

The Vine

For internal circulation only

January 2004

Vol. 1/2004

What's Inside...

1. Report and pictures of the Christmas Outreach program
2. More about Outreach by John Lee

Editor's Views

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. A new year has dawned upon us. Even as the last Christmas lights were taken down, there was a flurry of activity to redecorate the streets of Chinatown with lights to usher in the year of the Monkey. Things are moving very swiftly and before you know it the world has passed us by. Are you concerned that JCC is way behind? Do you think to yourselves, why can't we be relevant? Do you sometimes put the blame on the leaders?

Sometimes, it is easier to blame the leaders than to look at our support for them. How many times have we turned up for prayer meetings, or cell group meetings, or Bible classes, or serve in one of the many ministries? Can we blame anyone if we ourselves do not make an effort to grow? The leaders can try their best to help us attain maturity but most of the effort must come from ourselves. Like parents who provide all the necessary books, tuition and encouragement, ultimately, the child himself must make an effort to study. It is true that a good school will make a difference but not if the child does not make any effort.

The better half of last year was spent on helping us to grow in maturity. This year, we want to focus on outreach. Some of us may feel that we have not yet matured therefore we cannot consider outreach at this moment. Surprisingly, many

Christian experts have come to the conclusion that when one first becomes a Christian that is when one is the hottest for Christ. After some time, the fervor cools down. It is like having a new car. At the beginning we will like to drive it even though we have not got used to all the gadgets and gizmos in the car. After we have got too familiar with the car, we tend to drive it less often or with less excitement. Even so, there will never come a time when the whole church is at the same level of maturity. There will always be children, young men and fathers. So whichever level you are, let us all focus on outreach.

Why do we want to do outreach? If Jesus did not specifically command it, it would be optional. However He said it in Matthew 28:19, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*

So JCC has planned a retreat in June called "Spiritual Delight" to build up our Christian lives and come December, we have a grand scale Christmas Outreach in the pipeline. However, all these plans need one important ingredient - You! Will you be there for JCC?

Happy New Year and may God grant us His blessing and guidance for His service.

Martin Cheah

Have You Considered The Vine in Your New Year Resolution?

Happy New Year to You. Is this a year of New Beginnings for you? This is a leap year. Why don't you take a leap of faith? Perhaps 2004 can also be a new beginning for The Vine if we can add fresh faces to the Vine Team. This will depend a lot on you. Are you game to be one of the fresh faces? Have you made your service pledge? Have you cast your New Year resolutions? If so, you don't have to remove them. You can simply add on a little to what you have already for service sake and for Christ's sake.

Well, I am glad that many enjoy reading The Vine and I hope that The Vine does bring to these people blessings from God. To those who do not yet enjoy The Vine, don't give up. The Vine Team continues to do its best with the help of fellow members of God's community. You can offer constructive suggestions; pray for health, energy and skill of the Vine Team members; pray for God to send forth labourers to the harvest and do whatever else that you deem profitable to The Vine ministry.

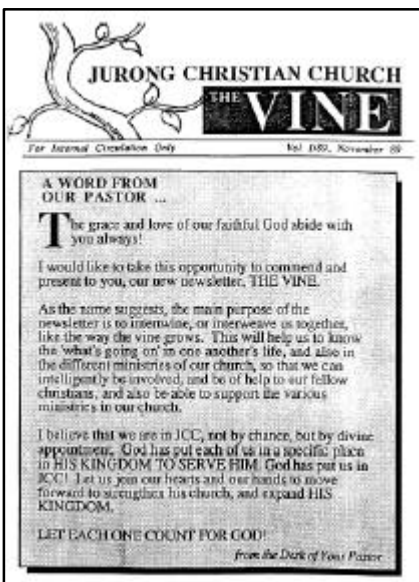
My dear readers, The Vine continues to appreciate your support. If it happens to be a new beginning for you to lend a hand, don't be nervous about it. Please ... please ... don't be frightened about serving. I don't expect everyone to step forward in some big and mighty way – just a little here and there that you render some contribution would be great as we let God take care of what is beyond our human strength. God has blessed The Vine through probably more than 150 monthly issues and in these issues you can see writings from readers ranging in age from the very young to the elder folks. Yes, they include little children, students in their teens, the young adults and so forth. Thank God that The Vine has had the privilege of getting the services of these wonderful brothers and sisters in

Christ. Of course, apart from writing, we also enjoy the company of helpers in many other ways that promote the production of The Vine from month to month. Thank God!

On the left, you see the first page of our very first issue – Nov 1989, presented by Pastor William Chang. Below it, you can read a section about New Births from the last page of that inaugural issue.

Note how Boren is now a big boy, very much a part of the JCC community.

Note also how Charis is now a big girl in Secondary school. She is with her father, Revd William Chang, worshipping and serving at



Three New Births

The Lord has indeed been gracious to Roy and Juria, when He blessed them with a son on 15 September 89. The boy's name is BO REN.

We wish to extend a very hearty congratulations to the happy family, and we pray that the Lord will guide little Bo Ren as he grows.

Congratulations also to Pastor William Chang, who recently became a proud father once again. His wife, Laura gave birth to a girl named CHARIS on 27 October 89.

Lastly, congratulations also go to Sister Wei Ling who gave birth to a girl on 8 November 89.

On behalf of the congregation, we would like to wish Pastor Chang's and Wei Ling's family a very blessed family life, and may God be gracious to them.

The Vine

Yishun Christian Church – very much a part of the Lutheran community in Singapore.

Think about how folks in our midst have matured over more than a decade of serving and learning in JCC.

*Some people tilled the ground.
Some people sowed the seeds.
Some people watered the plant.
We all watched it grow.
The Vine grew and grew.
It is fourteen years young.*

*THANKS TO GOD FOR HIS BLESSING OF SUNSHINE AND RAIN
without which the Vine wouldn't live to tell the tale.*

We are older by 14 years, but the Vine is still young. Do you dream of celebrating its 21-year-old birthday in seven years' time? Dream on ... for it is dreams that keep us going. I believe that even dreams are in God's hands.

The Vine Team is trying to draw fresh blood to nurture the young Vine until it reaches adulthood.

Now is the time when you can pledge your good Christian service in a year of New Beginnings. There is still time for you to add a little to your New Year resolution. Are you ready?

*Sincerely,
serving Christ together with you,
John Lee*

SQR #1/2004

The Shepherds Quarterly Review was held on 3rd Jan at the Garden Hotel. All the cell groups were represented by either their shepherds and/or their assistant shepherds. Together with us were Dr. Gary Choong and Rev. John Tan, our two consultants. The meeting began at about 9.00 am and ended around 5.15pm.

The next wave of the CG movement was highlighted with all shepherds sharing their outreach plans. The various groups have their own areas of focus. Some target their old folks while others their friends and colleagues. Activities like dinner, BBQ, talks by dialect preachers and outdoor fun are all lined up. Are you prepared to join in? We are not individual CGs trying to outdo each other but one in the body of JCC. Therefore we will combine our strengths to maximize our penetration into the world.



Gospel Mission To The Blind Ltd

Gospel Mission To The Blind Ltd

8 Lorong 27A Geylang
#02-06 Guilin Building
Singapore 388106
Tel: 7414490

Jurong Christian Church
2 Tah Ching Road
Singapore 618744

New Year Blessings

Thank you for your offering to GMB. We enclose herewith our receipt for the gift. May we echo what the Apostle Paul said in Phil. 4:18-19 - your gift is a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And our God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Git Hoe had been discharged from hospital. Please pray that the Lord will strengthen the left side of her body, and that she will be able to use her left limbs in due time. Pray that she will not sink into depression, as she will not be able to come out for fellowship for a period of time.

Mr Soh Hare Lim was referred to us in July last year. After a long period of visiting and befriending him, he agreed to come to our Outing in September this year. We thank and praise the Lord that after the outing, Hare Lim has been coming regularly for fellowship and cell meetings at GMB. On 30th November, he started attending worship service too. We were thrilled to hear him testifying how he prayed to the Lord Jesus and experienced the help of the Lord. He is so happy that with the Lord's help, he is now able to cut down on his drinking, and thus save six dollars a day.

We thank the Lord for the opportunity to participate in the outreach organized by the churches in Geylang this month. Our blind friends presented 2 songs and Choon Lee shared his testimony on 18th Dec, at the open field next to the Aljunied MRT station.

Lastly, the GMB family wish you a very blessed & fruitful New Year!

George Lee

On behalf of GMB
30 December 2003



Soh Hare Lim

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

Gong Xi Fa Cai

LUNAR NEW YEAR

The lunar New Year brings with it trappings of the spring festival, celebrations of surviving a winter and the joy of anticipating the coming year. With the New Year festivities we associate with: spring cleaning, new clothes, firecrackers and superstition, gambling, alcohol, feasting, Ang Pows (red packets of money to our children and juniors) and paying homage to the ancestors.

SPRING CLEANING

There is a frenzy of spring cleaning in the traditional Chinese house. Cobwebs swept, a new coat of paint, time to buy new furniture and throw out the old.

Perhaps it is a good a time for us to do an internal check: Take stock of our lives. What have we done? Where are we going? How are we going to get there?

Think of these in physical terms: What are the bad old habits we are going to throw out? What are the new habits we are going to adopt? Made any resolutions at the English New Year? How are you getting along with them?

Think of spring cleaning in spiritual terms: What are you going to do for God's kingdom this year?

NEW CLOTHES

New clothes for the lunar New Year! Our God provides! See how we can delight and rejoice with the prophet as God clothes us for the New Year:

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isaiah 61:10)

Proverbs 31:25 describes the clothing of a good wife: She is clothed in strength and dignity.

Revelation 19:8 identifies the quality of white linen we should wear: Fine linen, bright and clean. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints)

FIRECRACKERS & SUPERSTITION

For safety reasons the discharge of fireworks and crackers has been banned for many years in Singapore. But the superstitions and many other New Year practices still linger on. Firecrackers were supposed to chase away the evil spirits. Many Christians continue to fire crackers, partly just for fun; partly to keep in fashion; partly to frighten the ghosts away! Hmm... a stumbling block to some, not to say the danger to property, life and limb.

To my mind, an unhealthy fear of ghosts and evil spirit impoverishes our Christian life and testimony: Why be afraid? Why fear? "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (Ps 23:4)

GAMBLING

Gambling is a social evil and a moral death trap. The hope of getting something for nothing. The wish that luck will allow a big windfall in our direction. A vice at any time. Need we gamble for entertainment? Surely the human imagination is bright enough to find other healthier means of entertainment. Need we gamble to get our daily needs? Should we not depend on God to provide for us? Or do we have to place our life on the roll of dice? Gambling is a social vice that has led to the ruin of many a poor soul. To clear small debts the gambler places his assets (property, wife, daughter) with the moneylender. The situation gets from bad to worse. Chinese New Year is often used as an excuse for people to gamble. "Only once a year." The slide down a slippery slope begins with that first step! Gambling is bad any time of the year.

ALCOHOL

Likewise the Methodist aversion to alcohol. Alcohol wreaked the livers and lives of many of the working class in Wesley's days. Written into the Methodist Discipline is the judgment that we should not take to alcohol. Some might argue that a glass of

wine may be even good for your health. Within the bible we have so many examples of good people drinking wine. Jesus performed his first miracle by turning water into wine. Jesus asks us to use wine in commemorating his last supper. But we are also taught that:

"Everything is permissible"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is constructive. (1 Cor 10:23)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1Cor 10:31)

FEASTING

As successful members of a thriving economy, we generally eat too much, all the time. At festive times we eat even more.

1) So spare a thought for your own body: it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19); not too much cholesterol, not too many calories, do not litter it with rubbish, do not soil it with pollution, respect the temple.

2) Spare a thought too, for the poor and needy, the down and out: those with broken families: those with no families: the widow, the orphan, the alien, the prisoner. Is there any way you can share a teeny weeny bit of festive joy with them?

ANG POW

As I think of the red packet, and the great joy that children get from counting their gains, I also realise that Ang Pow giving is a bi-directional tradition: we give downwards to those under us, and we give upwards to those senior members of our family.

I think of the people that have served me faithfully though the year: wife, quietly by my side, supporting me in all I do; can I ever thank her enough? Our Filipino maid, years in Singapore because of economic circumstances; have we been able to share God's love with her? My office staff, is the red packet congruent with the way I have been treating them the whole year?

What about Almighty God? Is there a red packet for Him? Do I want to place in the offering bag, over and above the tithes and offerings, a special Ang Pow out of love and respect?

BENEDICTION

Almighty God, we thank you for the Chinese New Year celebrations. The annual family gatherings help us cement our family ties. We thank you for our family ancestors and spiritual ancestors: we pause to name them, one by one.... Father, give us a bold tongue that we may witness to our family and friends as we meet them during this festive season.

O God, give us obedient bodies that we may witness by the things we do and the way we act as well as by the things we say. In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus. Amen.

Dr Lim Su Min

Ed – Dr Lim is a gynaecologist who worships in the Methodist Church. He wrote the above in Feb 1997. Reproduced (with editing) from <http://www.antioch.com.sg/well/devotional/sumin/matt/0105.htm>. with permission of the author.



Spiritual Delight

Have you registered yet to make use of the installment scheme? Do you trust God to make a way for you when there seems to be no way? If money is the problem speak to the Retreat Committee. If Spiritual Delight is the problem, speak to your shepherds or pastor.

Our target is 100% attendance. Our aim is to help everyone find delight in the Lord. Fill up the registration form today and hand it to the Retreat Committee.

JCC Tuition Program 2003

I am sure you all have read the testimony, 'My Lesson Learnt from God and His People', by teacher Mindy published in the December Vine about her thoughts on the life-enriching outreach, etc. Let me share with you my thoughts on the tuition outreach programme from the student's point of view.

When I first received the publicity leaflet on the tuition programme that JCC was organizing, it was the 'free tuition' that caught my attention rather than the 'outreach'. (Evidence of the *kiasu* tendencies of a Singaporean.) Getting a friend to come to church just like that would seem to be somewhat difficult, so I decided to take this opportunity to invite my close buddy to join me in the tuition class. Being academically challenged personally by the subject (Additional Mathematics), I felt that I would be killing two birds with one stone.

Though the class was merely two hours long each Sunday, I felt it was a fruitful time spent practising my A-Math. During lesson time, we would be given questions to attempt and upon completion, our work would be checked. Being a veteran in the subject, Uncle John would make seemingly-impossible-to-solve questions look like chicken feed. His approach to tackling difficult questions was very easily comprehended. I think it can all be credited to his years of experience and knowledge of the subject. Through the weekly sessions, my foundation was strengthened and my misconceptions on previously taught topics were also corrected.

The class was never boring. The classroom never had a moment of silence once the tuition started. There would be giggles, laughter, and fellowship with one another that made the learning joyful. For the rest of the students, I can feel that the teachers and the students bonded together really well. All of them were very eager to learn, with some even asking for extra time with the teachers just to have more time for their doubts to be clarified. I remembered Uncle John telling me that, "when people pay for tuition classes, they will make sure they come for lessons, but when it is made free, they will take it lightly and may even not come for class". Well I can say that the class was a good class, and the non-believers indeed benefited from the tuition outreach.

The dedication of the teachers was evident as they sacrificed their Sunday afternoon naptime to help and invest in the lives of the students. The time spent together resulted in the close-knit ties that were forged between the teachers and us students. I think the students do appreciate the teachers very much for what they had done for them.

All in all, I would like to thank all the teachers, Pastor Anthony, the youths, and for the persons behind the great food at the party. The time spent was memorable. I look forward to the next tuition outreach as it proved to be a good stepping stone to reach out to those in need. All glory and praise be to our God for He is the giver of all good things!



Jonathan Tan

WHAT IS CHRISTMAS TO YOU?



JCC Christmas Kid's Outreach Concert – Dec.20st, 2003

Children took centrestage during this Concert. The Master of Ceremony asked them thoughtfully: What does CHRISTmas mean to you personally and what is the best CHRISTmas present you have ever received?



The answers from the Children were varied: Love... lollis... parties... JESUS.



JESUS – the Precious Gift of Life to us from GOD. “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the

Lord.” (Luke 2:11)



“... and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matt. 1:23) EMMAUEL, God with us! That must be the best present. Yes, together in this festive season, may we remember that CHRISTmas without CHRIST, is really no CHRISTMAS.

Tonykoh



Thanks to the Christmas Outreach Committee headed by Patrick Boey, which met over many Sunday afternoons to plan this event. Thanks also to Doris for directing, Seline for costumes and JCCK for giving us support. But ultimately, all praise to God for the success of the event.

JW & MS CELL GROUPS' OUTING TO SAF YACHT CLUB



It was a high-spirited outing on 25th November 2003. Pictures are best in place of thousands of words to describe it.



Roses and thorns, beauties and a beast and even babies in arms were entitled to a place in the sun for a day to be remembered ever after.



Our two well-known Martins in the Church – Revd Martin Yee and Bro. Martin Cheah – were game to help spread a good dose of laughter as they sashayed with poise in front of their audience with something on their back for good exposure.



Was there a staring incident adding thrill to the occasion, as the picture suggests?



The banana boat ride was a refreshing experience, and what great fun it was to be dunked into the wide open sea as the boat took a flip. If it was too cold for comfort in the salty water of the wide expanse, a warm dip in a tub was welcome relief even though it was open view as you enjoyed your bath.



Holding hands in play or 'hand in hand' for a walk was simply cool. As the sun was setting, little children had to have their last swing; but it



was not the end of the day yet. Yummy food awaited hungry stomachs and what better time could one long for to have a nice fellowship as mouths were fully employed for both eating and chatting, with a brilliant sunset to round up



a great day and give everybody a good night's dream of more of the same to come?

About Outreach & Kingdom's Expansion

I remember the dates 6-10 Dec 1978. On these dates, the Billy Graham Crusade 'happened' in Singapore. I vaguely remember that there were comments in letters to the press about the extravagance of spending for the Crusade. The retort from Christians was short and sharp: "What price a soul saved?"

Who is Joseph Liew?

Here is the testimony of someone we don't personally know:

"I gave my life to Christ on the 10th December 1978 at a Billy Graham Crusade in the Singapore National Stadium."

His name is Joseph Liew and he was a PhD student in 1997, the year that the above

testimony was published on his website. I purposely highlight this testimony of a person not known to us and I want to follow up with this question: "How many of you know the souls saved and the rewards accruing to God's Crusade's servants?"

The fact that we do not know many of them does not mean that there are not significant numbers around in the Church of God. Actually, I think I recall correctly that our sister Teng Ting Ching (older members of JCC know her very well) was one of those who were saved at the Billy Graham Crusade, and she faithfully served God in JCC for many good years until she felt the call to pursue other ministry plans. A little known fact to JCC members may be that Rev. John Nelson (former pastor of JCC)

was assigned to Bedok Lutheran Church in July 1978. The timing was by the will of God, and they rented a terrace house for meetings. By December, the first Bedok Lutherans were ready to receive new members from among the souls saved at the Crusade. By the Almighty's grace, half a year on, as many as ten children of God from this group were baptized into His Kingdom.

My Personal Testimony

I did not accept Christ at the Billy Graham Crusade. I did so about six months earlier. Nevertheless, as I walked the terraces of the National Stadium as an usher, I felt a sense of great satisfaction for being seen serving Christ after all the years I had tried making a monkey of Christianity. As an usher, I heard the messages delivered by God's servant, Graham, and the Christian Life & Witness Course that I attended in conjunction with the Crusade helped my seed of faith germinate. One week after the Crusade, on the 17th of December 1978, I was baptized. At my baptism, I sang the hymn "The Amazing Grace" with tears aplenty, which remains as my favourite hymn that speaks volumes about the "lost and found" story of my life.

The above are real-life, not just textbook understanding. They tell me a few sobering truths about outreach. Just as my spiritual benefactors found it extremely difficult to convince me of the Good News, it is the same with all or most other brothers and sisters who went through an arduous struggle before embracing Christ. Even those who were raised in Christian families often had need to confront their spiritual waywardness to come to terms with obedience to the Lord, as borne out by the confession of the Joseph Liew mentioned above:

"In my teenage years, my life had a lot of ups and downs. My spiritual life never grew and it was mostly down in the pits. I learnt a lot of things the hard way and got into lots of trouble ... As I look back at those years, although I was a Christian, I certainly didn't behave like one. I was very self-centred and thought that I could do everything with my own strength."

(www.erg.abdn.ac.uk/users/former/joshua/testimon.html)

Evangelism - No Easy Task

Even the Bible does not assure us that it is going to be easy. On the contrary, we are told that "wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it." (Matt. 7:13) The sooner we realize the weight of the evangelism task, not just in consideration of the great numbers of souls to be reached but also in recognition of the stubbornness of sinful human nature, the better we will ourselves be prepared to take the bull of a task by the horn and not be dispirited by false hopes.

While false hopes can work counter-productively and (may it not happen) even bring our own faith into stress, a lack of hope is equally destructive to our spiritual maturing. While the Bible does not tell us to expect evangelism to be an easy task, neither does it tell us to lose hope. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (Rom. 4:18) The experience of Abraham was a sense of hopelessness, but the hopelessness transformed into a realization that nothing was impossible. In reaching out to lost souls for Christ, it is the same. When we are extremely discouraged, entertaining the idea of lost causes in relation to particular souls, the hope that we carry may well sustain us long enough to

see the positive transformation of the hope into reality, when we see the birth of a new life, a new offspring in the spiritual sense. Hope should not be lost even if we do not have the pleasure of actually seeing the new birth because it is only good that seeds we sow sprout in distant places, well spread out across spacious fields so that in their turn they may have room to yield another generation of seeds. This is better than having a high-density population jostling for breathing space and becoming unproductive.

What is Christian Outreach?

Christian outreach is as much caring for souls in need of salvation and looking after souls in danger of degeneration. Three bad scenarios we do not want. Firstly, we don't want to have souls saved and walking into warm welcome at the front door, but forget that sheep are being lost through an unguarded back gate. The net result in numerical growth can be neutral and acceptable if only it is the case of us gaining newborns to nurture while releasing matured Christians to strike out themselves in yonder fields to do further sowing and reaping. It is not really the numbers *per se* in a local church that we should care for, but the contribution we make to the broader spread of the Good News "to all nations" as faithful servants of God, wherever we are called to be.

Secondly, we don't want to be stagnant and comfortable with the status quo and do nothing to expand His Kingdom. Things that are not right for church growth ought to be put right with a bold stroke of collective will.

Thirdly, we do not want to simply satisfy ourselves with numerics to sing praises to God but find that we do not have the will to provide the foundation strengthening to

keep the new lives going strong in the storms ahead. It is very sad to see young Christians bouncing with joy and excitement with all their youthful energy and idealism and then, comes a day when the going gets tough and the reality dawns that God does not promise every day a fine day of songs and dance, you find the numbers in God's family dwindle as older members abandon the home and still younger members fill their places in a zero-sum game of movements. A desirable church is where shepherds plan for old as well as for the young in such a way that the old always stay while the young move up as new ones come in. Moving out is ok only if it is to serve according to God's leading rather than a case of sheep wandering off as devil's prey in the wilderness.

What has JCC accomplished?

If we look at JCC, we do not wish to think of laurels to rest on; neither should we take a dim view of what we have done or what we can do. Pastors who have come fresh from seminaries, profiting us by their service and then moved on in response to their callings to be elsewhere to continue the Lord's work are not a loss to the Church of God. Members who come in drinking milk and growing to eat solid meals and then move on to serve faithfully according to where the Lord leads them are a boon to Kingdom's expansion. We do not focus just on the young because we have activities to build up the old too. If we have done right in growing the Church while actual numbers remain manageable here in 2 Tah Ching Road with enough room for opening out to more souls, then it is good for us to continue in the good work of continuing to add numbers and continuing to release servants of God to serve where they can or are needed. However, if this is not the case, then what is? If we have a

shortcoming, how do we nail it? Are we doing things according to the will of God or are we denying His will?

JCC can be said to be a small church. There are advantages of being small which big churches do not possess. Of course, there are advantages big churches possess which we do not have. I don't think that it is God's will for all local churches to be of the same character and size. We should embrace our strength of being small and work towards growing.

The next natural question for me to ask is whether it is God's will for us to grow big and then he will provide a new building when the present one begins to burst at its seams, or it is His will for us to take in numbers and then release numbers to the fields of the world to produce scattered harvests whereby we can continue to invest our old building for great many years more instead of having it torn down. Whatever is the will of God, there is no difference in the calling each and every one of us share – to reach out to the lost with diligence by playing our complementary roles according to our giftings. We can be a small local church, but we ought not be too local in our thinking. We should see ourselves as one unit in the LCS and within the LCS we can continue to work for more satellite stations of ministries like the way we first planted Jurong, Bedok, Mas Kuning, Queenstown, etc. while continuing to be small to medium within any physical locale to tap the advantages of smallness without the encumbrance of the law of diminishing returns administratively. We ought also see the LCS as one unit in the big church in the Singapore domain where there are other large units functioning under God's specific plan for them whereby they enjoy their own advantages of scale. Everything goes according to the will of God and all

things work together according to divine plan. We cannot force the will of God.

How to achieve church growth

At the church growth level, the growth in numbers and the growth in manner are all not absolutely within our control. If we desire to know God's will, so that we can satisfy ourselves that we are doing things right, then we have to seek the answer through prayers. Imagine that we are at a corporate prayer session because we are there firstly to watch a movie being screened and so we join in the prayers as a matter of course. Imagine now the alternative scenario that we seek to pray, so we join the corporate prayer session and then take the opportunity to watch a nice Christian film being screened at the same time. You see the difference between the two scenarios and you know which is the one that will move God to respond. Similarly, at personal private prayer moments, a prayer with heart enjoined in pleadings to God and a prayer that is just for its own sake are not going to get the same kind of response.

Seeking the will of God is not as difficult as some people think. Although it is not as easy as some others think, it is manageable. Take the analogy of a father who keeps on nagging his young child to study, and the young child gets so flustered without knowing why it is necessary to study so hard and what his father's will is for the whole thing. If the child asks less of WHY and does more of OBEYING, he will soon grow up to understand the WHY and be satisfied that his obedience is not in vain. God, our heavenly Father, has a perfect will for His children. All we have to do is simply OBEY and everything else will work itself out and we will come to know what God's will is.

Come, come, as Christians, how many of us can honestly say we do not know what to obey? There may be things we are yet not clear what God wants, but there are enough things we know what God wants us to obey as His children. I doubt any Christian can deny that we know God's call to serve instead of seeking to be served. This is one thing we know of what God wants, but do all obey?

In a conversation I had with Dr Gary Choong in August 03, he commented with approval that here in JCC we have quite many initiatives taken by lay members of the church. He was observant. From the top down, I am happy to note the Council members who put so much energy and devotion to their calling to lead the church. Below them in hierarchy, I admire the lay leaders in different ministries for their sacrifices of time and resources to do the work that no one else wants to do. Moving a step down again, we have another layer of workers who may be deputies of sorts who busy themselves like ants for Kingdom's sake, and continuing down the hierarchy I retain my gladness as I observe the humility of the faithfuls in service. Generally, it is expected that the more mature a Christian is, the more responsibilities he/she is expected to shoulder and the more willing and sacrificial he/she is to help carry the church's burden as the spiritually younger ones look up to him/her to emulate the servanthood. It is uncharacteristic for elders in faith to mark out limits and do little while the more junior in faith toil to move the church. Well, though unusual, it can happen and if this comes to be the will of God for a purpose of building up and strengthening the young faithfuls, then these loyal servants will not be left

empty handed. Maturing in faith and development of giftings are themselves good rewards apart from the inheritance promised in Col. 3:24 to those who work for the Lord.

My encouragement to you

Somehow, by involuntary action, my eyes switch channels and I get to observe those who for some reasons seem to be lacking spiritual vitamins that they often find themselves less active than they should according to their spiritual age. I would like to encourage them by saying that they can look forward to a better and more vibrant JCC if each and every member recognizes the power of individual work combined in expressing a collective will to move the church. Like when we wanted to build the Multi-purpose Hall, the collective will to move the project was palpable and God blessed us with a wonderful end product. What would have happened if there were divisions? Now, in serving, we need the collective will of members to join hands to make work light for the church to grow. In all endeavours, in outreach or any other type of work for the Lord, we need not worry about the outcome. We simply OBEY and do our best according to our giftings and leave the rest to God. In this way, we will have no reason to be discouraged when God's will that works out does not seem to conform to our preference; and we will not be proud to our peril when things work out well to win human praise, because we know that God is behind the success. Remember also that it is not how much we contribute in service, but how close to our best ability we work, that matters in tugging God's heart to answer our prayers. If we think that God has not answered our prayers, we need to ask: "Where is the collective will?"

John Lee

December In Pictures



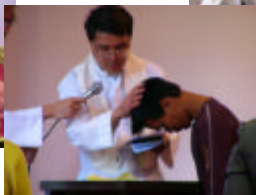
Dec 21 – Over 30 youths went caroling until late into the night.

Dec 23 – The adults had their turn at caroling with Pastor Yee along to share a word.

Dec 24 – Candlelight service. A joyful time of worship and adoration



Dec 25 – Baptisms, Confirmations and Transfer were the order of the day. After that, there was the usual Christmas lunch where some old friends helped make the season bright.



Snippets of JCC's past

Have you wondered about the cross that is hanging in a very prominent place behind the altar? The unique design with its rugged and totally natural look. None of that artistic, stylish design of most crosses which you may see in other churches.



Well according to our oldest member still around, Mr George,



when JCC was just built, it was surrounded by mangrove swamps. Mr George and some of the other founding members argued about whether to have a cross because they were of another persuasion which did not like to have any decorations in their church. Eventually, Mr George managed to convince them to make a cross. The team went into the mangrove swamp and just picked up two pieces of wood and strung them together with rattan rope like those they use in scaffolding. The others were hoping that the “cross” would just come apart after some time and then there would not be a cross anymore.

Now 36 years have passed and the cross still stands. Indeed it is symbolic of JCC.

JCC Children Ministry 2004

Our Sunday School continues to run on the format of 2 separate programmes for the pre-primary (Little Lambs) and primary school (Kids Church) kids.

Camps to look out for:

- ❖ **Little Lamb Day Camp.** Proposed to organise a 1 -2 days Day Camp for Little Lamb children during the Mar/June holiday. To invite JCKK
- ❖ **Year End Children Camp.** Propose to organise a 3-day Camp for Kids. For 2004 (1st weekend of the year-end holidays, tentatively 20th, 21st and 22nd Nov 04). Main focus would be for children of the neighbourhood and Kids Church. It would be in JCC itself.



Succession Planning

Bring in new blood by involving youth or upper primary children. Current renewal is dependent on new adults who join congregation. Also many current teachers have been teaching for a long time and may want to move on to other ministries. Younger folks who have a heart for this ministry could be trained on the job – eg as assistant teacher or help out with games/song coordination for the children.