

Jurong Christian Church

# The Vine

The Vine Committee

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## EDITOR'S WORD

Some ladies went to visit Mongolia on a mission trip in early August. Have you secretly thought, "I wish I could go with them but....."? Maybe it is because you could not take leave from work; maybe it is because you have poor health; young children who need you to be around; old folks who need your presence; insufficient funds; unable to communicate in a foreign language; fear of persecution and danger; lack of hygiene and problem with food, taking final year examinations, etc. Worst of all, maybe you think, "I don't know enough of the Gospel story". Does this mean that you will never be able to fulfil the Great Commission?

Let me give you an alternative. Have you heard of the Paper Missionary? What is it? TRACTS! How many of us have read tracts of interesting and edifying personal testimonies? These tracts can go anywhere from Singapore to the ends of the earth with just a stamp. Tracts can go where you may not be able to go. None of the reasons or excuses listed above can prevent you from writing your personal testimony and sending it forth as a Paper Missionary. With the advent of email, even paper is not necessary anymore. So you can fulfil the Great Commission by putting pen to paper, right where you are, without having to take a step out of your comfort zone. Will you at least do that?

Don't worry about how lame your testimony is. Afterall, not every one can experience what Paul did on the road to Damascus. Some of us were just sitting on a tree branch or beneath a tree when Jesus called us. It could be as simple as that. If everyone had to experience the Damascus road incident, then there will indeed be very few Christians because there were not many such incidents mentioned in the Bible.

So start putting your pen to paper now and when JCC celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, I hope to be able to compile a book of all our personal testimonies which can be distributed to all our pre-Christian friends and neighbours as a witness to God's saving grace, for the glory of His Name. Somewhere inside this issue, I have extracted an article on how to write your testimony to give you some tips. If you prefer, you can read Acts 26 for a Biblical example of a testimony by Paul.

*Martin Cheah*

# Balancing Family & Ministry

The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the home and the ministry of the congregation.



## Lighthouse or Power Station?

What is the relationship between your congregation and its households? Does your congregation have a lighthouse or a power station mentality? Let me explain. The role of a lighthouse is to shine as a bright beacon, capturing the attention of those around it. A congregation that understands itself as a lighthouse seeks to mobilize the time

and resources of its members to generate maximum brightness. The programs and activities of the congregation take precedence over the home lives of its members. The ministry of God's people is equated with participation in congregational committees, programs or activities.

The role of a power station, on the other hand, is not to draw in energy for its own illumination, but to give out energy. A congregation with a power station mentality values the place and role of homes and families in nurture, witness and service. Church programs and activities have a different focus: to support and equip people to love and serve God and one another in home, place of work and community. Instead of asking what people can offer in service to its programs, a power station congregation takes more seriously the service Christians are *already* performing in God's name through their vocations as parents, children, grandparents, godparents, mentors, friends, workers, students and so on. The question asked is not "How can we use you here?" but "How is God already using you, and how can we support you in that?" (Sometimes that means giving people the blessed freedom and permission to do less for the institutional church, rather than asking more of them.)

## Towards a Fresh Perspective

At the heart of a power station mentality is an appreciation of the second of the Youth and Family Institute's *Five Themes for Nurturing Faith: The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the home and the ministry of the congregation*. Exploring this partnership involves looking at the traditional functions of the congregation from a fresh perspective. For instance, a fresh goal of congregational *worship* becomes encouraging the practice of faith in the home and resourcing households for daily home worship. A fresh goal of congregational *fellowship* becomes building cross-generational relationships to supplement parental efforts to pass on faith to youth and children. A fresh goal of congregational *nurture* becomes to nurture and support parents as the primary faith influencers in the lives of their children. A fresh goal of congregational *service* becomes helping households find ways to serve together as communities of faith, and developing cross-generational relationships through service initiatives. A fresh goal of congregational *pastoral care* becomes enriching and strengthening family relationships through pro-active ministry. A fresh goal of congregational *witness* becomes helping households clarify their own sense of calling and mission, and to function as mission bases through hospitality, service and testimony.

In essence, this theme calls for a new appreciation of the ministry of the home and the ministry of the congregation as mutually connected and independent. On the one hand, the faith life of the home both deeply influences congregational vitality and is a vital component of the collective congregational ministry. On the other hand, the Christian household needs the nurturing ministry of the wider congregation in order to live and grow faithfully. This is, of course, nothing other than the body of Christ in action, with Christ the head of both home and congregation. As home and congregation partner together, the whole body is grown and is built up, as each part does its work, to the glory of God! (Ephesians 4:15).

Submitted by  
Pastor Samuel Wang

# Happenings

## Sunday 30th July 2006

A very eventful day with Pei Ern's installation, Baptism of 3 children, a visit from Pastor Edmund Lim and also Martin's Shield Bible Quiz 2006 semi-final rounds.



It's no wonder that we have the Monday blues because there is such a high of activities during the weekends that we are tired out when we get back to work on Mondays.



Pastor Edmund Lim was passing through



Singapore and this was his last Sunday so he paid us a visit. He must have been quite impressed to see the full capacity of the worship hall.



The best time to invite ex-pastors would be the



Communion Sunday. They will leave with the impression that JCC has expanded over the last 40 years.



## Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2006

The finals of the Martin's Shield Bible Quiz was held and the winning team was YAMcake, comprising Wilfred, Peh Ping and Beng Lay.



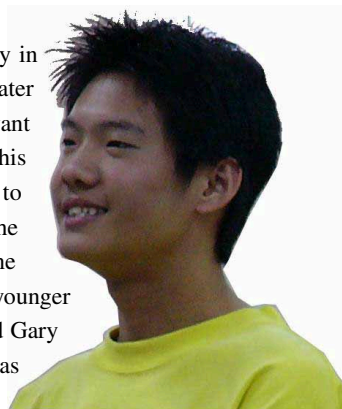
We also witness the confirmation of **Lim Tsu Ern**, son of Bro Ronnie and Sis Nancy.



# *BB Boy is Blessed*

As a BB Boy in the Seniors Programme, Gary excelled in drill and discipline. This is evident from him being selected to participate in various competitions such as the National Drill Competition in 2001 as well as the Total Defence Drill Competition at the Singapore Discovery Centre in 2002 and 2003. He was also developed in other areas such as the management of finance and leadership skills when he assumed the role of Treasurer for his BB Company and became a member of the NCO Council. He undertook heavier responsibilities when he was nominated to be Chairman of the NCO Council.

After Gary graduated from Shuqun Secondary School to study in Nanyang Polytechnic, he continued to be active in his alma mater serving as a Squad Officer. At BB Company level, he is a servant leader who is much appreciated by many of the parents of his Squad Boys and who regularly provides constructive feedback to his Captain. His love for developing Boys was attested to in the occasion where his Captain observed him in action during one of his home visitations to a BB Boy. He found out that his younger brother in Primary School needed some help in his studies and Gary proceeded to tutor him immediately. In a similar fashion, he has often volunteered and taken special efforts to conduct one-



on-one make up badgework lessons for Boys who missed parades. His heart to help others in need also led him to be selected by his school tutor to be a Mathematics mentor to his peers.

Gary also has developed a keen interest in serving The Boys' Brigade at the national level, leading him to volunteer for the various activities that were conducted. As a Primer, he was involved in the HQ Primers Orientation Camp, the Trainers' Course for Leadership Development as well as being a Kayaking Associate Instructor. He is also proactive in sharing with his Company officers the skills that he had acquired from the kayaking and First Aid lessons attended.

In all aspects, Gary's behaviour reflects well of being a BB role model for Boys.

## ***A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY***

Recently we took in a Boy from Tienjian China (TJCB in short) by way of tenanting and hosting him into our little family. Now we have a new addition of a boy, must be a welcomed change? How wrong...instead of the usual “cat” fights now it becomes bullish rivalry, ha.ha...pray for “taming spirit”.

When one is away from home, certainly home sickness slips in. Our dear TJCB, with true Mao Red spirit, said he missed his Homeland and our Dear Auntie was able to pray for him. TJCB’s primary purpose in coming to our Little Red Dot Island is to master the English Language for his future vocation. So English becomes the dominant language for this home stay stints...and it Opens Up Unlimited Opportunities...for all.

We simply do our part and in GOD we trust. We bring TJCB to church but to have him sit still to listen to the message on the Lord’s Day is another big challenge. (Not in English though but in true blue Singapore Mandarin). I will be “MIA” as I accompany TJCB for the Chinese Language Worship on Sundays.

The opportunities and challenges are unlimited if we open doors to such connections. If you have such experiences, I welcome your sharing them with me.

*Tony Koh*

**MIA (Missing In Action)**

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# CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED

Developed over 10 years, Christianity Explored is an informal course for people who'd like to investigate Christianity, or just brush up on the basics. It explores who Jesus was, what his

aims were, and what it means to follow him.

You're not asked to pray, sing, or read aloud, and you can ask any question you like. Or, if you prefer, you can come along and simply listen.

Be Prepared for it.

## **DISCIPLESHIP vs. NON DISCIPLESHIP**

JCC has adopted as its vision, "To glorify God through a life of true discipleship and disciple making", about 4 years ago. Have we clearly understood what the vision means and been true to its calling?

One of the key words in the vision statement is "true discipleship". We think discipleship is for the heavy-duty Christians, those who are empowered for the straight and narrow and are all out for the faith. Once, someone told me, "I would just be happy to get to heaven, I don't want all the crowns, mansions and rich rewards promised, just a place in heaven will be fine." However, if you study the Bible, you will see that there is no place for such type of Christianity; there is no place for half-hearted, lukewarm do-as-I-like Christianity. Either you are a disciple, a learner, follower and worker for Christ or you are not. In Luke 9: 57-62, Jesus turned away many would-be disciples because they are not prepared to give their total commitment after counting the cost.



If our belief is that Jesus died for our sins and that is all it takes for our sins to be forgiven and to go to heaven, why then the fuss about discipleship, Lordship and spiritual formation? There is nothing in the Bible that suggests that we can enjoy forgiveness at Christ's expense and have nothing more to do with him.

*"Some years ago A. W. Tozer expressed his "feeling that a notable heresy has come into being throughout evangelical Christian circles – the widely-accepted concept that we humans can choose to accept Christ only because we need him as Savior and that we have the right to postpone our obedience to him as Lord as long as we want to!" (I Call It Heresy, Harrisburg, PA.: Christian Publications, 1974, p. 5f) He then goes on to state "that **salvation apart from obedience is unknown in the sacred scriptures.**"*

*"This 'heresy' has created the impression that it is quite reasonable to be a "vampire Christian." One in effect says to Jesus: "I'd like a little of your blood, please. But I don't care to be your student or have your character. In fact, won't you just excuse me while I get on with my life, and I'll see you in heaven." "*

*(<http://www.freerepublic.com/~chooseyethisday/>)*

How can we even trust Christ for forgiveness of sin if we do not trust him for much more than that? You cannot trust him unless you are prepared to accept and believe that he was right about everything and that he has the key of life to bring about new life through forgiving your sin. If you believe that, you must want to obey him, follow him and be like him – i.e. to be his disciple.

Discipleship is a necessary condition for being a Christian. Actually, the Bible only uses the term “Christian” three times; the word “disciple” is used 269 times. Clearly, the emphasis is on being a follower, a learner and a worker for Christ. The New Testament is about discipleship, by disciples for the disciples of Christ. Churches generally do not require following Christ in his example, spirit and teaching as a condition for membership. (Discipleship is optional.) As a result, churches today are filled with “undisciplined disciples.” The reality is that in churches today, many members never decided to follow Christ. The Great Commission calls the disciples to use the all-encompassing power and authority of God to make disciples of all nations and to baptise and teach them to obey all that Christ commanded. Today, we make converts and baptise them into church membership; we contravene the Great Commission through two serious omissions:

1. We omit the making of disciples and enrolling people as Christ's students.
2. We omit the necessary steps through training to bring our converts ever increasingly to do what Christ commanded.

The Bible states clearly the cost of discipleship. It entails forsaking all (Mk 10:28), even our lives, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters —yes, even his own life— he cannot be my disciple.” (Lk 14:26) and in the same chapter, in v 33, Jesus said: “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” Discipleship calls for a decision, a settled intent, having counted the cost, the disciple of Christ desires above all else to follow Christ and to devote oneself to be like Christ seeking first the Kingdom of God. Not only does he desire to be a disciple but he seeks to make disciples.



In contrast today, we are prepared to be a Christian but to count the cost.

Forsake all? Give up our life? You must be kidding. There are too many things we have to attend to, like the would-be followers in Lk 14:18, 19 – we have bought a land, or a property, a flat, a condo, or some oxen, maybe a car, or taken a spouse, we just got



married. The excuses we give are not very different from that of 2,000 years ago. It's our career, or families, our need for rest, our studies or other priorities, which retain our ultimate allegiance. We often hear of Christians who say, let me finish this course, or wait till my children grow up, or when my job is less demanding or even when we retire. These putting off and procrastination reveals where our heart, the well spring of our life lies. If we keep up with such an attitude, it calcifies, it hardens our hearts and our minds are cluttered with excuses and self justification. Finally nothing for God and discipleship gets done, all we have accumulated from the years that God has given us are the idols and idolatries we have allowed our life to indulge in.

We often talk of the cost of discipleship but we may overlook the joy and reward of discipleship where we enjoy God's presence, the grace and peace and joy he bestows. In fact there is a cost of non-discipleship wherein we lose abiding peace and a life infused by love, we lose sight of the faith that sees everything in the light of God's sovereignty and we lose hope in the face of trying and difficult circumstances and the power to withstand the forces of the evil one. Non-discipleship cost you the abundant life which Christ promise (Jn 10:10). It is indeed a high price to pay.

Each one of us need to ask ourselves, "Am I a disciple or only a Christian?" Examining our ultimate desire and intention in the response and choices we make in our lives shows us whether there are things that we hold more important than being like Christ. If there are, then we are not yet his disciple, unwilling to follow him, our claim of trusting him rings hollow. Just as we cannot claim to trust a doctor, a teacher or a counselor whose advice we would not follow.

The correct perspective is to see discipleship as following Christ – not only as a necessity but the fulfillment of the highest human possibilities and as life on the highest plane, life as our creator God intended for it to be, in all its fullness.

*Tan Swee Leong*

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*A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, "I know what the Bible means!"*

*His father smiled and replied, "What do you mean, you 'know' what the Bible means?"*

*The son replied, "I do know!"*

*"Okay," said his father. "What does the Bible mean?"*

*"That's easy, Daddy." the young boy replied excitedly, "It stands for 'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.'"*

## **The Israel Lebanon Conflict – Some Reflections**

In our care group meeting last week, the Israel-Lebanon Conflict came to the fore and an intense discussion ensued. War is always painful and traumatic. Many civilians and innocent children are often killed, injured or maimed for life. Seeing countries going into a major conflict can be pretty depressing and perplexing to a Christian. This is because one of the main virtues of Christianity is LOVE (1 Corinthians 13). War is a manifestation of its antithesis – hatred. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not exactly a new development in history. They have been at war off and on for the past three millenniums. From skirmishes in Isaac's time to David squaring off with Goliath and until the present in 2006, peace has been rather elusive as far as Israel is concerned. The modern name of Philistine is now Palestine, if that rings a bell.

Firstly, I would like to say that living in a multi-racial, multi religious society in Singapore, we should not be too quick to jump to conclusions and voice our support openly for any side in the conflict. The reason is that things and issues involved can be too complicated for us to unravel and some information may be simply unavailable to us. We may also be only hearing one side of the story.

Secondly, we need to be sensitive to different races and religions in Singapore. We should not agitate things further; for example, by forwarding emails that solicit support for Israel and demonise the Palestinians or Muslims. Neither should we applaud the latter for their ideals at the expense of the former. Personally, I feel that we are all not experts on the seemingly inexhaustible conflict, and therefore it is less likely for us to create needless offence if we do not take sides based on imperfect knowledge. It is always easy to start a conflict right here in Singapore with dire consequences. In the end all will be losers, and stopping a conflict is no easy task as the Sri Lankan conflict indicates. Instead we should be peace-makers (Matthew 5:9), to explain the issues (if we are able to do so) without being overly emotional, and pacify our own folks who are disconcerted by radical elements, hostile thoughts and intents.

Thirdly, we need to exercise empathy and try to understand both sides, the grievances and sufferings. The Incarnation serves as a fine example of how God became flesh and dwell among us - to understand,

heal and redeem depraved humanity. In a conflict, normally there will be not be any one side that is perfectly right and without evil.

Fourthly, we need a clear theological understanding to have a handle on this issue of war. Is it okay to wage war as Christians? Are we not taught to forgive our enemies? In the Lutheran Church we have this theological understanding called the Two Kingdoms. We believe the Christian is **simultaneously** the citizen of two kingdoms – the Kingdom of God and also the Kingdom of the World. God is sovereign over both realms.

The Kingdom of God is characterized by forgiveness of one's enemies (Romans 12:17-21). There is a commitment to peace which is the outcome of forgiving the enemies. Justice prevails (Luke 4:17-19). It is marked by compassion for the oppressed, the disabled, and the disadvantaged (Matthew 9:36). There is redemption of creation through trust in the Gospel promises which is proclaimed in the Word and Sacraments.

The Kingdom of the World, on the other hand, serves to care for and preserve creation – often by means of retribution and punishment in order to curb disorder, chaos and injustice. James 4:1-2 & Romans 13:1-5 are instructive on this. In this context, just war can be waged against hostile invaders or terrorists that seek to destroy our nation. It is not wrong for Christians to go to war to defend his/her country. In some cases war may be the lesser of two evils. However a Christian should be allowed to choose not to participate in a particular war if it violates his/her conscience (Acts 4:19).

Lastly, we need to always pray for peace, forgiveness, mercy and grace for ourselves and others. As C. S. Lewis puts it, "It is easy to talk about forgiveness until we have something to forgive." But forgiveness is possible with the help of God. Corrie Ten Boom related in her book, "The Hiding Place", how her sisters were tortured and gassed at the infamous Nazi Death Camps because they were Jews. She was finally able to forgive the Nazi German officer who put her siblings to death years later when they met. May God help us.

**Pastor Martin Yee**

# Cameron Highlands

April 2006

A large group of people from the YAM took a quick holiday together during a long weekend in April. They visited the Cameron Highlands and stayed at the Lutheran Bungalow.

From the photos you can gather that they had a great time together playing games, eating, fellowshiping and visiting the places of interests.

The cool weather must have kept the warmth of friendship burning.



# Fund Raising

July 15 – The BB & GB companies were out in force to raise funds by washing cars and selling food and other items.

The persistence of these young people have raised them the funds they needed to collect.



## HOW TO WRITE YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Writing a personal testimony is really very simple. Its merely giving shape to a story that has already been written. You just need to organize it in a presentable form.

Your purpose is to let others know what Christ has done in your life. We suggest that you make your story approximately three minutes in length because that's the average time you'll be able to hold a listener's undivided attention. When appropriate, you can make it longer, giving a fuller explanation or embellishing it with details. However, it's much more difficult to condense than to expand it. Keep it short enough so that you can communicate the facts to someone who's waiting for a cab or in line to pay at the register.

Explain your story in such a way that others will identify with your past and present experiences, not just your conversion. You need to show the transformation in your life, whether it is subtle or dramatic. Show how your life is a fulfillment of God's promise that, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:1, *NIV*). Remember that we're all recovering humans; we're still works in process. It's not over 'til it's over.

The format is simple: B.C, Year Zero, and A.D.

### . **Before Christ (B. C)**

Your spiritual journey began with the time *before* you had any knowledge of Jesus Christ (BC: Before Christ). Talk about your life as an unbeliever or about how you grew up in a Christian home.

### . **Meeting Christ (Year Zero)**

Then there came a time when you were introduced to Jesus, and you knew you had to choose whether or not you were going to believe Jesus Christ is who He said He is. Year Zero is the time you *met Christ* and consciously chose to follow Him - the moment of your conversion. Talk about when you made a personal commitment to Christ.

### . **After Christ (A.D.)**

A.D. stands for *anno Domini*, Latin for "Year of the Lord." After you accepted Christ into your life, He began transforming you. That part of the story will never be over, but at any given point in time you are experiencing victories or seeing evidence that God is working. Every year after your salvation is a year of the Lord. Talk about what Jesus has done in your life since He changed you.

Now that you have a simple outline, find a theme that is characteristic of your life. As you think over your life, B.C and AD., does a pattern emerge? Is there a lesson you never seem to learn or a direction He keeps pointing you? Look for a thread that unifies your story.

This doesn't have to be anything profound. Just pick something personal that will be of interest to pre-Christians and provide a structure for your story. The theme you choose should allow you to bring in areas of your personal

struggle, growth, and ultimate victory in your life.

There will be more than one theme to talk about in your life and more than one way to bring together its main points. Choose two or three themes. Once you get the hang of applying the same points to different themes, you'll be able to do it in a witnessing situation. Keep it simple and flexible.

#### EXAMPLES OF THEMES FOR YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

- . addictions
- . arrogance
- . bulimia
- . depression
- . disappointments
- . dysfunctional family
- . life goals
- . loneliness
- . personal successes
- . self-reliance
- . spiritual emptiness
- . unmet expectations

The easiest way to put your personal testimony together is to first write out your spiritual autobiography. Your first draft may be five pages or fifty. However long, its worth the exercise to write it out. Think about the three phases of your spiritual life and its major themes.

There will be many variations on this basic outline. If you grew up in a wonderful Christian home, you may never be able to pinpoint a specific conversion experience. You may have just *always* known Jesus. Think back to the time when you chose to follow Christ apart from your family's influence. Or you may have recommitted your life to Christ after you had walked away from the God of your youth. Perhaps you had a dramatic conversion experience, but later turned away from Jesus. Then, years later, you turned to the Lord again and made an even deeper commitment. There are many other possible scenarios.

The bottom line is that you clearly state how Jesus Christ has changed your life and why you have chosen to continue letting Him be Lord. Tell when you accepted Him as your Savior, how He's changed you, and what the tangible results have been in your life.

#### Template for Your Personal Testimony

- ❖ **Introduction:** Establish common ground with your listener or define the main theme of your story.
- ❖ **B.C:** Describe your life before you knew Christ or your experience of growing up in a Christian home.
- ❖ **Year Zero:** Describe your conversion experience.
- ❖ **A.D.:** Describe your life after you became a Christian and tell how the Lord has changed or is continuing to change you.

## The battle-crazy world we live in



Year 2003. “Operation Iraqi Freedom” began. Three years have gone by since the collapse of the Saddam regime. The people in Iraq are still beleaguered by sectarian violence. Bombs still explode here and there in Baghdad; and the Iraqis are still in search of the elusive freedom. In a news report dated April 2004, President Bush was reported to be ready to send more troops “to finish the work of the fallen.” Two years later, only last month (July 2006), Bush again vowed to send more troops to quell the violence. In the last two months, more than 6000 people have died in Iraq.

What will be in the news two years from now – about the dawning of peace?

Today, Southern Lebanon is in ruins because of war. Who started it all? Was it the Hezbollah who abducted some Israeli soldiers and hence the no-holds-barred ferocious response? Or was the Hezbollah’s dastardly incursion into Israel to capture two soldiers a response to some precedent “crime” on Israel’s part? Whatever act perceived as justifying retaliation is often argued as a reaction to a previous injustice; the injustice in turn was but the outcome of some preceding aggression; and continuing retrospectively, the aggression was justified as a counter to an earlier offensive ... – the chain of links terminates nowhere. The imbroglio is getting from bad to worse with accusations and counter-accusations that spawn never-ending cycles of hostility. Let us take a quick look at events in the brief history of modern Israel to see how enduring peace can be in the Middle East. (See Table on next two pages.)

The UN Security Council resolutions cannot please all parties at the same time or all the time, and it just takes one militant to breach the order and a spiral of bloodshed is set off. An enduring peace requires a miracle. So what if the Hezbollah is trounced? The Iranian President is on record for his recent bellicose statement calling for the destruction of Israel. It is not very encouraging of peace (to put it mildly). It harks back to the fundamental Arab policy of old to reject Israel’s statehood, when the very existence of Israel was a monstrosity. If Iran can have its way, the import of the statement is beyond measure.



- 1948 War of Independence – Within a day of independence, the State of Israel was invaded by Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon and Syria.
- 1949 – There was at last peace after the war as Israel signed separate armistice agreements with her neighbours. Israel's boundaries were established, with the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) and the Gaza Strip going to Jordan and Egypt respectively while Israel retained about 75% of her original territory.
- 1949-1956 Israel's Border Wars – The precious peace was short-lived as Security Council resolutions were frequently flouted by hostile actions, such as cross-border attacks and infiltrations. Israel's security was threatened by the military alliance of three of her neighbours. Israel wrested back the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula in an invasion in 1956. However, the captured territories were returned under pressure from the U.S. and the Soviet Union.
- 1967 six-day war – Just like what we see today of Israel invoking her right to self-defence in attacking Lebanon, she did the same in 1967 to launch a preemptive strike against her southern neighbour, Egypt. The war extended to battling Syria on the Golan Heights in the north and fighting Jordan in the east. Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, took control of the West Bank and the eastern Sector of Jerusalem from Jordan, and seized the Golan Heights from Syria. It was a resounding win for Israel.

**(UN Security Council resolution called for the return of captured territories and for all parties to work for a just and lasting peace.)**

- 1968-1970 – Israel might have been victorious in the 1967 war, but became estranged from her Arab neighbours. Just one year later, Israel was at war again with Egypt. This was concluded only in 1970 with a ceasefire agreement.
- 1973 Yom Kippur War – Israel was caught off-guard by simultaneous Egyptian and Syrian attacks from opposite directions. This was called the Yom Kippur (“Day of Atonement”) War because it occurred on Yom Kippur, the Jewish holiest day. The war ended in a stalemate.
- **1977 – Israel's new prime minister strove for permanent peace**

**with her Arab neighbours.**

- **1978 – The Camp David Accords gave hope for enduring peace with self-government for the Palestinians**
- **1979 – Peace treaty signed between Israel and Egypt, brokered by America.**

(From our vantage position of hindsight, we see that in the region pockmarked by bullets and bombs, precious peace was never meant to last.)

- **1981 – Egypt President Anwar Sadat who signed the peace treaty was assassinated by elements in his army who objected to peace with Israel.** (Could this be more aptly termed “an assassination of peace”?)
- 1982 Lebanon War – Israeli forces entered Lebanon in response to frequent terrorist acts by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), aggravated by the attempted assassination of Israel’s ambassador to the UK by the Abu Nidal Organisation (Fatah). Israel cleared out a zone of Lebanon land next to her northern border to prevent the PLO from launching attacks.
- 1987 – Palestinian intifada (uprising) against Israeli occupation.
- 1994 – Peace treaty between Jordan and Israel (under PM Yitzhak Rabin).
- 1995 – PM Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated.
- 1996-1999 – Series of suicide attacks in Israel. Political wranglings over peace deals.
- 2000 – Palestinian violence broke out again, developing into another intifada.
- 2006 – What is happening today? (Israel is again bombing out Southern Lebanon, trying to establish a perimeter zone free from the threat of rocket attacks, except that this time it is against the threat from Hezbollah whereas in the 1982 war it was against the PLO.)

It appears that going from war to peace and then from peace back to war in a never-ending cycle is a legacy of Middle East history. The Land of Israel as referred to in the Bible (including the present Israeli land and Palestinian areas) was itself a region of frequent conquests. It was subjected to numerous foreign controls and varied influences from the Byzantine era (Christian influence under Emperor Constantine) to the Persian invasion and back to Byzantine, then to Arab rule before it fell to the Crusaders. After that, it was ruled by the Mamluks (a Muslim military group) before the Ottomans took over. WWI put paid to the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, after which the Middle East was divided between Britain and France; the part administered by Britain gave rise to the State of Israel. The Holocaust resulted in large inflows of Jews. The strife between native Arabs and Jewish immigrants and the discord over the splitting of the then British territory into separate Arab and Jewish states all added to the complicated equation for co-existence. So you get the picture of how convoluted the interests of different groups have been for a long time. Note that I haven't gone all the way back to Abraham, the common ancestor of the peoples belonging to three major monotheistic faiths.

**The Middle East is a region that is the focus of world attention** by its abundant oil, a region where the rights to water resources are often contentious, a region where (apart from the Israeli-Arab conflict) border disputes are ordinary such as between Syria & Turkey, Egypt & Sudan, Saudi Arabia & Yemen ..., **and a region of great religious sensitivity.**

As I ponder the intractable conflicts between peoples in that part of the world, I realize that it is sadly also wars without end in another part of the world – Afghanistan. Just considering the country's history from the time of its 3<sup>rd</sup> Anglo-Afghan war (1921) to the Russian invasion, to the Mujahideen liberation, to the Talibans and to the present situation, the whole period of history is littered with local brutalities and bloodshed too. You know of the latest 'liberation' of the Afghans from the Talibans. **As the assault on Afghanistan came to an end, the U.S. Defence Secretary said, "We have moved from major combat activity to a period of stability ..."** That was several years ago. Today, foreign troops and local police are still battling Taliban fighters with death figures climbing daily. The violence sees no sign of abating.

So the Middle East may not solely own the dubious credit of having lots of wars in its history. In fact, when our mind is drawn so much to the Middle

East or anywhere in particular because of our immediate concerns or of news media's focus, we forget that high-wire combative adventures of man take place in many other locations all the time. The same characteristic of man led to WWI and WWII! Now, Ethiopia is on a war footing with its troops on Somali soil. In Congo, the UN hailed the latest election as a milestone in the republic's peace process, but a palpable signal that peace is far away from hope is the shadow of war that still haunts with ongoing clashes between the army and the militia. You would also have acquainted yourself with the unrest in Timor Leste, China's enormous defence budget of possibly over US\$30 billion this year, the threatening situation on the Korean peninsula (no thanks to "Dear Leader"), the Muslim separatists' waves of attacks in Southern Thailand, the Mumbai train bombings, the Tamil Eelam's never-ending violent struggle for independence from Sri Lanka, the tension still prevalent in Kosovo (Remember the Albanian anti-Serb violence in 1994?), ... (the list goes on).

It only takes the wind to blow the right direction for the whole world to be engulfed by a single spark of terrorism or foolish decision. Even if we in Singapore feel at ease for our comfortable and peaceful situations within, the reality is that we are certainly susceptible to potential collateral damage by events without that are beyond our control.

Is anywhere in the world free from human clashes? If not about military warfare or communal riots, we have selfish political scuffles that put ordinary peace-loving folks in a quandary and suffer the innocent ones from the mess up. Adding to man's self-inflicted havoc, many countries are recently feeling the fury of Acts of God like heat waves, floods, earthquakes and tsunamis. Do we have enough food around the world to feed the suffering poor and enough money to procure warm clothes for their body and material to rebuild their houses? God knows that leaders of the world can mobilize enough energy and funds for all these needs with more to spare. It would be the mother of all ironies if they claim limited means to meet such real needs, yet they can tolerate (or perpetuate) the deliberate bombing of physical infrastructure and then promise hefty amounts of aid to rebuild!

The world is obviously not in material or financial poverty when its annual military spending and weapon deals can easily exceed US\$1 000 000 000. Mother Teresa was therefore absolutely right to say that "the most terrible poverty is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved." Where there is war,

love evaporates into thin air as the evil of man's heart is revealed in all its nakedness, ruled by hate and vengeance; as the innocent and the culpable are all lumped together as fair game for the killing to serve "superior" objectives. The following observations in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century remain utterly valid today:

*"Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes ... known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few... No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare."* — James Madison (4<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and father of the U.S. Constitution)



Is peace always dodging man or is it the other way round that makes the world a pretty grim place? With television, live scenes from around the world are brought to our homes every moment (watch CNN or BBC News) – scenes of wanton destruction, of deaths and devastations of people and homes at the hands of man – scenes that speak eloquently of the gross human nature in which conscience seems nonexistent. The thoughts about a sick world make me sick.

Let me just conclude with the following words of Mother Teresa:

*Beirut 1982, during fighting between the Israeli army and Palestinian guerrillas*

*"I have never been in a war before, but I have seen famine and death. I was asking (myself), 'What do they feel when they do this?' I don't understand it. **They are all children of God. Why do they do it? I don't understand.**"*

Painfully, like Mother Teresa, **I DON' T UNDERSTAND.**

**DWIGHT EISENHOWER:**

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron."

April 16, 1953



John Lee

## In Memoriam

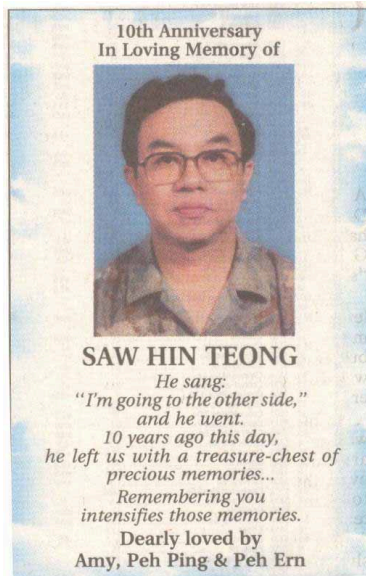
Time flies. **10 years** have gone by since we bade farewell to our late brother **Saw Hin Teong**; yet, he is still in our memory, not forgotten.

When we remember someone, what do we remember him for? He, like anybody else, was a person of many vocations – as a devoted father, a loving husband, a thoughtful friend, a hardworking employee and so forth. Each of us remembers him for a different reason, for the season that he came into our life to make a difference.

Bro. Saw was a part of our JCC community, in partnership for Kingdom's work and in fellowship with us as we laughed with/at one another, shared experiences, and enjoyed one another's companionship. Whatever the circumstances that we partook a bit of one another, it always served a purpose with the resulting mutual influence for the enrichment of lives and ministries.

Bro. Saw may have gone home before us, but I have no doubt that his daughters **Peh Ping** and **Peh Ern** reflect the light of his positive influence as they are now grown up and serving faithfully in the Church. I especially recall that **Peh Ern** was a shy girl disinclined to interact with people when she was young. See how different she is now!

Like bro. **Saw Hin Teong**, we are in this world for a season. May we be our best in the vocations that God has placed us in and pass on the love that has been given to us as we learn from the good examples of those who went before us.



John Lee

### 8 Aug 2006 – **All Night Prayer Vigil**

They came, they prayed and they conquered their sleepiness by singing, prayer walking and praying, of course. As a result, a family of 1 JCCK student came to the Lord. Anthony attributes this to the prayer walk to all the classrooms of JCCK at around 4 am on 9 Aug 2006.

Praise God.



# TOKYO MISSION TRIP

submitted by Zhiqiang

Dearest supporters, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus said in Acts 20:35 that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'.

From 24 May to 16 June 2006, we got to experience these powerful words first-hand in Tokyo, where the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel to university students. It was truly an awesome experience. We went there to bless, but were blessed so much in return as we worked with the local ministry to reach the many unsaved students. Our faith grew, and so did our relationship with God. We learnt many other valuable lessons and the time we spent serving the Lord in Japan will be one that I will always look back fondly upon.

Our heartfelt thanks go to God and all of you who helped to make this trip possible. Your support represents love in action and I am sure that every one of us on the team will always be very grateful for the love and support you had shown to us. It is my hope and prayer that the pioneering work we had started in the two campuses will continue, and many more Japanese students will turn to Jesus very soon.

On our first house party-Wednesday, 31 May 2006, we invited our newly-made Japanese friends to join us for a night of interaction and local cuisine. Azuma Tetsuro was one of the students from Hitotsubashi University who turned up. On that very night, he accepted Christ and

became our brother-in-Christ.



Our team of thirteen were divided into two campuses; six sisters went to the Tsuda's Women College and the remaining seven (four sisters and three brothers) went to Hitotsubashi University.

We held daily lunchtime gatherings in the two campuses with the help of our Japan Campus Crusade staff. During these gatherings, we organized games, English classes, Mandarin classes, Singlish classes as well as evangelistic skits towards the end of our stay.

The Japanese students were very spontaneous and friendly. As we prepared some local snacks from home such as Tapioca chips, Ayam Brand Tuna and Kachang Puteh for our Japanese friends, they too, responded by bringing us around Tokyo, treating us to meals and even invited us to their homes!

Apart from these, we spent our afternoons in campuses doing random friendship evangelism. We made friends with students around the campuses and invited them to join us for lunch. We also invited them to join us in our home parties which we held twice a week.

In total, we have 4 friends who prayed to receive Christ, 63 who heard the full gospel, 148 were exposed to gospel and 2 follow-ups. Praise the Lord!

# Mongolia Mission

14 – 26 June 2006

Our 4 daring ladies, Betsy, Cecilia, Vandi and Lydia took to the horses and rode around the Mongolian countryside to seek out the lost as our Lord commanded in Matthew 28:19.

Apart from helping out the doctors or dentists, they were also called to share their testimonies.



It is thus very important to have your testimonies ready to share at anytime and at anyplace with anyone by Divine appointments.