

THANK YOU, SUPPORTERS!

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Heb 10:24)

Thank God for a great team that went forth to the Land of Smiles. The team members were able to work with one another, with one’s strengths making up for another’s weakness; and for every little bit in our contributions, despite our unpreparedness, we were able to rise up and make a difference to our eager and welcoming Thai friends. Yes, despite our earnest preparations for weeks, the saying came true that man proposed but God disposed. Much of our prepared stuff had to give way to impromptu decisions.



Thank God for journey mercies, and for each and every one of you who, though not physically with us on the trip, were there in heart and spirit to spur us on. Every heart with Christ is a missionary and

every heart without Christ is a mission field. The Thai Mission team was very encouraged by your financial support. Whether a copper coin or a

Wishing all a BLESSED CHRISTMAS

from The Vine Team

denarius that you sacrificed, God multiplied it and within a short time our target was met.

Especially noteworthy was that there were those among you who, though not enabled to give us any financial support, made the effort to send in your written pledges of prayer partnership with us. It raised the team's spirit to know that we were not lonely missionaries. Our faith target was for 70 prayer warriors, and we managed to receive written pledges from close to half the number. Add to this number the many others who were very likely to be praying for the team quietly ("in secret") as they had indicated their prayer support verbally, the team can boast in the Lord for enjoying the number of comrades in Christ that He gave us for building us up for the work of His Kingdom. We boast about this, without being ashamed of our human limitations: that the Lord understands and knows each and every one of us, and the successful completion of the mission trip has proven that He was always there with us, with the prayers of wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ backing us all the way. (Jeremiah 9:24; 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:8)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for whatever way you have partnered the team as missionaries, with Christ in the heart, to reach out to the mission field. As you read the accompanying write-up on the mission trip in this issue of the Vine, you will realize that the



mission field is great for harvest, but the labourers are few. However, we are not going to be discouraged. Even if we have only a jar of flour and a jug of oil to keep us going, we have faith in the Lord that 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.' (1 Kings 17:14).

So KEEP GOING, EVERYONE WITH CHRIST IN THE HEART!

John Lee

Member, Thai Mission team

EDITOR'S WORD

In a recent CG meeting, we were studying the temptation of Eve in the garden. Somehow the topic of giving was brought up and one of the members reminded us that I have always taught them that we are not giving 10% to God but rather that God is giving us 90%. Have you ever heard me mention this before? If you have, I am sorry but I must correct myself.

After the meeting that night, as I was brushing my teeth, the thought came to my mind that actually God was giving us 100% and even more, that my theology of the 10% was totally wrong. How did I come to this conclusion?

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap – Luke 6:38.

Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. – Matthew 19:21

It seems to me that the 10% (or whatever amount you “give” to God) is like CPF. It goes into your account in heaven and earns good interests. So it seems that not only is God giving you 90% to spend in this world but He will return the 10% with full interest in the next.

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? – Romans 8:32

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son – John 3:16a

My theology may again be wrong but I don't think that a God who loves us so much would withhold anything from us especially when he doesn't even need the 10% we give to Him.

If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. – Psalms 50:12

So dear brothers and sisters, even as you consider your stewardship for the coming year, remember that God loves you and He has given you everything, withholding nothing.

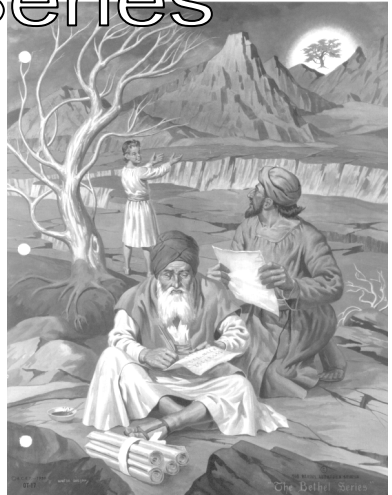
The devil said to Eve, “*Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?*” – Genesis 3:1. *And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden – Genesis 2:16*

So do not be tricked into thinking that God wants to withhold 10% from you so you cannot enjoy life to the fullest.

Martin Cheah

The Bethel Series

Many years ago, when I received Christ, I started reading the Bible with great enthusiasm. Of course, I started with Genesis until someone told me to read the gospel of John. When I finished the gospel of John I went back to try to read Genesis and the other books of the Old Testament. I struggled and I could not quite fit all together. After a while I lost interest in the OT and just kept on with the NT. I could relate more to the NT as it is not so historical and there were more applications. The life of Jesus was interesting to me. As a young Christian, I could not see the connection between OT and NT.



When I took up the challenge of Bethel Series, a commitment of one and a half years of weekly study, I was serious about my faith. I wanted to know what the Bible was about and also to know more about my God. The Bethel Series helped me to understand many high points of the redemptive history of mankind. The OT, the age of promise of the Messiah linked to the NT, the age of fulfillment of the promise. The hoped-for Messiah in the OT came in the form of Jesus in the NT. The NT is the continuation of the OT where the plan of salvation is revealed in Jesus Christ. With each book of the Bible, the jigsaw puzzle of God's plan unfolds.



I would highly recommend The Bethel Series as it gives an overview of the Bible while maintaining the theme of God's plan of salvation for mankind. The best part is that it is not so theological that one cannot manage. In fact, with each lesson there is a picture accompanying it; this is to help one in remembering the concept. However in terms of time commitment it is rather long. But be assured it is worth your effort and time.

Ewe Ewe

It is a good thing to give thanks unto The Lord

That was what TJCG did on 2 Dec night, at our last CG scheduled meeting for the year, 2005.

For instead of the normal session, it was turned into a “Praise and Thanksgiving” session.

Whilst the children gathered in room A for songs, games, and, a short lesson on “ultimately – it is God’s Will”, the adults congregate in room 4 to Praise and Thank God for many things, and, highlighted below are some of them: -

- Seeing us through as a cg, where His Providence had supplied us with many lessons learnt, services and assistance rendered for and to each others.
- Manifold blessings as encouragement.
- Answered prayers.
- Sharing of needs and how God through His Goodness, Mercy, Love, and, Grace led us through it.
- Gatherings and outings with our loved ones, friends, and, the neighborhood residents, especially our group targeted, block 328, for long term evangelism.

Thanking The Lord also for the 2 children from the recent ‘Kids Camp’, one of them with his mother in joining us for the night of Celebration Praise and Thanksgiving.

The night ended up with a mini feast ordered from KFC, Pizza Hut, with Log Cake.

Please prays for us and with us as we gather again as a CG on 6 Jan 2006, desiring for another year of deeper maturity in Christ through His Word and His Command to be His witnesses.

Indeed His Grace is more than sufficient to meet our every need. Amen.

Praise The Lord.
TJCG

Youth BBQ

18 Dec 2005 – The Youth held a year-end BBQ Nite celebration to invite friends and those youths promoting up from Kids' Church next year. The entire event was organized by the Youths themselves with some help from parents who contributed home cooked food like curry, bee hoon and fried rice.

The Youths had games, food and more games as a few of us adults stood in the sidelines to watch in awe at the amount of energy there is to harness. If we could channel all this raw energy, we could really have a mighty army to replace all the worn out adults.



Answers to Quiz

Hi, may I share some facts about myself with you? John is my name and it was not by a fluke but by God's revelation according to His grace that I came to know Christ more than 20 years ago. It is my pleasure to introduce this fun recreation to you about the books of the Bible. Do you know them all? Yes there are 21 hidden in this jungle of words, and it is a most easy job for you to count them with the numbers from 1 to 21. All for fun say "cheez ra ra ra ..." and go on your hunt and easy does it. Some may think they need to be as wise as the judges, or that the quality of their intellectual genes is not up to par for the challenge, but it usually just takes a pair of sharp eyes looking systematically line by line to help you. Here is a tip. Mark out with a pencil any you can find, then take this game with you when you are on a drive. Truth is that you may get caught in a jam especially in nasty traffic and so you would feel it better with your previous effort on this game to compete relaxingly rather than charging up your blood pressure with lamentations over the high road tax you pay for the bad road service. A friend, Matt Hewlett does it this way: She brews a cuppa of tea or coffee to drink for mental power before sinking into her comfortable couch to tackle this interesting game of words while at the same time humming a tune from a song of songs that are among her Christian favourites. Sounds fun, doesn't it? Now, give it a try.

My Philippines Experience

The time is near... and it has passed...

“How is your Philippines trip?” asked the church members. My reply was “How did you know I have been to the Philippines?” Never would I have thought that my email would be posted in The Vine! Due to the first little “contribution”, I must continue my contribution to The Vine, to provide an full report on my trip to the Philippines.



Children were playing beside deep dark water

The trip was organized by the Bible Society of Singapore in partnership with the Philippines Bible Society and Asia Evangelistic Fellowship Philippines, Inc. The team consisted of 3 staff from the Bible Society of Singapore and 7 volunteers from various Singapore churches. The main objective was to distribute free Bibles to families who can't afford to buy one.

On the day of our arrival, we visited the Philippines Bible Society and had lunch there. We proceeded to the slum area in Metro Manila, BASECO (Bataan Shipyard and Engineering Company). This is a crowded housing area next to a port.



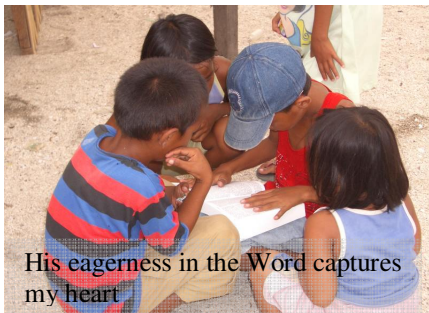
Group photo with the hosts in Philippines



Distribution point, a church

After the adventure of various transportation modes, we reached the





remote villages of Botolan in Zambales Province. People live in very simple bamboo homes, furnished with the barest of necessities. One elderly man said, "I have been dreaming to have this [the Bible], but my eyesight is getting bad."

Many adults were out for work, so we had the children to sing songs they learned in Sunday School. They were so eager to do so, may be they were more eager of our goodies. Hahaha...



In another village, the patrolling soldiers, with their machine guns, were given the Bibles too.



We went to the villages in Cabangon to continue our Bibles distribution. The moment when the jeepney stopped, many children started to crowd around us while we unpacked boxes of bibles. It was so overwhelming that Grace, our Filipino



teammate, did an impetus children ministry in Tagalog. Thereafter, we trekked up and down the hill to distribute bibles door to door.



Grace shared John 3:16

river. The Bibles were kept in good condition but there were not enough Bibles to distribute.

Have I lost the eagerness in the Word? Is the Bible my treasure or just another book? What do I do about it, to let it collect dust or to use it to have a closer relationship with God? These are questions we must ask ourselves.

Give thanks for we are blessed with many things on earth. We are blessed to be a blessing to others!

Santa Fe was our next distribution. As the jeepney was cruising through the wasteland resulting from the volcano eruption to get closer to the Santa Fe, our journey was blocked by a river, the Santo Tomas River. Therefore, we had to leave the jeepney, take off our shoes, roll up our pants and walk across the



Walking across the Santo Tomas River



SOOK HWEE

JCC Kids Camp 2005 – **Shinning Star**

In this day of Reality TV in Singapore, the Word – “STAR” is no longer a Big or Difficult Word to our Children In SINGAPORE, even though they may be just P1 –6, they are introduced to SUPER STARS of SINGAPORE.....Super Idols...etc...on TV.

So our theme: Shinning Star for this Year's KIDS' camp, we shared with our Campers that they are ALL a Star in their own Unique way created in the Creator's Image and Pastor Lily of Grace Assembly Church reached down to their respective Level to dawn on them that they are EACH a Valuable STAR in the sight of GOD and they need to KNOW and SHINE for GOD who send His SON, JESUS CHRIST to die for our SINS and JESUS is Forever the Shinning Star in the LIFE of the CHRISTIAN.



It is Good to introduce the LIGHT of the WORLD to the young children especially when we have children coming from different family backgrounds outside the compound of JCC for this CAMP, and it is of

great satisfaction to reach out to this young people group sowing the GOSPEL Seed into their HEART.

So all our Energy and Activities for this CAMP are immeasurable compared to the Great Harvest we are reaping yearly for the KIDS'



Camp.... PICTURES are Worth a Thousand....Words.....(Reporting LIVE from Perth, AustraliaTony Koh)



THE THAI MISSION TRIP

23rd November – 4th December 2005

I instantly accepted Pastor Anthony's invitation to join the mission trip, and I have no regrets. It was a great opportunity to do something for Christ in the mission field, and also to be blessed. The Bible teaches us that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35), so to be blessed was not the aim. Nevertheless, I speak from the experience of this mission



trip that in the process of trying to be a blessing, without expecting anything in return, the blessing that we bestow others somehow has a bouncing effect, and it returns to us many times more. The many blessings that we end up with are the extras, not really deserved, by the grace of God. It is spiritually enriching to ourselves to see how humble folks can still be called faithful children of God without the trappings of city lifestyle and wealth, and a sobering reminder that we have much to learn about dependency on Christ for the sufficiency of our needs without being weighed down by the pressures of needless wants. No matter what I say, there is nothing like being in the field to personally feel the spiritual pulse of the land. Here, suffice me just to share some observations about the places we visited – Nonghan (North-east Thailand), Phibun (East) and Nan (North).

A common observation is that in the rural churches, members who are mainly from the farming communities mostly live far apart. Going to church therefore entails travelling long distances, and church memberships tend to be small, and attendance not always regular. The demographics naturally lead to the concept of preaching points, each with a small gathering. Only when a small group grows to an appropriate strength will it then be recognized officially as a church.

NONGHAN

The difficult conditions of the country folks make it remarkable that the rural church in Nonghan is able to reach the stage of having its new building constructed of concrete that is suitably equipped, spacious and comfortable. Built at a cost of 1.6 million bahts, with assistance from supporters, it is very conducive for congregational gatherings, and the people could even sleep overnight at ease on the tiled floor in the worship hall as they made preparations into the night for the next day's church opening ceremony.



The church is located in remote countryside, but access is possible by car along unpaved tracks. Travelling by foot would be difficult because of the long distance from the main road. Think of the building of our church 30 over years ago:

When our building at 2 Tah Ching Rd was erected, with the rustic atmosphere of its surroundings, the church had its pride of place in the heart of the pioneer young Christians. It would seem very spacious, more than adequate for all worship and fellowship needs, noting the small membership size. It stood out as the tallest building in the area.

I see a bit of similarity between the new Nonghan church and our old Jurong church in Singapore. It shows promise of stability, as I am encouraged to think so by the high spirits of the faithfuls gathered there in testimony for Christ. These included unsophisticated rural folks who had travelled far, local Lutheran pastors from the whole of Thailand and foreign missionaries from countries like Norway and Finland. Some local members gave dance performances and shared testimonies. I see in Nonghan a church that, with God's blessings, will grow much in the years ahead, even if constantly retaining a small physical building and space, as generations after generations of Christians graduate into servanthood for

Christ and go forth harvesting souls in scattered preaching points across the land.

The gathering of church pastors and simple folks gave us a very good feel of the Lutheran church beat in Thailand, and the work and fruits of missionaries hailing from various countries. Although the Lutheran membership across Thailand (numbering 2000~3000) is puny in relation to the population of the country, my understanding is that it enjoyed a 50% growth last year. Percentage-wise, this is very significant and if it continues with the fervency of existing servants of Christ reaching out to others, the multiplier effect can reap a substantial harvest. The most effective formula would be to encourage and equip locals to reach out to the locals. We are better placed to do the encouraging and equipping while the local co-labourers work the field with the facility of a common language and culture with the pre-Christians. I reflected on Singapore's

work through the Thai good News Centre (TGNC), on the fruits we could taste as we chatted with the Thais who first found opportunities to know Christ when they were in Singapore. Now they are pastors in Thailand, reaching out to their country-men



across regions of rural terrain. Even the 52-year-old Bishop Visanukorn Upama himself who speaks English well had a stint working with the TGNC years ago. Our work via the TGNC and missionary enterprise, though modest in scale, do not count for nothing if in humility we submit to God to do what He will in multiplying the effort of a few labourers to serve many.

PHIBUN

The church in Phibun is set in a region in between rural and suburban conditions. We worshipped in the church on a Sunday and noted that the attendance was small, with attendees including students from the nearby Lutheran youth hostel.

In the hostel, the youths are instilled with Christian discipline. We had time of playing games with the youths and also a night of fellowship gathering. The hostel had three computers broken down, and we managed to help them repair one. This was one way we made ourselves useful and encouraging to the residents of the hostel. The students were generally from poor farming backgrounds. We bought their handicrafts as a means to providing some support for their personal financial needs. (Proceeds from their sale of the handicrafts through the hostel go directly to the students.)



We had a marvelous experience at an English Camp in the rural Palanchai School. Although communication was a little problematic with the young students, we were able to get by very well with Thai interpretation and hand signs. The Norwegians taught them English. We played games with them and taught them dancing in the day. There was also time for the foreigners and the locals to form into teams to play friendly matches in volleyball and soccer.

At dinner time, food was served on simple wooden tables set on grass with overhanging tree branches. As we tucked into the appetizing meal, the flies (as good as twice the size of the houseflies we see in Singapore) joined in for their share.

After dinner, a performance was staged. Our host entertained us with various charming Thai dances. We served a Singapore video, a skit, a song, a Christian message and our own dances. Wow! How they enjoyed taking part in



our Singaporean young people's dances! With our young team members' leading, and having been taught the dance steps earlier, the students proved themselves to be avid learners and dancers as the whole floor in front of the stage was turned into a ballroom. The adults joined in with encore, and the Norwegian missionaries joined in to enjoy a wild time with us and we with them. Towards the end of it, it was already late into the night. Our hosts were obviously beaming with great satisfaction as they good-naturedly tried to "extort" a promise from us to join their camp again next year. We told them we would try our best.

The evening atmosphere at the English Camp could be described as thrilling. Certainly, our energetic youthful team members had not expected to stir up a storm among the students and staff. The missionaries from Norway were also caught up in the heat of the interesting programmes. A very significant point to note for our mission is that despite the Thais' religious background, they had no reservation in welcoming us with their Thai hospitality, and the Christian message preached was also received calmly.

NAN

The two churches in Nan are the humblest of all, situated not far from each other on a mountain that would take at least two hours to reach by car from the foothill and then by wading across a stream, crossing a rickety bridge one person at a time, and climbing slopes. We even had to cross the bridge one night in the pitch darkness of the forest save for torchlight and starlight. Stars were in fact aplenty in the night sky above the mountain.

The church buildings are primitive constructions with no walls. The houses of the mountain people are quite far apart. The mission





team visited some of the homes. Despite the hard life of the people and their scattered housing, it is encouraging to note their faith in Jesus Christ and their enthusiasm towards our visit. Due to the distances involved, our team had to split into different groups so that we could cover more houses and give spiritual solace to the people. Moving from point

to point, we had to maneuver prickly bushes and take risk with sucking leeches. (Ask Samuel Tay how he felt being bitten by leeches.)

Reading what I have just described might put off many, but in fact (especially to the young ones), it was exciting and quite fun. Despite my age and lesser fitness compared to the youths, I still managed to survive the “jungle training”, supplied with energy from austere meals of plain



water, sticky rice that we rolled into balls before putting into our mouths, healthy salt-less boiled vegetables and some kind of kampong soup with chicken bits that was at least more flavourful and spiky for the taste buds. Of course, we also had the luxury of some fish and tapioca roasted over a simple wood fire. Thank God for the wonderful experience away

from the city, that everything with His help was all very manageable.

One church member testified earlier that he was troubled by ghosts in his pre-Christian days and had lost faith in mediums before turning his hope on Jesus. When he decided to seek out the Christian God, a family member told him, “You go and believe first. If you don’t die in three years, then I will believe.” ☺ He later won over his family members for Christ. Let humour be humour, but truth is that in the high mountains, far removed from the bustle of the city, lives worthy of Christ do exist. Who are these lives? They are the poor in spirit, but theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They are those who mourn, but will be comforted. They are the meek, yet

they will inherit the earth. Can we city people measure up? Most likely we can if we have Christ residing in our heart.

OUR MISSION

Our Mission is to be encourager, supporter and promoter for the gospel of Christ. How can we do so?

With Christ in our heart, we ought to be humble to recognize our limited abilities and resources; yet we have to be trusting in God's power to make a little count for much. This means that whatever little we have, it is not for withholding from blessing others, but by faith we hand it over to Jesus and let Him do the rest abundantly just like the miracle of feeding 5000 with five small loaves and two fish.



While we can make plans for trips, we ought not forget that our mission can best be served with our concurrent support for the TGNC. The Missions Committee will study the reports from the Mission Team and look into various promising ways we can make a difference for our Thai brothers and sisters in Christ, and for the field of harvest. However, WE NEED YOU to provide the backing for great plans. I have no doubt that every Christian with a heart for Christ is a missionary, and there are many in JCC who will rise up to be counted among the faithful who will play an essential part in claiming every ground for the Kingdom of God.



John Lee

The *Marilyn Baker* Concert

16 Dec 2005 - The night was cool as the people slowly made their way to JCC to listen to jazz singer Marilyn Baker from UK perform for one night only. What is unique about Marilyn Baker is that she is blind but is full of the joy of the Lord. Puts most of us able-bodied people to shame for being less joyful. Accompanying her from UK were Tracy, her deaf friend and also an ex-missionary to Sarawak, Tony Horsfall.



Marilyn belted out a number of her own songs and some jazzed up versions of Christmas Carols, all the while sharing her Christian experience. Before Tony came up to give the message, Tracy gave her moving testimony.



After Tony's message, there was an invitation to accept the Savior and two persons responded positively.



Senior Citizens Ministry

A Lunch Date with Rev Oh Beng Kee

Saturday 3 Dec 2005 – An exciting afternoon awaited the Senior Citizens Ministry members who had been practicing their Hokkien songs over many Sundays in preparation of inviting their friends and relatives to listen to the very famous Rev Oh Beng Kee.



Rev Oh had to be booked very far in advance

because of

his busy schedule and after sharing the message, he had to be specially driven to the airport for a flight to

KL. His message was

simple yet powerful. Man

needs God they are not

smart enough even to

battle against a tiny

mosquito. Man is sinful

and needs to be forgiven.

I hear that the message of

man's sinfulness has

touched some of the old folks.



Even as we continue to bring the Word to the old folks, we continue to pray that it will affect their lives and result in a change of heart.

