing and revitalization of the body. We do not want to grow for our own benefit but for the sake of others that others may become disciples of Christ who would glorify Him. The Church exists for the sake of non-members as someone said: Unless we reach out and bring others

into the kingdom, our growth can become self-glorification.

For 2003 we want to embark on building one more key area: -

Need oriented evangelism – using our gifts to serve non-Christians with whom one has a personal relationship, to see to it that they hear the gospel and to encourage contact with the Church. Those whom we have personal relationship include our family members, friends, colleagues, schoolmates and others the Lord bring to us. The call to evangelism is made to all Christians, some are gifted in this area and the plan is for them to direct this area of ministry.

The Key emphases of Church Life in 2003 are in: -

**Caring  
Outreach  
Building the Paradigms**

Outreach is closely tied to loving relationship; for it is out of love that we seek that pre-Christians come to know the Lord and the gospel. The loving-relationship working group will be working very closely with the Need Oriented Evangelism team for outreach. JCC has spent sufficient time and resource in building and readying ourselves; the call now is to “Go and make disciples...” which is also the call in our Vision to disciples making.

We seek to do much but we must all remember that the Church is God's

Church and to let God be the Lord. Even as we are entrusted to do this work, we need to guard our hearts for it is the well spring of life (Proverbs 4:23), Dr. Gary Choong aptly reminded us at the leaders retreat with this passage from which I draw these reminders and lessons:

*We are a being not a doing.  
Character cannot be formed in  
busyness.*

*Take time to slow down, tend  
and guard your heart.*

*Guard your time with God and  
with the people who matter to  
you most.*

*Slow down and ask fundamental  
questions – “How is your walk  
with God?” How is your walk  
with man?”*

*Beware of the “barrenness of  
busyness”*

*Activities can swallow us so that  
we have no time with God.*

*Watch the source – only a good  
tree bears good fruit (Matt 12:  
33). Only from a good source  
does good water flow forth.*

*Leaders cannot teach or lead  
out of a vacuum but out of a  
sense of “fullness” of life.*

*Take time to build our  
relationship with the Lord or  
else we have nothing to give.*

We need to ask ourselves some searching questions. How is our walk with God? Take heed of Proverbs 4:23, “Guard your heart”, we need to ask God to change us, change our values and lifestyle.

How are we guarding our heart, giving our time for the Lord, our time for people who matter to us – our family, and loved ones? Our walk with the Lord must be fresh.

2003 can be an exciting time and a fulfilling one. Let us look to JESUS the pioneer and pefector of our faith even as we run this race marked out for us.

*Tan Swee Leong*

## **THE 7 TRAITS OF A GOOD SHEPHERD.**

By John Stott

### **The good shepherd:**

1. **Knows his sheep** (John 10:3) The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
2. **Serves his sheep** (John 10:11) I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
3. **Leads his sheep** (Psalm 80:1) Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock;
4. **Feeds his sheep** (John 10:9) I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.
5. **Rules his sheep** (2 Samuel 5:2) And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'
6. **Guards his sheep** (Matthew 7:15) Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.
7. **Seeks his sheep** (John 10:16) I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. There shall be one flock and one shepherd.

# Book Review: **THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER**

Hey I am back again with an extract from Chapter 2 of "The necessity of Prayer by E.M. Bounds"

Before I go on to Chapter 2, remember I ask a question in Chapter 1:

***Is your faith growing or declining as the years go by?*** What's your answer?

Knowing in your heart the answer to the question, are you doing something about it?

## **Chapter 2** **Prayer that gets results**

Genuine authentic faith must be definite and free of doubt.

### **WHAT IS FAITH ?**

Faith is not an abstract, belief in the Word of God or a mere mental belief. It is not a passive belief. Faith deals with God and is conscious of God. God is the great objective of faith, for faith rests its whole weight on **HIS WORD**.

Faith is not an aimless act of a soul, but a look to God and a rest on His Promises. Faith gives birth to prayer. It grows stronger, strikes deeper, and rises higher in the struggles and wrestling of mighty petitioning. Faith too is *humble and persistent*. It can wait and pray.

**DOUBT AND FEAR** are the twin enemies of faith. A **simple confident faith**, living day by day, will drive fear away.

*Philippians 4:6 "Do not anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God"*

This is the divine cure for fear and doubts.

### **RESULTS OF FAITH**

Faith grows by reading and meditating upon the Word of God. Most of all, faith thrives in an atmosphere of prayer.

It would be good if we stop and ask ourselves: "*Do I have faith in God?*" Do I have real faith – faith which keeps me in perfect peace about the things of the earth and heaven?

Another question related to it: *Do I really pray to God* so that He hears me and answers my prayers? And do I truly pray to God so that I get directly from God the things I ask of Him?

### **PRAYER DEPENDS ON FAITH**

Prayer introduces us to a life of faith. Paul declared that the life he lived, he lived by faith in the son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him that *he walked by faith and not by sight*.

Prayer is absolutely dependent upon faith. Before prayer ever starts toward God-before its petition is chosen and its requests made known- FAITH must have gone on ahead.

Faith starts prayer to work. Faith makes prayer strong and gives its patience to wait on God.

### **THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL PRAYER**

We constantly need to be reminded that *faith is the one inseparable condition of successful prayer*. There are other conditions but faith is the final essential condition of true praying. As it is written "But without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6)

God Bless  
*Michelle Lee*

## **TEN REASONS TO FOLLOW CHRIST**

1. **He is credible.** Jesus' followers saw His blameless life, listened to His incomparable teaching, and concluded, "We have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69).

2. **He is the focus of a historically reliable Book.** The Bible's historical record is supported by archaeology. Its preservation from textual corruption has been confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls.

3. **He tells us about our Creator.** Christ reveals a God who cares as much about His creation as the design and detail of the natural world indicates (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:16-25).

4. **He has lies to the past.** Those who trust Christ are accepting the same Lord worshiped by Adam, Abraham, Sarah, and Solomon. He is the Messiah who was anticipated by the Old Testament prophets (Acts 2:22-39).

5. **He rose from the grave.** The first Christians risked their lives to tell the world that they had seen Jesus die and then miraculously walk among them 3 days later (Acts 5:17-42).

6. **He has power to change lives.** Paul, one of the worst enemies of the first disciples, was transformed from a killer of Christians into one of their chief advocates and spokesmen (Galatians 1:11-24).

7. **He understands our hearts.** Many want to believe that our problems are rooted in ignorance, poverty, and bad government. But Jesus pointed to sin in the heart (Matthew 15:19-20).

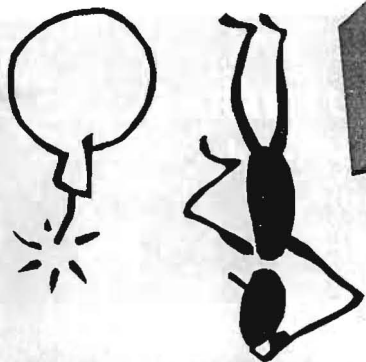
8. **He knows where history is heading.** In spite of mankind's high hopes and efforts, the world is approaching a terrible endtime predicted by the Bible (Matthew 24:5-31; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

9. **He has changed the world.** Calendars bear silent witness to Jesus' birth. Basic Christian values have been foundational to social morality, the work ethic, and social relief efforts.

10. **He has the answer to our deepest need.** We can find forgiveness and be adopted into the family of God by trusting Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-13). Christ asks us to follow Him—not to merit salvation but as an expression of gratitude, love, and confidence in the One who has saved us (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Adapted from the RBC Ministries booklet *Why We Believe*





# AWAKE-UP CALL

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 8:31-32

## Free Printer

One of the editors, Bro. John Lee has decided to upgrade to a laser printer and therefore has decided to give away his trusty old Epson C20UX color inkjet printer.

As there is only one machine, it will be given on a first come, first serve basis according to Bro. John's discretion.

So hurry rush up to Bro. John Lee now.

Here are some closing thoughts wrapping up the Year 2002. Like any new year which comes and goes, another New Year approaches and as we reflect on the foregone, it certainly dawns on us that time and tide waits for no man. Our days are numbered! (Ps 39:4-5; 2 Pet 1:14)

We are in for Tough and Changing Times. These days, we have to expect the unexpected even though we have an unchanging God who is the same yesterday, today and forever!

Competitions are intense, old ways of doing things will give in to new mindsets. We just have to learn and let iron sharpen iron.

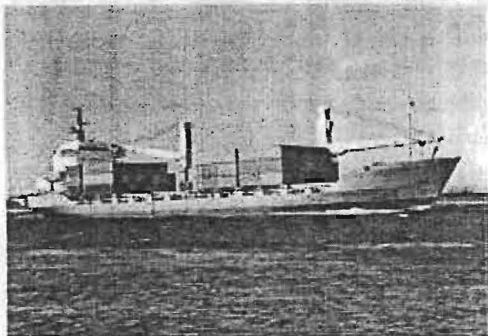
In these days of woes and glooms (with war trumpets blaring at us), let us constantly remember to comfort those who are afflicted by troubles. We ourselves must be alert to events that may come to pass, lest we are caught unprepared. Readiness and Preparedness must be constantly by our side.

Notwithstanding the above not-so-cheerful reflection as the year 2002 comes to a close, we have the blessed assurance that "Jesus is mine". Be certain that our souls are anchored on the sure & steadfast Rock of our Salvation. (Matt. 7:24)

Tony Koh

# INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN SEAFARERS' MISSION

Update on the ministry  
December 2002



Dear friends in Christ,

A big "Thank you" goes to our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed our ministry tremendously and through us many seafarers. Let me update you on our ministry: we visited 145 ships and had contact with 1180 seafarers from 11 nationalities. The Lord has touched over 30 seafarers who were baptized during the last couple of months. One of them was Mr Shi Guo Ziang who was baptized on 14<sup>th</sup> of October.

We were very encouraged by the fact that many seafarers from different nationalities are willing to work as "Chaplains" on board. One of them is Mr Hector who not only conducts services and studies on board, but also evangelizes amongst port workers in an African port. We support him with our prayers, bibles and Christian materials. Praise the Lord for seafarers like him.

We receive a lot of support from individual members of the different LCS congregations. Without the prayers and financial help from LCS and individual members, we wouldn't be able to do our ministry amongst international seafarers.

We were very privileged to be part of the LCS mission conference in August. We organized a display, brochures and shared the blessings of our ministry through a power point presentation.

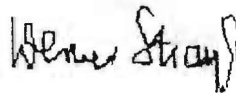
As a special Christmas gift to seafarers, we distributed about 350 English & Mandarin Jesus videos, which are shown on the ship and used as an evangelistic tool. Many seafarers take the video home and show it to friends or congregations.

Two journalists from Germany accompanied me on one of my regular visits to ships to write an article about our ministry. This is a good way of promoting our ministry and finding more people who pray for us, for the seafarers and support our ministry.

To celebrate our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary we did a souvenir mug to present to the various organizations, shipping companies, maritime authorities and overseas affiliates as a gesture of appreciation and acknowledgement of their assistance and involvement with ILSM.

We are also very grateful knowing that many of you have supported us through the last year with your prayers and the financial support.

Yours in Christ



Rev. Werner Strauss  
Port Chaplain



On 17<sup>th</sup> December, Rev. & Mrs. Werner Strauss left for Germany for their furlough. They will return to Singapore in early April 2003 to resume their duties.



Nine Chinese seafarers were baptized at the Jurong Christian Church on 21st April 2002.

## *Destination: A Caring Church*

On Christmas Day 02, the Straits Times ran a heartwarming news report “Muslim groups join police to guard churches”. It was certainly a love for peace and goodwill demonstrated by the two largest Muslim groups in Indonesia, the Nadhlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, against a backdrop of religious turbulence in the global scene.

It is heartwarming to note that while newsy happenings connecting terror with extremist elements tend to crowd our minds these days, hope for peace can still be kept alive. Peace and goodwill are inter-related with each other and with a caring spirit that reaches out to all and sundry beyond the four walls of the church. The Straits Times report reminds me of what Rev. Daniel Ang (in his sermon on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 02) recounted about an experience Dr Harvey, a TTC lecturer, had on a visit to Indonesia.

According to Rev. Ang, Dr Harvey saw many Muslim villagers queuing up to enter a huge tent erected outside an Indonesian church. The membership of this church was predominantly ethnic middle-class Chinese, but surrounding it were slums inhabited by Muslims. Inside the tent were church members who had volunteered their time and service in providing care to the needy villagers.

There is a saying that charity begins at home, which means that we care for ourselves first before caring for others. There is some truth in this statement. For example, when you travel by air, an announcement before flight take-off would remind you that in the event of an emergency, the able-bodied should help themselves to the lifesaving equipment first before helping the incapable children. The obvious logic is that we cannot possibly help others when we cannot help ourselves. This may be a point for quoting by all who want to justify their insular attitude in caring for themselves first, to the extent that they do not have time and energy to spare to care for others simply because their own needs are never-ending from cradle to grave. However, if we honestly espouse this point of self before others unlimitedly, then the same we should, by being faithful to our own conviction, recommend it to everybody else. The end result will be that everybody helps himself/herself and we shall not maintain any wish of help from others in our own needy situations.

Blessedly, the church in Indonesia that Dr Harvey visited subscribes to the exhortation of Scripture rather than the self-centred man’s refrain. Facing the darkness of riots happening in some parts of the country where militants had been going around burning churches, the love-focused Christians did not count men’s sins against them, but were committed to God’s message of reconciliation and acting as Christ’s ambassadors carrying the message of reconciliation as we are urged to do in 2 Cor. 5:19-20. That church’s pastors also shared with Dr Harvey a touching encounter by a church in Ambon, the capital of Indonesia’s

Maluku islands. When the church in Ambon was under threat by a militant mob, a group of Muslim villagers stood between the militants and the church, protecting the church from being torched.

When I read the Straits Times report on Christmas Day, I reflected on the Indonesian story brought back by Dr Harvey. The truth rings! What Rev. Ang shared with us was a lesson on feeding the hungry, poor and strangers. At the heart of this lies a caring spirit, an outward kind rather than the insular breed.

Think: What is the second most important thing we must have in order to be a good Christian? If you say LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR, you are spot on. The second greatest commandment from God is "Love your neighbor as yourself". (Matt. 22:39) If you have love (pure, unadulterated, unconditional, natural, springing forth from your declared love for the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind), the caring spirit will exude spontaneously without conscious effort. Every effort that we make and every scheme that we operate help draw our attention to areas of our Christian life that we need improving. In this vein, I see that the current endeavour by our leaders "to develop ourselves and members of JCC TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER as a way of life by practising Intentional Loving Relationship" is an endeavour pointing us in the right direction to the area of caring where we are in need of improvement. We ought to cast aside any insular attitude as individual Christians or inward-looking attitude as a JCC community. The complexity of any effort is always in the details, but we can cast away the complexity too if only each and every one of us is willing to touch base to recognize that what we need really is LOVE, a loving spirit (without offence as we tolerate the intolerable) that brings out the caring spirit effortlessly whereby the means to achieving our objective of growing a strong church will be bestowed upon us.

Different persons have different ideas about how they want to care or be cared for. Apart from the thoughtful acts of hospitality to visitors and of comforting the bereaved, sick, separated, hurting, etc., there are many more little deeds that we can contribute in a spontaneous (non-deliberate) manner to camaraderie and bonding. In JCC, I am both happy and sad. I am happy for the care in little things that I have been able to receive from my brothers, which are useful in meeting my needs. I remember a sister who, without being asked, approached me to share students' practice test papers because she knew that my son in Primary School had need for them. (Was this not a caring act that did not require gargantuan efforts?) To be sure, I am not as poor as a church mouse and I don't need financial handouts. Nevertheless, I have been receiving significant financial assistance (in terms of savings) by way of the things passed on (clothing for children, used textbooks, etc.) and I am not shy about receiving them and passing on things myself to those who want them. (Is helping one another to save money not a laudable caring act?) Every individual in the church is an expert in his or her own field and dispensing helpful advice or words of encouragement pertaining to the field of expertise and experience for the benefit of fellow members in the community can be a caring act that affects the

beneficiaries profoundly. As an example, a Lutheran brother in the legal profession recently gave a wonderful written advice to JCKK on some matters free of charge. (Was this not a caring act within the body?) When there is a sense of mutual dependency between members of a community rather than the “to each his own” kind of spirit with a price (in time units or \$ value) attached to everything done for a brother, the attractiveness of the body staying together is definitely greater. It does not cost much to the givers of care, but it means value to the recipients. It is not even the \$ worth that matters, but the thought behind the humility to offer help and the humility to receive help. Imagine if there is someone in the church who is not already involved in ministry but willing to take up the role as co-coordinator in the sharing of useable things (used computers, gadgets, educational paraphernalia, etc.), will our church treasurer have to sweat over budgeting for a new ministry of care? Especially in these bad economic times, is there anyone in the church making a loving effort to do something in the area of care in practical ways?

Obviously, care giving and care receiving must work together. Different church members have different care needs, and if those who have needs keep quiet (due to one kind of fear) and those who are able to offer care also keep quiet (due to another kind of fear), how can a genuine and warm caring culture take off that makes every member feel the warmth of camaraderie in a community? It is my feeling that there are many practical ways in which we can set up an intentional caring relationship without it being a heavy yoke on shoulders or bearing down on the church treasury. It is not possible for me to make a long list of possibilities here, but I am sure that leaders of the church can do much to encourage humility in both care-giving and care-receiving in practical ways and, not to forget, encourage many resting members to rise up, each picking up a little piece of work that will go towards caring for the care-givers too. Those who do not rise up in spiritual service will not complain that the church is not growing spiritually the way they want to see it. As Bro. Swee Leong shared in this issue of the Vine, the “leaders committed themselves to be equipped as shepherds and went through a 6-month preparatory training for the new paradigm cells”.

**The cells provide wonderful fellowship and care opportunities in a small-group setting where members can build up a closer rapport with one another. But members in the cell cannot be passive or absent. Only the members can make the cell work, and if it does not work, both the shepherd and the sheep must do something about it instead of just pointing fingers and giving up on it. Evidently, it is not for want of efforts by the leadership in building up a caring relationship in the church, but a shortcoming in the body's conviction to the objective spelled out for the church and in each individual's selfless willingness to give something to the caring atmosphere.**

I said above that I am also sad. This is because while I see pockets of good caring relationship in JCC (including but not limited to the love shown to Auntie Grace and Bro. Rodney, and the quiet selfless personal “beyond-the-call” contributions by individuals in Christian service), a large part of the JCC community seems to be remote on either the giving or receiving side of care. Therefore, I feel that as a church our caring atmosphere is thin. I am not even thinking of big things done in the name of caring, but little actions without publicity that go a long way in building a loving spiritual environment in the church with everything else good naturally coming into play. If charity really begins at home, then we should build up a strong charity framework (QUICK!) within the JCC community to be our buttress as we seek to reach outside our four walls. To do so, we need the partnership of everyone in the gospel (Phil. 1:5), which has to do with “sharing in” or “participating in” the work at hand in big ways or small ways. Here is what Apostle Paul says to us:

**“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Phil. 2:1-4)**

*John Lee*

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## **THE CHIEF SHEPHERD**

*We are told that Jesus was moved with compassion when he saw the crowds, “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matt 9:36) Shepherdless sheep must still arouse his distress and concern. Ultimately, he is himself their shepherd. But he delegates some of his responsibility to undershepherds; (Acts 20:28) ‘pastors and teachers’ are still among the gifts with which he enriches his church. (Eph 4:11) He is the true servant, who came “not to be served but to serve”. (Mark 10:45) And now calls us to follow him in the path of service, and to be the servants of others for his sake. (2 Cor 4:5)*

An extract from “The Contemporary Christian” by John Stott.

# WELCOME 2003 WITH CHARLOTTE

## What I Have been Reading

After all these years of procrastination, I finally laid my hands on the highly acclaimed classic by John Bunyan: "The Pilgrim's Progress". Like the apostle Paul, John was in captivity when he composed "The Pilgrim's Progress". His book was inspired by a vision he had, and this kind of reminded me of John who wrote the book of Revelation. In his introduction, John alluded to the positive influence Martin Luther had on his Christian faith.

I am still reading this remarkable piece of literature. If you have not read it, join me!

## Matthew 5:8

*"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."*

I have always marveled at how my children pray. One of them always begins with "Thank-you Jesus for a beautiful day"; and the other always closes with "and please teach us how to pray". Whether they had time-outs in the day, or just returned from the hospital's A&E department, they do not vary their statements to God. They do not seem to place that much emphasis on the outcome to their prayers, and may be that is why God constantly rewards each of them with happy songs to the tune of those sung in Sunday School. Indeed, the joy of the Lord is their strength.

## My Kingdom

If you have been following AW Tozer's writings in "Born After Midnight", he has shared profound insights on spiritual warfare. I am sure most of us have encountered writings such as "Brave New World" and "Antic Hay" by Aldous Huxley, a critic of Christianity. However, AW Tozer highlighted that even Huxley acknowledged that the kingdom of self has to go in order to make way for His kingdom to come. *"My kingdom go is the necessary correlary to Thy kingdom come."*

In his book, "The Quest for Character", Charles R Swindoll made reference to 1 John 5 and identified 4 "kingdoms" that are carved out by individuals:

- (my kingdom of) Fortune
  - The pull of wealth
- (my kingdom of) Pleasure
  - The pull of (instant) gratification (often at the expense of others)
- (my kingdom of) Fame



- The push to be popular
- (my kingdom of) Power
- The push to be in control

Hey, Christians are not spared. Even the minister who has a place on the pulpit can succumb to lordship over any of these kingdoms.

Jesus said in Luke 9:23, *'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'* Yes, **daily** – this is a sobering reminder to let "my kingdom" go, to make room for "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done ...". Amen.

### **Nurture Your Heavenly Nest**

I say "nurture" and not "build". If you build, chances are your efforts are in vain because God is the master builder. If you nurture, you will always have your goal affixed to Him. If you ever neglect (like we all will from time to time), and you are reading this, I would like to serve this timely reminder from Jesus in Revelation 3:19-22:

*"v.19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.*

*v.20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

*v.21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

*v.22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

As a writer of sorts (i.e. master of none), I am continuously on the lookout for interesting stories and anecdotes to reinforce a message. I came across this timeless piece that bears a close relation to the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

*"A very good carpenter felt he was getting old. He told his boss of his plans to leave. The boss was sorry to see him go. He asked the carpenter if he could build just one ore house as a personal favour.*

*The carpenter said yes. However, after some time, it was easy to see that he was not trying his best. His workmanship was not good. He used poor materials. It was sad.*

*The boss came to look at the house when the carpenter finished it. He then gave the carpenter the key to the front door.*

*"This is your house," he said, "My gift to you for so many years of good work."*

If only the carpenter had known he was building his own house, he would have done his job differently.

Based on "Meet Yourself in the Parables" by Warren W Wiersbe, I would like to summarise the comparisons between the faithful and unfaithful servants:

<b>The Faithful Servants</b> (qv. Luke 19:15-19)	<b>The Unfaithful Servant</b> (qv. Luke 19:20-26)
They knew their responsibility.	He knew his job but did not do it.
They did their job faithfully.	His heart was not right with the master.
They were rewarded for their faithfulness.	He lost his opportunity and reward.

All these can be likened to the call for us to serve and continuously look out for more opportunities to do so. To be faithful, we need to live out what we believe. Many religions advocate that good works will earn men and women their abode in heaven. I am only referring to works carried out in obedience to God's calling and in accordance to God's plan. Through our service, we do not demand to now what God has in store for us now and in the future. We can, however, trust that He will sharpen our tools and equip us for every good work.

At this juncture, may I urge you to read 2 Timothy 3.

### **Finishing Off**

May I end off on a funny note. Ryan has a classmate who could not speak Mandarin to the Chinese teacher. He told the teacher, "Because I am a Christian". The teacher replied, "I am a Christian too, so how come I teach in both languages?"

If I think more deeply, the fact is many have equated the Christian faith to the English-speaking and more educated. I do not know how this has evolved but we can assure the doubting by citing that Jesus made disciples out of fishermen, He healed the lame and blind, He stayed with a tax-collector (Zacchaeus), He comforted an adulterous woman, and the list goes on and on.

Here's my wish for you – that you have a Spirit-filled year ahead. If you find me in the spiritual doldrums along the way, do show me His way and tell me it pays.

# THE WAGES OF SIN

Sin has matured and is yielding a staggering harvest of death. Read the statistics and weep:

- *One million Americans are infected with HIV (and 110 million worldwide). Every one of these unfortunate people will die of AIDS eventually, barring the improbable development of a cure.*
- *One million new cases of pelvic inflammatory disease occur annually.*
- *1.3 million new cases of gonorrhea occur annually. New strains have developed resistance to penicillin.*
- *Syphilis is at a 40 year high, with 134,000 new infections per year.*
- *500,000 new cases of herpes occur annually. It is estimated that 16.4 percent of the U.S. population ages 15-74 is infected, totaling more than 25 million American - among certain groups, the infection rate is as high as 60 percent.*
- *The most common killer of women among the sexually transmitted diseases is not AIDS, as is widely believed. It is the human papilloma virus (HPV), which can cause cancer of the cervix. 6,000 women die of this disease each year in the United States. 24 million American women are now infected with HPV.*
- *One and a half million unborn babies are aborted each year.*
- *Up to 20 percent of brides are pregnant at the altar.*
- *The divorce rate in America is the highest in the civilized world.*

Extracted from "When God Doesn't Make Sense" by Dr James Dobson

August  
23

## T-Shirt Day

(Read Matthew 26:69-75)

Jenny and her family were spending vacation at Mountain View Bible Camp, and Jenny was having a wonderful time. "Can I please buy a camp T-shirt?" she begged one day. "Everyone else has one."

Mother agreed, and Jenny promptly put the shirt on. On the front was a picture of the chapel with the words "Proclaiming his Word to the World." On the back it said "Mountain View Bible Camp." Jenny wore the shirt regularly, proud to be a part of the group.

Back home, Jenny stuffed the shirt in a drawer and forgot about it. Mother didn't forget, though. From time to time she suggested that Jenny wear it, but Jenny always refused. "I like it," she insisted, "but it just wouldn't look right here."

One Friday was declared T-Shirt Day at school. Again Jenny begged for a new shirt. "Not this time," Mother replied. "Wear your camp shirt. It's almost new." "I can't wear that," protested Jenny. "It wouldn't look right. Everyone else will wear shirts with cute sayings on them, or they'll be from exciting places."

"Wasn't camp exciting?" asked Mother. "You loved your shirt before." Jenny bit her lip. "It was different at camp," she said.

"Yes, it was," Mother admitted. "It was comfortable to be identified as a Christian then, because others shared your faith."

Jenny bristled. "Are you saying I'm ashamed now to let others see I'm a Christian?"

"Are you?" asked Mother softly.

Jenny thought about it. "I guess maybe I have been," she confessed. "I'll wear my camp shirt to school after all. Maybe I can interest my friends in attending Bible camp in the summer."

"Good," Mother said. "Then you'll be proclaiming God's Word, just like your shirt says!" J.H.



### HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do your friends and teachers know you're a Christian? Do you pray before you eat, witness when you can, and speak up for your faith in the classroom? Don't be ashamed of Jesus. Others need to know him, too.

### MEMORIZE:

"So you must never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for Christ."  
2 Timothy 1:8

A good devotional book for young girls. I read these stories to my daughter on most nights.

**Martin Cheah**



Don't Be Ashamed  
of Jesus