

The Vine

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Editor's Views

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. When Mr Chong Ser Choon spoke about the lost, self-righteous elder son, did you notice me nodding in agreement. Yes, I must admit that at times my editorial seem to be hitting out at my “younger” brothers who have left me to “slave in the fields”. A better comparison would be Mary and Martha, where Martha said, “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

Did you realize that if 120 people give \$30 per month extra for 4 months, we would just about achieve our budget income? Every little bit counts. Even the CPF retuning will help us a small bit.

The Treasurer is glad to announce that we achieved a surplus in July. Considering these hard times, it must indeed be a sacrifice on your part out of love for the Lord. Never for a moment think that you are giving for any other purpose other than unto the Lord who gave us His all on the cross.

Many of you have asked me if I know the Finance Manager who is alleged to have committed fraud to a tune of \$130 million. Well, I have met him and said “Hello” over the last four years but not much more. So I can't really claim to have known him in many sense of the word. Because I knew him so little, I would not venture to say that he could or could not have done this crime. However, his exploits seem to have given his image a surreal appeal of someone who is very clever. In fact, too clever for his own good. In the Bible, Jesus also commends such a “clever” manager – see Luke 16.

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Are we asked to emulate him? Certainly not! If you read carefully Luke 16:11, we are warned that if we are not trustworthy with worldly wealth, God will not give us real riches.

Therefore I say to you:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

*"Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you."*

Heb 13:5

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Martin Cheah



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Dear co-workers, brothers and sisters in Christ

A depressing economy, poor business climate, rising unemployment and a 3% CPF cut – even Christians are not spared the knocks as gloomy clouds envelope the sky.

Exodus 14:21 says, "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided." When the Israelites were in a fix with no way forward while being pursued by soldiers from behind, God was able to make a way out for them by driving back the sea waters to create a dry path. It was not just way out for the Israelites, but a means for their survival. God does not work only in the day, but can also perform miracles in the darkness of night when people cannot see, touch or feel anything.

When the outlook is not bright and we face uncertainties as though all hope is gone, remember that God can work "in the night" so that when day breaks, we can see a path laid out right in front of our eyes for us to move on. Maybe we cannot see it now, but we must have faith. God is already busily working in the "darkness" of our life. Dry land will appear soon.

On-Line Study On Christian Spirituality



This on-line course is provided by Australia's Luther's Seminary and is managed by Dr Victor Pfitzner. He recommended it to our co-workers when he paid us a visit on 7th of July. At present, the course material has not yet been translated into Chinese. Our pastors will introduce the course to church members who know English well.

Federation Of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Malaysia & Singapore

The Federation was formed in 1977. Its members include The Lutheran Church in Malaysia & Singapore, The Basel Christian Church of Malaysia, The Protestant Church in Sabah, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia and The Lutheran Church in Singapore formed in 2001. The object of the Federation is to promote mutual friendship among members and collaboration in certain ministries. At the conference held in Kuala Lumpur on 8th July, Bishop Gideon Chang was elected as the Federation's Chairman while Bishop John Tan was elected as the Federation's Secretary.

The Lutheran World Federation – 10th Assembly

The LWF held its 10th Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada, from July 21st – 31st this year. There were about 700 official delegates and 100-plus other participants and staff workers. The theme of this meeting, which takes place once every six years, was: "For The Healing Of The World". Bishop Mark S. Hansen from The ELCA was elected as the LWF President. Bishop John Tan and Ms Joanne Lee Yi Ting represented the LCS at the Assembly.

6th LCS Consultation Meeting

The 6th LCS Consultation Meeting with partner Churches (The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria and The Lutheran Church of Australia) was held from 25th – 26th August. Participants included Rev. Barbara Lund (the Program Director for East Asia of Division for Global Mission, ELCA), Rev. Dr. Peter Shen (the Regional Representative for East Asia, Division for Global Mission, ELCA), Rev. Dr. Traugott Farnbacher (the Asia Secretary of Division for World Mission, ELCA) and Rev. Wayne Zweck (Director, the Board for Church Cooperation in World Mission, LCA). We gave these new representatives an introduction to the LCS ministries and needs. The meeting was a big success.



Lutheran Church in Malaysia & Singapore (LCMS) - 27th Biennial Convention cum 50th Anniversary

Held from August 29th – 31st at Petaling Jaya's Amara Hotel. Bishop John Tan, Rev. William Chang and Rev. Lu Guan Hoe attended the Convention as guest participants.

Commissioning Service

Commissioning service for Ms. Rosanna Hutagalung as LCS missionary will be held at Bedok Lutheran Church on 14th September. Ms Rosanna graduated from Singapore Bible College and has been involved in Thai ministry. She will be assigned to serve with The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand.

Co-Workers' Activities

Rev. Tan Juak How of Yishun Christian Church (Lutheran) Chinese Section was diagnosed with stomach cancer. He has undergone surgery to excise ? of the affected region and will be receiving chemo and radiation therapies. Please pray for his recovery.

Rev. Lee Tian Keong from The Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer (Chinese Section) flew to Hong Kong's Lutheran Theological Seminary on 24th August to do a one-year course. Please remember him in your prayers.



Congratulations to Rev. & Mrs. Haraneath Singh of The Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer (English Section) on the occasion of the birth of their daughter on 26th August.

Rev. Werner Strauss of the International Lutheran Seafarers' Mission went to Hong Kong on 2nd – 7th September to attend a training course for seafarer ministry workers.

Concert



Rev. Johannes M. Roth from The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria will be with us from 18th – 21st September on a concert tour of our Lutheran congregations. Rev. Roth is a multi-talented pastor. He can sing, play musical instruments, as well as compose music and songs. Your presence at the concert is most welcome.

Rev. David Cheah and Rev. Chung Tze Lu went to China on 8th September on a special assignment.

Bishop John Tan and five other leaders of churches in Singapore received an invitation from China's State Administration for Religious Affairs. They will be visiting China from 22nd – 29th September.

Rev. William Chang will be in Australia from 24th September – 9th October to do a part of the PhD course at the Luther Seminary, Adelaide.

Reformation Day Service

This year's Reformation Day Service will be held at Yishun Christian Church (Lutheran) on 31st October. Bishop Robert Solomon from The Methodist Church in Singapore will speak on the theme "Affirming Christ Centeredness In The Church Ministry Today". Please give your full support with your attendance.

**Bishop's Office
Lutheran Church In Singapore
September 2003**

Jurong Christian Church and its Pastors over 36 years of history

(Part III – final)

1998 onwards

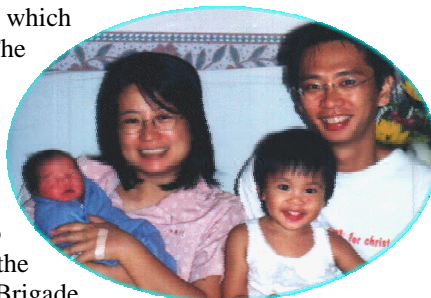
Martin Yee accepted Christ back in 1977 after hearing some FEBC Christian Radio broadcast from Philippines. But before that he used to attend Scripture Union Fellowship in a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia). He received his calling to full time ministry in 1993, entered SBC that year and graduated in 1997 and after that right away joined the church until today. The greatest milestone in his ministry was in the year 2002 when the church became energized and united to grow together culminating in an Easter Outreach and the commencement of the Youth Service in 2003. He came to Singapore in 1983 and is married in 1985 to Betsy Cheong. They have two children.



Michael Christian, a youth who grew up with the church also entered SBC in 1993 together with Martin Yee, but graduated in 1996 with a diploma. He joined the pastoral staff right after graduation and was mainly involved in mission work. Subsequently, Michael Christian undertook another year of study in SBC before he obtained a degree in theology. He resigned in late 2001 to become a full-time missionary. Together with his wife, Sintha Simbolan, they now serve in the orphanages in Nias, an island off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia.



Anthony Loh grew up in a small town, Kampar which is a 45-min drive from Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. The birth of this town was highly shaped by tin mining businesses. His parents were non-believers and he was brought to church by an aunt at a very young age. The first Christmas caught his heart, and triggered the spark to attend church. It was there that he began to grow in the Lord. The youth ministry (namely the Methodist Youth Fellowship) and the Boys' Brigade (BB) ministry were stepping stones whereby he could serve God actively and there he was also being trained as a servant leader.



By the time he reached 15, he was ready to give his life to Jesus. Those five solid years of serving in the youth and BB ministries, played a vital role in changing his life. In October of 1989, he started working in Singapore, thereby landing on JCC, his first church here.

Despite his hectic working schedule, he began to serve God in the youth ministry, and eventually enrolled in SBC in 1993, together with Martin Yee and Michael Christian. It was a fruitful time for him, learning under many good and humble lecturers throughout the four-year study. He graduated in 1997 with a degree in theology. In 1998, he married Chen Meiling, who hailed from Taiwan. Their heart for mission had led them to serving in the Campus Crusade for Christ; Anthony Loh serving as a crusade staff for 4 years and doing ministry in the National University of Singapore. Godly leaders and endless prayer movements were the two out of many legacies that impacted him most while in the crusade ministry. Then in 2002, Anthony Loh once again took up the challenge to serve as the youth pastor of JCC.

In March of 2003, the church once again took a bold step in renovating its void deck and turning it into a multi-purpose hall. On 27 April 2003, the hall was dedicated and the following month, both the youth English Service and the second Chinese Service moved into the premises. More than \$200,000-00 was raised from both the Chinese and English congregations and the Kindergarten.

The Chinese pastors from 1980 onwards

Over at the Chinese congregation, an Indonesian-born Chinese, **Chen Tian Nan** was appointed the pastor of the Chinese congregation on 1 Sep 1980. Chen was born in Sulawesi, Celebes. The eldest child with 7 sisters, he was brought up in a traditional Buddhist family in the port of Semarang, on the east coast of Java. He had served as a pastor in Indonesia for 13 years and had just completed his Master of Ministry degree at Trinity Theology College (TTC), Singapore when he was employed by the LCMS. In September 1981, Chen was granted the license to administer the holy sacraments, and his ordination was officially recognized in convention in 1985. On 1 March 1986, he was reassigned as pastor of the Chinese congregation of Queenstown Lutheran Church.



John Tan accepted Christ as his personal Savior on 15 April 1967. He was baptized on 8 December 1968. He was brought up in church since very young, and attended nursery class in Sunday School even before he went to primary school. He was converted in a revival meeting when the preacher spoke on 'Born Again' message.

He received God's calling in 1970, and went for his theological study in 1971. He married Jean Lin Sheh Ching

on 6 June 1975. Jean took up courses such as vocal, conducting and Bible in the SBC for two years. In the box, John Tan narrates the three milestones in his Christian ministry:

First Milestone (1981 – 1982)

In 1981, I went to America to study for my Masters at the seminary of a Christian university. My wife accompanied me there and we had between us only US\$6 000. We received no financial support from anybody. Our situation was like that of OT Prophet Elijah who gazed daily at the brook in Kerith that was gradually drying up because there was no rain in the land. God provided Elijah with water from the brook to drink, ordered the ravens to fetch him bread and meat and, with a handful of flour and a little oil from a widow, helped him to survive three and a half years of severe famine. (1 Kings 17:1-15) During the time my wife and I were in America, God miraculously provided for all our needs. Firstly, I succeeded in my application for a 50% discount in the fees for all subjects. Then I was able to find work in the campus to earn some income. At that time, we shifted our lodging twice – from an expensive rented apartment to a cheaper hostel facility, and then to the home of a Christian couple for which we only had to pay a token sum for utilities. In view of space constraint, I am only able to recount briefly the above facts. On my graduation day, I felt as though I was in a dream. This experience of studying in America boosted my confidence in the Lord, and I was gripped by the reality that God is indeed Jehovah Jireh, our Provider.

Second Milestone (1986 – 1997)

I was transferred from Johor Baru Lutheran Church to Singapore to be the pastor of the Jurong Christian Church Chinese Section. This was a new challenge – new environment, new comrades and new ministry. I served in JCC for twelve years. In that period, I witnessed four postings of pastors in the English Section and also major renovations to the worship hall upstairs, two pastoral residences, the office and Kindergarten rooms. Recalling the twelve years, apart from the plentiful learning and experience gained, I have also formed deep camaraderie with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. I realize that members of both the Chinese and English congregations in JCC are a bunch of warm, friendly, kind-hearted and affectionate brothers and sisters worthy of me to devote my golden years in their midst. It will be my life's great reminiscence.

Third Milestone (1998 -)

The Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS) was officially inaugurated on 30th October 1997 and I was chosen as its first bishop. With this new appointment, a fresh set of responsibilities was placed on my shoulder and I could sense a new mission call. In everything, the start is always difficult. Coupled with limited resources, we are in the process of developing the LCS ministry step by step. We need the prayers and support of brothers and sisters in Christ, to build a house that bears the name of the Lord. This is indeed LCS' vision and goal.

Bishop John Tan

With John Tan's new appointment as Bishop, he had to leave the Chinese congregation to **Peter Chong** in 1998. Peter Chong served for a year before he returned to serve among Chinese-speaking seafarers (usually fisherfolks from China) who come into port.



How Chin Yong succeeded Peter Chong in April 1999. How accepted the Lord in June 1980 at a gospel rally. The Holy Spirit worked through the message of the speaker and brought him to conversion. After a year into his conversion, he received the Lord's calling to serve Him full-time. After his graduation from SBC and having served in other churches for five years, he was assigned to the Chinese congregation in 1999. He married Grace Lee Siew Mee on 12 July 1997.

They have 3 children. Although Grace is not theologically trained and working in a non-Christian organization, she is very supportive of his ministry.

In June 2000, **Lee Ka Heng** was appointed as a pastor to assist How with the Chinese congregation. Lee grew up in a Christian family and attended Sunday School regularly since young. Although he knew about God, he only received Christ when he was 12 years old, when one night he was convicted by the Holy Spirit of his sin and accepted Christ as his Savior and Lord of his life.



He hailed from Malaysia and came to Singapore in 1989. He enrolled in SBC in 1996 to study theology and graduated in May 2000. The following month, he was appointed to JCC.

Find Them Faithful

Through my research for the materials on the history of JCC and its pastors, I have been reminded of the words from a song by Steve Green that we are like pilgrims on the journey along a narrow road. Those who have gone before us (our past pastors and members) line the way, cheering us on and encouraging us when we are weary. Their lives were a stirring testament in God's sustaining grace. Let us run the race not only for the prize but as those who have gone before us and also let us leave to those behind us the heritage of faithfulness passed on through godly lives.

It is therefore my prayer that those who come behind us find us faithful too, and may the lives that we live inspire them to obey our Faithful God.

Lau Se Ping

P.S. The writer would like to acknowledge with thanks the following:

(i) Warren Lau, whose book "A Heavenly Vision" provided useful reference information.

(ii) Bishop John Tan, Rev Ralph Kusserow, Edmund Lim, Frederic Lee and Martin Yee, and Pastors Anthony Loh, How Chin Yong and Lee Ka Heng for their kind inputs.

SHARING OUR MONIES AND GIFTEDNESS part 2

Pledges and Tithing

A government cannot function without taxes. If every citizen does not pay tax, there can't be a functioning society to start with because no funds are available to do anything. Then, every citizen can put to rest any idea of wanting the benefits of a well-run country. Unless the church decides to launch commercial enterprises to obtain funds first and then run the church business the way it is supposed to be, the church must depend on the sacred financial stewardship and generosity of members to produce the operating funds with which to build up the spiritual ministries for the benefit of members. If members' resources are only privately held and consumed, then let members forsake the expectation that the church leaders can run the church the way they would want it – spiritually, efficiently but not commercially. God forbids that the church loses its validity by becoming a commercial operation! Members of the church cannot have their cake and eat it!

According to my understanding, tithing and pledging are not synonymous with ad hoc giving as we may be motivated by love to make. [We can say that ad hoc giving, regular tithing and specific pledging are all voluntary](#) because no one, not even God, will grab you by the neck with a demand. I have not come across any church that mandates compulsory financial or service contributions by members. [Yet, on another plane, we can say that they are obligatory by](#)

[virtue of the fact that as Christians, we have all already made “the good confession in the presence of many witnesses,” \(1 Tim. 6:12\) which is a pledge of commitment to God, which entails helping to build the church.](#) In this regard, when Christians flagrantly reserve all personal resources (of each and every kind) for private holding and consumption, how can they logically claim to be fulfilling their commitment when the church totters for lack of operating ability? Understandably, we may fall short in our performance from time to time. There is none without weakness in the Church. But falling and rising up again and making the effort to do better continually is certainly much more satisfactory for our Christian testimony than a completely cannot-be-bothered or cannot-spare-a-penny attitude towards helping the Church.

Some Christians are fearful of pledging because they do not know that they have a choice between an absolute pledge (based on an unwavering spiritual resolve and a conviction of their ability to fulfill the pledge, with a level of personal sacrifices if required) and a qualified pledge (e.g. “if I am not retrenched from my job and so continues to have the income”). Whether absolute or qualified, pledging pinpoints our intention and following the pledge with earnest prayers for God's help in its fulfillment is indicative of our spiritual maturity to trust God for all things and not in our own abilities alone.

Some Christians are also reluctant to pledge openly because they are simply humble or they are influenced by their interpretation of **Matt. 6:3** as an instruction to do their charity (meeting needs) quietly in the background; so they choose to give their contributions undisclosed. Still, there may be those who are hesitant about making known their intended contribution amounts for fear of embarrassment should they find themselves short in fulfillment or for other reasons. No matter what, a pledge is ultimately between a church member and the Lord, not between one and his church leaders. Whether one gives openly or without anyone knowing, wholly or partly either way, it is up to him. God knows and will bless the individual for his faithfulness, not according to the amount but according to the legitimacy of the link between the pledge and the heart or spiritual resolve.

However, ad hoc giving and a pledge made in silent prayer to God are two different things. While scripturally, there is no need for church leaders to know the silent pledge, they do have an interest to know a prospective income figure as they exercise their responsible stewardship in budget and programme planning. It is therefore understandable why we may frequently hear calls from our leaders to offer our pledges. Such calls are invariably pitched not as orders from the top for us to fulfill against our will, but as appeals to our righteousness to consider our Christian duty to be the financial

pillars of the church (trusting in God's help) with the hope that as the church grows in strength, the advantage will ultimately be ours to share as we have shared in the support. On this point, **Heb. 13:17** is instructive:

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

A pledge can be for anything other than for the regular tithing. While, as mentioned above, an open pledge may be helpful to church leaders in planning ahead, such expediency should not be the primary motivating factor for one to make a pledge. A Christian's decision to pledge should be spiritually conditioned first by his fidelity and trust in God's enabling, whereby with such conditioning he declares to God, “Here, this is my pledge, with thanksgiving for blessings enabling me so to make this pledge ...” and then he may say, “I pray that with God's guidance, the church leaders may make good use of their knowledge of this pledge for good purpose in forward planning for the work of this church ...” One may pledge to offer a monthly tithe. Without the pledge, tithing is still a faith giving for a Christian to seriously consider offering up to God and so one may not say, “I did not pledge, so I don't have to tithe.” Neither should one say, “I pledged \$x according to my ability, and so I am

committed to that and not a cent more even though my financial ability has improved.” In a nutshell, **whether or not a Christian pledges or tithes, he is bound by his heart of love for the church and his spiritual attentiveness to the “good confession” (1 Tim. 6:12) to do his part to make possible the building of the church.** As an encouragement for your generosity, and not a command, Paul offers a reference Macedonian model of Christian stewardship in **2 Cor. 8:1-9:15**. Here I outline some salient points disclosed in the model:

- ❑ Despite the most severe trial and extreme poverty, the Christians gave with overflowing joy and rich generosity. (v. 2)
- ❑ Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded for the privilege to give. (v. 4)
- ❑ They gave themselves first to the Lord. (v. 5)
- ❑ Giving is by the grace of God (v.1) and one is encouraged to excel in this grace of giving. (v.7)
- ❑ **No command to give, but a test of the sincerity of love (v. 8)**
- ❑ Know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (v. 9)
- ❑ Giving with willingness (v. 12)

- ❑ Giving not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. **At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality. (vv. 13-15)**

Money does not accompany people to heaven. Even in this world, the limits of money in giving us pleasure can be seen easily when, no matter how much increase of it we come to, we never seem to have enough. **The Macedonian Christians did not let their most severe trial and extreme poverty burden their giving.** Rev. John Tan shared that during the 1997 economic crisis, his church’s collection from tithes went up instead of down. Contrast this with Christians who let “the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.” (Mk 4:19) In today’s context, we may also come across some high-earners who incessantly complain about the lousy economy sinking them into financial straits (curbing their ability to give) and their relatively poorer neighbours who comfortably make do with the falling prices of goods and services. So, it seems that to poorer folks, economic recession has a positive side too in bringing goods and services within their financial reach when once only the well heeled could afford. And without the burden of high liabilities brought forward from unholy excesses during the time when economic hopes soared sky-high, the poor now have more to offer up to God after meeting

their humble needs. Is the world turning upside down that the rich become poor and the poor become rich? There is no straightforward answer.

I believe that while human eyes see chaos, there is order in the way God's will unfolds. Mathematicians propound Chaos Theory too to explain the hidden orderliness of phenomena that are ordinarily observed to be random and unreasonable. So there is logic that offerings to God may go up when human thoughts seem to point the opposite way. While one may observe myriad differences in individual attitudes and actions, and there is no single specific formula for any individual to manage his/her stewardship of resources (including both money and giftedness for service), the church as a body with a collective will can successfully push forward its agenda no matter what wind blows. It is possible if people who are called Christians have the faith to submit to God's invisible guiding hand.

In Conclusion

Consider the positive multiplier effect if our wealth, instead of being in perishable paper accounts, is converted to practical use to save lives. Consider the blessings to the Church if our giftedness for service, instead of being left idle to be lost with time, is applied to energize our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who will in their turn further their service by our example. If, on the

contrary, most of our resources (monies in moneybags and service potential not converted to energy in action) are just laid up in some hidden place, and we have would-be economic producers dying of hunger or losing their ability to do good work, will we stand to gain anything from the productivity loss that, were it not lost, would have flowed back to us in the sharing process? **Let us not be contradictory with unsparing demands and tightfisted giving.** "To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away." (Matt. 25:29 NLT) So, as we seek to revitalize our church with the wise appropriation of our 'talents' in all senses of the word, personal economic growth may just be the bonus added to our spiritual gain by God's grace.

As we contemplate our offering to God (in both money and service), let us be wise to the fact that we are not compelled; because any giving that is forced out of us gives us little in satisfaction and God sees little worth in it. On the other hand, giving even a copper coin **out of free will and out of a sense of commitment to God's purpose** carries with it the miraculous multiplying effect of God's power to meet the needs of the multitude and allow us the pleasure of an uplifting sense of contentment.

John Lee †

The Vine is published monthly. If you have missed any issue, you may provide your email address to receive a copy of eVine. If you have contributions, feedback or questions, you may contact: mart5003@hotmail.com (Martin Cheah) jpbislee@starhub.net.sg (John Lee)

Every month, you may pick up more than one copy if needed. If not needed, please stick to one copy to share between family members to help save the trees. ☺

LANTERN OUTREACH



I pondered the question of Immortality on the verdant field of Lower Pierce Reservoir after joining JCC in three full busloads to get there for the Mid-Autumn Festival outing on 6th September. It was heartening to see many people of all age groups (from the very young to the very senior) gathering as one big family for fellowship under the moonlight.

The green surroundings with plentiful water certainly testify as the handiwork of the Creator and draw one's heart and mind closer to the Maker of Heaven and Earth – and Maker of the Moon, too! I saw myself being brought back to nature to re-live my childhood by playing the slide with my two little girls on the grassy slope. It was such good fun – free and enjoyable.

Our singing sensation, Peter Cheong, did not disappoint as he led the singalong with the fabulous song “Believing in Jesus is *chin chia ho*” rendered in Hokkien and Cantonese, with music accompaniment provided by the famous father-and-son team from the family of James. It was not just a time for bonding, but also an opportunity to exercise our resourcefulness in fashioning scarecrows out of the things and humans we could lay hands on around the reservoir. Those who did not take part in ‘creating’ scarecrows out of nature’s provisions also benefited from their learning adventure of picking up snails, ants, seeds, fruits, pebbles, etc. – living and non-living things, we had both covered.



“Food, food ... where’s the food to fill my hungry tummy?” Before food for the tummy, Rev. Yee provided the spiritual manna for the soul. In Chinese mythology, one of the stories told was that Chang-er was banished to the moon for snatching the pill of immortality from General Hou-yi of the Imperial Guard. The Good News for us Christians is that we do not need the pill of immortality from General Hou-yi – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16)

As we sipped our cups of Chinese tea and enjoyed the variety of mooncakes, I pondered the question: “Should people just dream of immortality with a pill with no fulfillment forever or should they not wise up to grab the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ, the Lord?”



Tony Koh



Making a Jesus Lantern and using it to witness salvation



Enlarge and draw (freehand) a "negative" design of Jesus on a pumpkin. (* The negative graphic available below. If you can't draw it freehand, you can tape the illustration to the pumpkin, and poke holes through the drawing onto the pumpkin with an ice pick as a guide to 'trace' the design.)



Then **deeply "scrape"** all of the area designated by the black, and leave the pumpkin surface, as it is, on all of the area designated by the white.

To preserve the carved area from shrinking and discoloring, rub a light coating of petroleum jelly into the carved area. Doing the same to the inside helps the pumpkin from mildewing as quickly.



Please Note:

It is important to scrape somewhat deep (but not all the way through) - at least $\frac{1}{2}$ the thickness of the rind. The flesh area is more striking if the Jesus-O-Lantern is illuminated with a light bulb instead of a candle. Unless the carved out area is very thin, a candle does not give off the intense light needed for this display.



When the "Jesus O Lantern" is lit, Jesus' face glows with flesh tones and texture!

The Story

The inside of the pumpkin represents the sin in our life.

When we ask Christ to forgive our sins, HE "cleans us out" - removes the sin.

Then as Christ changes our lives, the story suggests that we designate this by carving a happy face that shines for the entire world to see.

Others will see Jesus in us when HE lives within our hearts. Having Christ, as Savior and Lord of your life, will make a difference in the way the world sees you. (2 Corinthians 5:17) If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is passed away, behold the new is born!

Additionally, we can see the negative becoming positive. Just like the negative side of Christ dying - giving the positive side of eternal life for us.

KENYA MISSION Part 1

Dearest friends in the Lord,

Warmest greetings in the name of our risen Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. It is with excitement and a tremendous gratitude to God that I write for the first time for the Vine. I am no budding writer, nor speech maker (close friends and family can attest to this), but I pray that the Lord will help me to tell you about my trip to Kenya.



To begin, let me tell you some background. For those of you who don't know me, I am currently a 5th year medical student at the National University of Singapore. At the end of the last academic year, the faculty had allocated 8 weeks in the school curriculum for students to go on electives overseas. We were given the freedom to go anywhere in the world to do anything medically related as long as there was supervision by a medically qualified person. Popular destinations included top medical schools in the USA and UK as well as several familiar mission hospitals in third world countries – that were familiar because we have seniors who had been there and back.

My initial arrangements were to go with 2 other classmates to Mukinge Hospital in Zambia, Africa under SIM (Serving in Missions). However, those plans fell through as they did not have enough vacancies for 3 of us. Left high and dry so near (4 months) to the period of elective, I became very worried and prayed for the Lord to provide a place. My heart was heavy because applications to mission hospitals are usually required at least a year in advance. However, after some time, I got a favourable reply from one of the mission hospitals I had enquired at. My heart leapt for joy when I read the email saying that they had a vacancy for the period I had asked for, and this was only because there was a last minute cancellation! It was an answered prayer!

But there were obstacles I had not foreseen...

Tenwek Hospital had only 1 more vacancy for medical students for that stipulated period which meant that I had to go alone. I had my fears, but more than that, my parents had their concerns. Major concerns about my safety, and did not give me the permission to accept the offer. Usually, (this works in most families and a trick that I'm sure most kids know and use with great cunning) I would get my mother on my side and rope her in to help persuade my father. But this time, my mother



herself was not easily persuaded and there I was, 3 months away from the elective period with one precious offer but no permission to go.

Once again, my heart was heavy and I prayed for God to provide a way. At this time, I had my own fears and feelings of inadequacies about going so far away all on my own. I feared the loneliness, and didn't trust that I could sustain myself emotionally, academically and spiritually without all the comforts and things I was used to. And because those fears were real, I consoled myself and thought that maybe it's a good thing that my parents didn't allow me to go.

I continued to pray for God to guide, and to lead the way, and a close friend of mine, a sister-in-Christ also prayed with me. And we waited and wondered how the Lord would lead... and here's how He did.

I spent many days thinking and reading about Tenwek Hospital on the Internet. The more I read, the more I longed to go. But the fears were still there. One day, in the perfect timing of our Lord, the burdens and fears I had were lifted. I can't say how or why, but I knew. For my heart was freed from worry, and I had



PERFECT peace about going. I did not have any answers, not any idea or reassurance that it would all be ok, but one thing for sure, I knew I had no more fear. Truly, in Christ, all fear is gone! And from that moment on, I continued to pray single-mindedly for God to provide, to somehow give my parents the peace in their hearts to trust me in the Lord's good hands.

The situation continued to be a stalemate for some time. My parents showed no signs of changing their minds. My father even said after much thought that if it had been my brother, at my age, asking to do the same, he would not give the permission, what more, me, a girl. I didn't and don't blame them because I knew and understood that they were just trying to protect me. What to do? I continued to pray.

Slowly, I sensed that my mother had given her blessing, and she joined me in praying and encouraged me to pray that God would remove the other barriers and give my father the peace in his heart to give me his blessings to go.

The day came when I had to reply to Tenwek Hospital, to accept or reject their offer. And I asked my father once again, and this time, he said yes! Praise the Lord!



So that is the story of how I got to go, if you are curious as to how my parents came to agree, you can email them at nantgc@hotmail.com or as_lim@hotmail.com to ask them for their story!

So that was the beginning of my adventure in Kenya, the Lord had many lessons for me even before I went, and looking back, I see that it was a foreshadowing of the difficulties ahead, as well as how He would wonderfully and lovingly see me through.

I thank those of you who prayed for me while I was there, for those who wrote to me. It was indeed a great encouragement and your prayer support meant a lot to me. I thank you for reading thus far, I can't wait to share with you the wonderful experience I had in Kenya. After hearing me talk about Tenwek Hospital, I'm sure you're excited to find out more about it! Do stay tuned for part 2 in the next issue of the Vine!

Chui Yin

A QUESTION THAT SEEKS AN ANSWER

Is it OK for Christians to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival, eat mooncakes and light lanterns?

Different festivals have different origins and they are celebrated for different reasons. Many people celebrate festivals for the sake of keeping traditions alive without subscribing to the legends that attempt to explain the origins of the festivals and their related customs. One may enjoy eating mooncakes and look forward to the arrival of every Mid-Autumn Festival for such an opportunity, but not care a hoot about the mythology that surrounds the tradition. Folklore may add colour to conversations and give meaning to a tradition, but Christians do not endorse the superstitious elements. Taking the Mid-Autumn (Mooncake) Festival as example, we may enjoy talking about ancient beliefs and the backgrounds to cultural practices (learning a lesson on history and anthropology), but we do not attach any factual value to the myths about the moon goddess, the old man of the moon (月下老人), the association of the full moon with fertility and harvest, and such other stories that have no substantive basis for belief. It is of course acceptable as fact that there was a man who flew to the moon. He was Neil Armstrong. So the first person on the moon was an American man who flew there in a spaceship, not a beautiful fairy who flew by the magical effect of a pill. ☺

Talking about stories can be an eye-opener to truths too, even if you do not wish to accept the stories as true. Let's talk about the origin of the mooncake. A well-

known account is that the mooncake was a means used by a Han Chinese rebel leader to spread the message of an uprising against the Yuan Dynasty on the 15th night of the eighth moon. Apparently, since the rebellion was planned around the period of the Mid-Autumn Festival, it was opportune for a gift idea in the form of a round cake as a symbol of celebration and good wishes. It appeared as an honourable gesture of esteem for the Mongolian ruler that his subjects proposed the idea. Unfortunately, it was not as innocuous as the emperor thought; for it was a clever plan to spread a revolutionary message when public gatherings by the oppressed Hans were disallowed.

Whatever the acceptability of the story to you, we know that there is no other account that places the origin of the mooncake any time near the origin of the *Chang-er* (Moon Goddess) legend. So, we can reasonably accept that the practice of eating mooncakes and giving them as gifts started relatively recently (since the story of the Han rebellion dates to only about A.D. 1368, the end of the Yuan Dynasty) compared to the Moon Festival tradition that dates back thousands of years to ancient time. We can also safely conclude that there is no legend surrounding the mooncake that attaches any spiritual or superstitious significance to its origin. For those who agree with this account of history, distributing and eating mooncakes can be a celebration of the Han Chinese freedom from oppression under the Mongol invaders whom they finally kicked out of their land by an ingenious way of mobilization.

Regarding the parade of children carrying paper lanterns, there is no record of how it all started. However, it should be understandable that the carrying of lanterns at night was plainly normal activity when there was no electric light in olden days. When people celebrated the full moon then, they would likely go outdoors as children had fun with the lanterns in their hands. So with the gradual passage of time, the carrying of lanterns to watch the moon rise evolved into just a fun activity children enjoy. I remember that when I was small, I liked carrying paper lanterns which, unfortunately, tended to end up in flames. Now, we have battery-operated ones.

See how traditional activities undergo modernization, just as we have now a thousand and one varieties of mooncakes to whet our appetite rather than putting up with just a single *Han*-authentic recipe of old. From generation to generation, it is quite natural for the observance of age-old festivals to continue and for traditional activities to take on evolutionary changes. Significantly, the inherent connotations of some festivals fade off with time and the purposes of the related activities also undergo updating. The Mid-Autumn Festival is a major event celebrated by most Chinese across the world. Though not a Christian tradition, it has its importance in reminding the celebrants of their cultural roots. When we celebrate, we can at the same time educate our children on the truths and falsehoods of the traditional beliefs, the permissibility of particular practices for us as Christians, and a lesson on the promotion of friendship and goodwill within a community that share a common heritage. We can do all this without compromising our Christian faith if we do not engage in any of the worship (of the moon fairy or other false gods) and superstition as practised by some people.

John Lee

Liankup and Chinh Chiang

have been friends since



secondary school. Liankup, a Myanmar national came to Singapore at the age of 10 and was baptized just three years ago.

During Singapore Poly Campus Crusade Vision Tea, God used him to lead his buddy and fellow freshman, Chinh Chiang, to Christ. "I couldn't stop crying when Chinh Chiang said he wanted to receive Christ. I asked him three times to confirm his answer!" said Liankup. "I invited him to the Vision Tea though it was meant for Christians. I couldn't contain my joy and I have to stand up at the end to share with the entire group about the good news."

Who would not understand the unspeakable joy of Liankup who spent the past few years praying for the

friend he loves? What an example for us to not cease praying for and reaching out to our loved ones!

Pastor Anthony Loh

Good news to share

Rejoice in the Lord always, rejoice.

One of my ex-juniors Boys has accepted Christ last Thursday after attending a magic show organised by FCBC (his BB company's sponsoring church). He prayed the sinner's prayer and accepted Christ into his life.

He is one of those names that I've invited for the Easter musical, but on the concert night, he cut his fingers and his mother did not allow him to come for the event. But in God's timing, he put his trust in Christ after the magic show altar-call. He is excited and concerned for some of his good friends' salvation.

He is praying that after his exam he would try to come to our church for service as he knows some of the BB officers and Boys in JCC.

Do continue to pray for Kelvin that he will grow in Christ and be a blessing to many.

Praise the Lord and give thanks.

Pamela

Porn on your PC?

Michael switched on his computer to find an email from his friend with the subject 'check out this cool website'. Without thinking he clicked on the address which immediately threw up a picture of a naked woman in a very suggestive pose.

He realised immediately that his friend had sent him the address of one of those pornographic sites that he had been warned about. He was torn - half of him wanted to shut down the computer - the other half found the picture very stimulating and wanted to explore the site further.

In that moment of hesitation - the picture was automatically replaced by another equally obscene one. And so this continued - picture after picture kept coming up on his computer screen - and all Michael could do was just sit back and allow the filthy images to burn themselves into his memory bank.

Once he made a brave attempt to try and close the website - but nothing happened- the pictures kept coming. The only way to shut down the computer was to switch off the power supply.

Pornography is addictive. Even one exposure to it can lead to the formation of a habit - that even adults find difficult to control. Sex is a beautiful gift of God and was meant to be enjoyed in the context of marriage. The addiction to pornography and the

accompanying habit of masturbation corrupt the beauty of that gift.

If you are already caught in this habit - make every effort to break it. Keep asking God for forgiveness and the strength to resist the next time. If you come across such a site by accident - switch off your computer at the mains immediately.

Do yourself a big favour and move your computer out of your bedroom into a public place in your home -like the living room. Pay for a programme that will automatically filter many of these sites. I use www.cybersitter.com for my own protection. Never be ashamed to admit your addiction to pornography and ask for help.

There are many wonderful sites on the net. But there are also many really harmful ones as well. Surf wisely.

Rev (Dr) Horman Wong
Brigade Chaplain



Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink (Matt 25:41-42)



Pictures like this one should stir our hearts with compassion. If it doesn't, think about the verse above. Have our hearts grown cold and callous?



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#02-06 Guilin Building
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2 Tah Ching Road
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Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for your gift of \$167/- to GMB. We enclose herewith our receipt for the gift.

On 25 July, we brought 9 persons to an encounter meeting. At the end of the teaching the pastors baptized the handicapped people. Rejoice with us that besides Siew King Hon, Chong Yoke Sin and Chong Ah Swee from our group were also baptized.

34 blind persons have signed up for our camp which will be on 25th through 27th August. Please **pray for the Lord's anointing** upon our speakers, Pastor James Lim and Pastor Clement Chia to minister effectively at our camp. Please also pray for those who had been coming for our fellowship meeting, but had not yet fully committed their lives to the Lord, that they will make a response at the camp to publicly receive the Lord Jesus into their lives. They are Mr Tang Yee Loo, Mdm Quah Tee and Mr Go Teck Yong.

Please pray for our urgent need for part-time drivers and also for voluntary drivers with their own vehicles to ferry blind people to our activities.

Thank you for your partnership in the Lord's service. May He reward and bless you.

George Lee

On behalf of GMB
22 Aug 2003



Teck Yong

Pray that the Holy Spirit will open their spiritual eyes to behold Jesus.

Dear praying friends,

“The Lord said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’” 2 Cor. 12:9

Much had happened since the last prayer letter and through it all – God is faithful. His grace is indeed sufficient. In my weakness God manifested his power and grace.

1. In the Dan Khun Thot project of Sikhiu Church, the land between the project site and the college was repossessed by the government for the construction of a hospital. We had been offered more than double the price for our small piece of land. We are considering selling it to buy the land next to the church.
2. Sikhiu Church has agreed to host the ELCT's Women's camp scheduled for 8-10 October 2003. We are busy in preparation. We pray that the camp be a blessing to the Women that come.
3. The blue-print for the church building has been approved. It consist of a single storey 8m x 16m sanctuary as well as a two storey building that consist of one office, one office, one multi-purpose hall, one canteen/multi-purpose hall and 4 toilets. The QS estimate for the project is 1.47 million baths (S\$65,000). We now have 380,000 baht (including the 320,000baht from Bedok Lutheran Church). Please pray that the Lord will provide for this need.
4. Terry has been unanimously nominated by pastors and evangelists of the 3rd Zone to be their spiritual mentor. Please pray for spiritual wisdom.
5. Terry, together with Bishop Visanukorn and Rev. Suk (Director of LITE) has been appointed to prepare Evangelist Subin for ordination. This includes a pre-ordination training and an ordination examination.
6. The Lutheran Institute of Theological Education has invited a team from the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer to conduct a workshop in Tambourine and Liturgical Dance from 22 November – 1 December 2003.

7. LCS will be sending a Youth team to visit the ministry in Thailand. Pray for Terry as he makes plans and co-ordinate that the trip will bless both the youths and the Thais.
8. Terry is now co-ordinating for another English Teachers' Training in Udon this December.
9. By invitation and entrusted by the Executive Council of the Church, Terry is also now exploring the possibility of starting a new Preaching Place in Bueng Khong Long (800km from Bangkok). Terry now visit and preach there once a month as an extension of his ministry to Nong Han (600Km from Bangkok). The response of the people had been very positive.
10. In addition to the above, Terry is also involved in the re-design of the sanctuary for LITE and other ministries. Through it all, it is possible only by God's grace and for which we are both thankful.

Prayer points:

1. Continue to pray for God's protection in our ministry: spiritually against the devil's attack and physically in our travels.
2. Pray that members of the church would continue to grow in love towards God and one another, faithful in worship, diligent in the study of God's Word and active in the sharing of God's love through proclamation and service.
3. Pray that the land and other resources of the church be well used for the glory of God and the well being of His people.
4. Pray for God's provision for the Building project of Nong Han Church where Terry is also the pastor.

May God continue to bless all of you richly according to His wonderful grace.

Yours in Christ's love,

Terry and Sally Kee

WHY GOD CREATED TEACHERS.

When God created teachers
He gave us special friends
To help us understand His world
And truly comprehend
The beauty and the wonder
Of everything we see,

And become a better person
With each discovery.

When God created teachers,
He gave us special guides
To show us ways in which to grow
So we can all decide
How to live and how to do
What's right instead of wrong,
To lead us so that we can lead
And learn how to be strong.

Why God created teachers,
In His wisdom and His grace,
Was to help us learn to make our world
A better, wiser place



*A Teachers' Day tribute recited
word perfect by Timothy Leong.*

*Then the children distributed gifts to
all their Sunday School teachers.*

HAPPY & BLESSED

TEACHERS' DAY

TO ALL TEACHERS



The Big Walk was an experience. I do not know whether it was my first, because I could not recall when I ever did such a walk in my younger days.

As it was, thanks to God, my legs could support me for over 10 km - including the pre-Walk walking and post-Walk walking to and away from the stadium. I could not have imagined myself walking if not for the company of my wife, son and my wife's colleagues. It leads me to wonder whether the big

extended JCC family or the smaller family units (the Care Groups) or our youths can form teams to join in the Big Walk next year for a walking fellowship and to Walk the Talk with the following message on the back of T-shirts.



Walking is itself not a problem, especially for our energetic youths. I have been told that some of our members have experience in Prayer Walk too. However, the Big Walk is essentially a healthy national walking exercise that comes by only once a year. Our participation will also be a way to signify our support and encouragement for our members to engage in a healthy national pursuit as a body, and attest to the fact that JCC is a big, healthy and energetic family. ☺

John Lee

Youth @ Work

Over two Sundays the youths worked, I am quite sure beyond their parent's expectations, and raised more than \$1000 towards the funding of the Youth Camp at the end of this year.

It is encouraging to know that our youths feel the need to be responsible for raising funds to subsidize non-Christian friends to join the Youth Camp.

Indeed, they are growing up before our very eyes.



Their first project was car washing and polishing. Never have I seen so many people attending to one car, cleaning every single nook and cranny. It was a very good attempt by youths who probably never cleaned a car before.

A few weeks later they followed up with an after service lunch sale. Preparing the food the day before, the eager youths were selling their wares to the hungry adults. Within a short time everything was sold out.

I am glad that they are doing all this for the sake of the expansion of God's kingdom on earth.

