

The Vine

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EDITOR'S WORD

JCC Missions Month is here and the Mission Committee have provided many missionary speakers, static displays and even a video show of past mission trips. All these activities we hope are like seeds falling on good soil which will produce a crop yielding 100 times the effort we put in.

Obviously, we are well aware that some seeds will fall along the path and on rocky ground. However we pray that most of it will fall on the good soil. Jesus did not ask us to pray for the harvest, He asked us to pray for workers. So we know that the harvest is there, it is the workers that we are lacking. May the Lord of the Harvest provide JCC with the workers.

One of the fields which JCC is actively looking into is Cambodia. Not many in JCC have ventured there but there were some, Jim, Anthony, Lydia Sum, Zewen, to name a few. If your heart is touched by the heart of God for His people and would like to go, let the Mission Committee know. If you are hazy about it, don't worry the winds will blow and it will all be made clear.

There are many ways to do Mission work. Some like Vision Network set up Community Development with tools like Faith Garden, Self-reliant House, etc. Some build orphanages while others go into the field as tent makers, like Paul. Different methods apply in different situations with different people groups. The objective however is the same to bring the Good News of salvation to God's people.

With Ronnie and family and Sai Kong in the Middle East and now Elenor and Jun (Abundance CG) have been relocated to Norway, maybe God has chosen them to be tent makers.

We wish them God's grace and provision until we meet again.



Martin Cheah

"It is unlikely there'll be a reduction in the wages of sin."

A prophet from Nigeria (Africa) is coming to town



A prophet from Nigeria is coming to town in November. It is said to be a huge Christian event called the “National Healing Campaign” led by prophet T. B. Joshua who hails from Africa. Who is this man called a “prophet of God” by his followers? According to the website publicizing the event (<http://www.nationalhealingcampaign.com/>), he is popularly known as the Man in the Synagogue, the Founder and General Overseer of the Synagogue, Church of all Nations, Lagos, Nigeria. I believe the names “Nigeria” and “Nigerians” are familiar to all of us – Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and Nigerians are no strangers in Singapore, a cosmopolitan country. Perhaps because of his standing as a prophet, he has drawn detractors. According to himself, it is not that “Nigerians don’t believe him,” but that “there is division among the people.” I quote:

“Newswatch: At the initial stage most Nigerians embraced the Synagogue and many of them are worshipping here even till today. Why then do you say that Nigerians don’t believe you? Is it because you are a Nigerian?”

Joshua: No. That is not what I am saying. What I am actually saying is that there is division among the people. You cannot expect all the people to say that a particular man is good. It is never seen anywhere, where all the people will attest to the goodness of one man. Even the Bible said that Jesus had the same experience ...”
(underlining mine)

(The quote is taken from an interview with Newswatch Magazine in November 2005, excerpts of which are published on the abovementioned website for public information under the heading “Most Things People Say About Me Are Not True.”)

Now, after reading the interview excerpts, it becomes easier for me to understand why I meet people with different views about the “National Healing Campaign” – for it, against it and neutral – for even in the prophet’s homeland, Nigerians are showing divisions. From the excerpts alone, I find the interview to be greatly enlightening. It would have whetted my appetite more to learn more about this prophet and his ministry if I could have a chance to access the full interview. Anyway, come November, people in Singapore have a chance to see him, hear

him and watch him perform miracles at the Indoor Stadium. Are we excited? Are we longing for an extraordinary chance to witness miraculous healings of our ills and illnesses? Those of you who have internet access may wish to surf to the said website, click on the link to information about the prophet and read for your own illumination the pdf document of the interview excerpts. (You can also see two photos of the prophet in the document.) The prophet would surely appreciate that.

Recently, the New York Times reported about a woman who struck a lottery twice with a probability of 1: 17 trillion. Wow! No one would claim that as an answer to prayer for the strikes, or a Godly miracle. What then to make of it? People who are not enthused about the prophet T. B. Joshua have cited the Law of Large Numbers to explain their position. If enough people come together with a hope for healing, the hope will be seen fulfilled in a number among them. Insofar as the individuals within this number are concerned, it is a miracle – and a miracle it is indeed, from the individual human perspective, but not necessarily divine according to biblical criteria!

When I first heard from Pastor Yee about the impending event, I was keen to know more. From the website, I read the following:

Advance Appointment for the seriously ill

Those with serious illness are requested to come for an interview (with medical records where applicable) to Smyrna Assembly, 3 Yishun Street 11, Singapore 768645 from 13th till 25th November 2006, between 4pm to 9pm. Please call 67440087 for further clarifications.

I called the number to clarify my puzzlement, and the response was gentle and friendly, telling me that the advance appointment was to enable advance praying by the prophet when he arrives. It would be very crowded at the indoor stadium if we go there directly, so I was told. Apparently, it would be more advantageous for those seeking serious healings to make the advance appointment instead of just going impromptu and risk being jostled out in the crowd and missing the opportunity.

I have no doubt about the fact that prophet T. B. Joshua is not the Healer, according to the following quotes attributed to him at the same website:

“I am not the Healer. I know the Healer; His name is Jesus Christ. The work of God we are witnessing here in the Synagogue, Church

of All Nations is not a result of my works, but of my faith in the finished work of our LORD Jesus Christ.” (John 14:12) “Jesus Christ has many miracles in store for you. Give Him the chance to prove it.” (Matthew 8:2-3)

This statement by the prophet is very honest and encouraging. Whatever that is the work of the Holy Spirit, whatever that we perform with humility in the Lord’s service, Christ is the One whom we focus our attention on. The Holy Spirit by His work draws attention to Christ, not to man. We do not even dare to seek self-aggrandisement with any conceited attempt to promote ourselves as specially favoured by virtue of our faith and good works to receive the special dispensation of God on a special occasion to witness his miracles upon us or healings upon our bodies, assuming that we go in sickness and return home in health. God dispenses his miracles or healings wherever and whenever He pleases, and He is capable of performing (or withholding) His miracles and healings anywhere and anytime. The lasting spiritual fruit is not to be found in the encounter of any moment, but in our continuing experience founded on our faith and practice that is true to God’s Holy Word – so much so that whether we are on the uphill or downhill juncture in our journey of life, whether in joy or in suffering, we know that our faith will remain steadfast and unmolested by ill winds.

I remember myself seeking miraculous healings long long ago. Most of you do not know, but a few (including bro. Peter Cheong) do, that I have some hearing loss and they saw me wearing hearing aids on some occasions. My partial hearing loss has been with me since young and as a sensitive young chap in those youthful days as a member of a Pentecostal church, I was accustomed to assemblies with healings and miracles on the agenda. I witnessed others exuberantly testifying about the improvements in their conditions, about being “un-handicapped”, and all and sundry manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s power. I believed, and I still believe, in healings and miracles by the Power. In fact, I was amazed on an occasion at a meeting somewhere in town when an Indonesian Lutheran brother from BLC told me about my speaking in an unknown tongue while I was joining some other Christians in the laying of hands on someone for deliverance in a case of demon encumbrance. (Frankly, I was not aware myself of what “gibberish” I might have been mouthing.) While this was an attestation of God’s power at work through his humble and worthless servant, it was disappointing to me in the case of my quest for healing of my hearing. Was it because I didn’t have enough faith or that I was not serious enough about my quest? Or was it because God for the reason He knows best decided against granting the blessing of healing the way I sought it? I have since reconciled myself with God in all things that I did not understand well but which I now understand better even if still incompletely. The

incompleteness is attendant in my continuing struggle to share with fellow brethren about balancing hope of healings and miracles with the reality that God's will has an essential influence on whether in our search for a "result" we will end up being jubilant on cloud nine for a wish fulfilled, or disappointed and spiritually in the dumps when hope turns into despair. Either extreme can happen, and can be very dangerous (providing a fertile ground for the devil to work his wiles) if we do not anchor our spiritual faith on the rock-solid Word of God (the Bible) when engaging storms in our lives. Hence, I feel that the Nigerian prophet is stating it right for all hopefuls that he is not the healer, but Jesus is the One; and of course Jesus heals as He pleases.

Jesus is the One who has miracles in store and the power to heal. Jesus' healing is not restricted to any location and time. If it were, then we would probably see Jesus in a different light. Hence, there is absolutely no necessity for us to wait in anticipation of the "National Healing Campaign". If we have faith in the Lord to perform a justifiable miracle and to heal us of our sickness, we should not wait for a time and a location to arrive. We ought to pray now wherever we are and keep our hope high. In fact, in my telephone conversation with Smyrna Assembly, the organizer of the "National Healing Campaign", I was told that they were already beginning to pray for all who had needs. So it is implicit that we don't need to simply sit and wait for the prophet to come and make people feel that our faith in the presence of God is nothing in the absence of the prophet. If it is God's will to heal on a mountaintop and we are there, it is good, isn't it? However, if the (mountain) terrain is forbidding and unsafe for us to go over, it would be preposterous to suggest that our omnipotent Lord has power to heal or perform his miracles only on the mountaintop, say, and so we all have to assemble there by hook or by crook at all risks to seek His grace and mercy for healing. On the other hand, **IF faith is a necessary prerequisite for healing and we "do not have enough faith"**, no matter where we go and who will pray with us and for us, we may see nothing of what we desire for an outcome. If you have the faith, God can still extend His healing touch to you directly or through His servant wherever He is and wherever you are – ultimately, it is God who heals unconstrained by space and time.

Note that I have emphasized the word **IF** above in small caps. This is because I want to draw attention to the fact that what is of God does not hinge on faith alone. Thankfully, for God's grace and mercy, He (our Lord Jesus) who is all-powerful performs His miracles and healing not by faith alone. (Don't get me wrong – I am not saying that faith is of no great concern.) Jesus (called "the great prophet" in Luke 7:16) performed the miracles of raising a widow's son and of healing an invalid at Bethesda (Jn 5:2) without the prerequisite of faith. So if you

go to the meeting at the Indoor Stadium and have your wish unfulfilled, DO NOT let the devil send you into a guilt trap about your lack of faith. Neither should you fret if you are unable to go to the Stadium, because Jesus (the One who is the healer) is able to perform miracles and heal anywhere anytime directly or through anybody (possibly your brethren or pastor) He chooses to use as a conduit to convey His power. I have heard testimonies of people being healed, not necessarily at huge gatherings, but in their quiet moments with the Lord or by united prayers with their pastors and/or small groups of brothers and sisters in Christ. Similarly, I have heard of people not being healed regardless of with whom they gather in petition to God for miracles.

“I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” (2Cor11:1, 3)

I am certain that prophet T. B. Joshua, enabled by the great prophet (Jesus), will be praying for all rather than just those he would see at the Indoor Stadium. And being a prophet, a respected servant of God, he will no doubt be understanding that if you are too sick to travel, or are not traveling for any reason, God will not abandon you. This is because if God can perform a miracle in a group, He can do so outside of the group.

A significant question is how we may discern what is of God and what is not. Pastor Yee shared this:

“Dr Violet James, my lecturer at SBC kept reminding us, ‘Not everything that works are from God.’ Quite a profound statement as I reflect on it. Even Chinese mediums, witch doctors, bomohs and Sai Baba can do healing and miracles – they work! - but definitely not from God according to our Christian conviction.

When discussing Charismata Gifts or Gifts of the Holy Spirit, our understanding of this will influence our practice and response to all the various manifestations of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is a paper put up by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) in USA which I find offers quite a balanced Lutheran assessment and view of all these. I have read this paper carefully and I agree with most of it. Here is the URL link

<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/mosynod/web/chmat-01.html>

On one hand we must not dismiss Charismatic Gifts of the Holy Spirit as irrelevant or non-existent today like how John Mac Arthur does - that includes prophecy, tongues and miracles. But we also do not just accept any such manifestations as from God but using God's Word and our Lutheran Reformation Theology to filter and discern whether they are true or false.

A problem some of us faced is that we are often labeled as hindering the work of the Holy Spirit or even sinning against the Holy Spirit when at times we question such charismata. In truth, we do not really question charismata, but we are careful about all claims of signs and wonders, as a discerning man would: 'A discerning man keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth.'(Prov. 17:24)"

A discerning man we have to be, according to Prov. 3:21, but it is not easy because of the fogginess of human vision. Consider the following:

1. Whatever phenomenon that is of God ought not be subjected to any human bind with regards to space or time of happening. Nevertheless, any spiritual incident that is wrongly subjected to human categorization as “only for this occasion”, “only for that location”, “under this condition” or “subject to that condition”, needs not by the human folly alone be regarded as non-ascribable to God. Which man, after all, is without sin? God can work a miracle through sinful man, and Satan can use a sinful man to serve his end.
2. Where a healing itself is a miracle, the happening of the healing in respect of the space and time of its occurrence still needs not be anything that can be miraculously attributed. We have to be aware that while God has all the power to perform all miracles, Satan also has some power to perform some miracles. In Exodus 7:10-12, when God empowered man (Moses) to cast down his rod before Pharaoh whereby the rod turned into a serpent, Pharaoh's wise men and sorcerers did likewise. We also have warnings in Revelation about the anti-Christ performing miracles to deceive the masses. (See also Matt. 24:24, II Thess. 2:9) Thankfully, albeit Satan is potent, he is not omnipotent. So ultimately, in history and in the future, God always makes the last call and has the final victory.

The safest way out for us in facing the difficult question of which is which is to turn our eyes to God and not fix our mind on human glorification. Seeking the

truth in personal prayer solitude in God's presence, and be sanctified by the Word (Jn 17:17), may be all that we need for a spirit of discernment.

Finally, here are some additional interesting observations about the miracles performed by Jesus:

- No advance publicity by the healer (Jesus) that a miracle is going to happen where and when.
- No boasting or sensationalisation by the healer (Jesus). At times, he even maintained a low profile or sought to keep his healing secret, like when he told the leper not to tell anyone. (Matt. 8: 4).
- No caveats to save the healer's skin in case his pronouncement of healing or miracle does not work out. (Similarly, prophets in OT who performed miracles **not by their own power but by the power of God** did not have need for any "escape clause" to save them from embarrassment in case their proclamations turned out ineffectual. Their proclamations were always couched in certainty. **Is there any scope for less than 100% accurate prophecies?**)

Is anyone sick? In need of a miracle of healing? HE/SHE CAN PRAY NOW, WHEREVER THE PLACE & WHATEVER THE TIME. Jesus is the healer. No need to wait until tomorrow or wait for anybody. The Lord will hear and answer the prayer! Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; **test yourselves**. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Even if a prophet dispatched by God comes along and we do not treat prophecies with contempt by the instruction of 1 Thessalonians 5:20, we are still obliged to "**Test everything**. Hold on to the good." (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **so that you may be able to discern what is best** and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:9-11)

John Lee

Illiterate? Write today for free help.

LUTHER on DEPRESSION

This article is by *Tony Headley*, a professor of counseling at Asbury Theological Seminary, a licensed psychologist and author of *Achieving Balance in Ministry* (Beacon Hill Press, 1999). It might be useful to individuals who are going through the shadow of the valley of death, and to their caregivers. The full article can also be read at:

<http://www.freemethodistchurch.org/Magazine/Articles/Nov-Dec%20Articles/N-D%20Headley%20Article.htm>

This 16th-century reformer emphasized a spiritual approach.

The hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* gloriously celebrates God's power. It was penned by the great 16th-century reformer Martin Luther, who believed God's power could help believers overcome great difficulties -- even depression. Given his pastoral heart, he sought to bring spiritual counsel to struggling souls. His compassion for those souls shines in numerous places, including his sermons, lectures, Bible commentaries and table talks. In addition, he devoted many letters to counseling troubled folk.

Luther's writings reveal his knowledge of various emotional difficulties. For example, in August 1536 he interceded for a woman named Mrs. Kreuzbinder, whom he deemed insane. He described her as being "accustomed to rage" and sometimes angrily chasing her neighbor with a spear. In addition, Luther's wife, Kate, struggled with pervasive and persistent worry indicative of generalized anxiety disorder. Prince Joachim of Anhalt, to whom Luther often wrote, exhibited signs of obsessive-compulsive disorder, and he believed he had betrayed and crucified Christ. Conrad Cordatus, a pastor and frequent guest at Luther's table, exhibited signs of hypochondriasis, a disorder involving preoccupation with fears of having a serious disease.

Besides observing mental difficulties in others, Luther had a compelling reason to affirm their reality. Luther himself endured many instances of depression. He described the experience in varied terms: melancholy, heaviness, depression, dejection of spirit; downcast, sad, downhearted. He suffered in this area for much of his life and often revealed these struggles in his works. Evidently he did not think it a shameful problem to be hidden.

Depression: A Complex Problem

Spiritual Factors

For Luther, depression involved a complex interplay of spiritual, social and cognitive factors. In the spiritual realm Luther recognized Satan's role. Being the "accuser of the brethren," Satan causes Christians to dwell on past sins. Such thoughts induce melancholy and despair. Concerning Matthias Weller's depressive thoughts, Luther wrote, "Know that the devil is tormenting you with them, and that they are not your thoughts but the cursed devil's, who cannot bear to see us have joyful thoughts." Luther recognized a spiritual truth about depression. One can expect Satan's persistence until faith is destroyed, but in the midst of depression God is with us. He never leaves us alone. In the midst of trouble He draws near to us. Sometimes the invisible God draws near through visible people, and they become the bearers of God's comforting and strengthening words to troubled souls. What's more, God seeks to assure us of His love and esteem. And through His Word, He counters Satan's lies with His truth.

A Cognitive Emphasis

Luther also saw thoughts as playing a prominent role in depression. This emphasis continually punctuated his letters on the subject. In his view, sometimes Satan instills depressive thoughts. At other times, people prove their own worst enemies because of biased thinking. Luther described several tendencies that specialists today recognize as cognitive errors. Sometimes depressed persons attend only to those things that support their negative assumptions (selective abstraction). They also make small problems seem larger than they really are (magnification). Sometimes they draw false conclusions from insufficient data (arbitrary inferences). Luther also knew that depressed persons frequently anticipate the worst possible outcomes (catastrophic thinking). For Luther, solitude magnified these errors.

Family Links to Depression

Luther also recognized that depression runs in families. He saw this trend in the brothers Jerome and Matthias Weller, whom he counseled. Likewise Luther saw similar family links in some royalty. In his letter to Prince Joachim, Luther noted that other members of his family had been "... of a retiring, quiet, and sober nature." He then used those family traits to conclude that Prince Joachim's illness derived from "melancholy and dejection of spirit." He implied that other members of the family had struggled in this area.

The Potential for Suicide

Luther knew depression could sometimes prove deadly, since depressed persons may become weary of life and preoccupied with death. Such was the case with Jonas Von Stockhausen. To help ensure his safety Luther gave the following instructions to his wife: (1) Ensure that his surroundings are not so quiet that he sinks into his own thoughts. (2) Do not leave him alone for a single moment. (Luther believed that solitude is poison for such a person.) (3) Leave nothing around with which he might harm himself. Sound advice by any clinical standard!

Brief Conclusions on Luther's Understanding of Depression

In many regards the views Luther expressed in his writings appear consistent with current knowledge. I marvel at his insights into the role of cognition. He possessed an excellent grasp of the variety of cognitive distortions that maintain depressive states. And why not! Given his own struggles in this area, he knew well its internal mechanisms. Luther also looked within the environment to discover the presence or absence of behaviors linked to depression. For this reason he placed great emphasis on helpful behaviors such as playing games, having fun and getting involved with others.

Luther's spiritual emphases separate his ideas from modern secular approaches. Luther gave prominent place to both God's and Satan's activity. Luther reminds us that we cannot ignore Satan's role in human difficulties. Ample biblical evidence points to a tempter who desires to destroy believers. But Luther emphasized God's power to bring change. Most therapists likely dismiss such views as archaic and out of touch with modern notions. Yet the serious Christian cannot readily dismiss spiritual activity.

Having said that, we should exert care regarding the degree to which we emphasize Satan's activity. Some believers too readily see a demon behind every case of depression. That's not Luther's intention. Can the Christian be oppressed by depressive thoughts? Luther answers with a resounding "yes." Can the Christian be possessed by some demon that stimulates depression? His answer would be a resounding "no." Christians must steer this delicate middle ground. We must affirm spiritual activity (both God's and Satan's) in the many events touching human lives. However, we also must avoid taking positions that heap heavier burdens on sincere Christians caught in the grips of depression.

Conclusion in the next issue of The Vine...

BB National Bible Quiz

Recently the 28th BB Company participated in the annual National Bible Quiz and came in 8th in the overall standing. Once again we would like to thank God as well as many members of JCC for their continual support in helping us groom these young lives.

Here is an account from one of our sec 1 Boys, Clement, who was part of the winning team:

“The Bible Quiz is very exciting and interesting. It is unlike any other BB bible quiz I have participated in when I was in the Juniors (BB). It certainly helps both Christians and non Christians alike to know more about God’s word. Being a Christian, I have never gone so deep into God’s word.

During the quiz, the verse “God is with us”, became very true to me. Our team was down to 3 members due to some last minute changes and we were up against teams consisting of 5 members per team.

During one of the more memorable outdoor stations, we were required to toss a ‘chaptah’ using our legs, and depending on the number to tosses we obtained, we get to open a part of a picture that provides a clue to our final answer. The choices we made in selecting the different parts to piece out the picture were not very wise but God touched the heart of the station master, and he gave us many additional clues to solve the picture.



Lastly, I want to thank the officers for their effort and guidance. I hope that more BB Boys will participate next year because Bible quizzes are so cool!!”

Clement Tay
Sec 1 BB Boy

5 exciting workshops
to choose from
Sign Up NOW!!

W5. Charge!



W3. Making choices



W1. i am me



the New mirror **W2.**



W4.
Staying together

Pulse + GB Camp 2006 \$35 

FACTOR   **01-04 Dec**

Jurong Christian Church 

Register with Sam Tay/Mindy now!

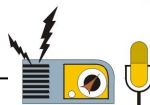


25

REASONS WHY I SHOULD COME...

1. A good time to be independent without your parents...
2. A good time to know more friends...
3. A time to learn more about God and to spend time with him
4. As a church member, we should support our church activities...
5. Best opportunity cost to a holiday...
6. Camp <<Cross Factor>> is my home!!!
(or at least for those 4 days)
7. God is waiting for you...
8. It's a one in a live time experience...
9. It's Fun...
10. We are waiting for you...
11. You have a chance to have a time of your life...
12. Ever wondered why the letter "t" is in the middle of "factor"?
13. Finding your true self!!!

stay tune..
..to the next issue..



Giraffe International 2006

Riyala, Noonamah
Northern Territory
Australia

Learning to follow the dust of my rabbi,
Angeline You

What makes Giraffe, Giraffe?

What makes giraffe, giraffe is a question that was prompted to us since the beginning of the Giraffe program. The reason the initial organizers named it 'Giraffe' was because they felt that they were sticking their necks out in faith in organizing the program. As participants, we are called 'Giraffees' because we were to stick out our neck for God while attending the course.



The 3Ps below are the elements I felt had created the Giraffe environment:

1. The preparation
2. The programs
3. The people

The preparation

An email was sent to all the youth leaders in April. It was an invitation to participate in Giraffe International organized by Lutheran Church of Australia. I looked at the duration of the course which was from 25June to 29July and I hesitated.

As much as I wanted to go, my mind kept pondering around these questions: "What about my work? Who's going to teach the students while I'm away? Will I be able to take such long leave?" I feared that my leave will not be approved, I feared that the replacement may not be able to do a good job to meet the teachers' expectations, I feared the work that will piled up when I'm away... Moreover, I also struggled in taking a no pay leave for a month as July was actually the month that I got an increment in my salary.

However, after much consideration and prayers, I decided to apply for it.

Upon receiving the confirmation that I am able to go for the giraffe course I was overjoyed and thankful to God who had given me the opportunity. My leave was approved, a replacement was found to take care of the tasks I'm handling, I have the assurance that God will provide my needs hence I wasn't upset over that one month's salary that I was giving up.

I read up the brief course description in the package given. The headlines of the topics were "Personal Faith Journeys", "Christian Faith" and "Ministry Skills".

As I look at the areas that will be covered in these topics, it excited me. I have been praying for opportunities where I could receive more inputs, such as having a deeper understanding about God's Word, being more equipped so as to serve God and man more efficiently... etc. At the same time, I've have assumed the way they were going to deliver the messages which is more like those workshops and 'lectures style' conferences I had attended in Singapore. I'm not a person who is able keep my mind focus on what the speaker is teaching over long hours. Hence, I foresaw it could be a struggle when I'm there.

One of the major struggles that I thought I may face was the difficulty in communication due to different cultures as there were participants from Australia as well as Indonesia.

Despite the uncertainties ahead, God has always assured me through His promises.

The programs

Personal Faith Journey

Through a series of Personal Growth and Development sessions with Peter.J, I've discovered more about myself; knowing and being true to my inner feelings and to better deal with them. Knowing and understanding the root of bitterness, anger and shame has helped me manage them better. It has helped me to be more real to myself and open to others.

With these lessons learnt, together with the MBTI assessment, it has helped me to understand not only myself better but others too. More importantly, we were taught how to better relate and compromise to people with different characters from different cultures to avoid misunderstanding. The activities conducted have drawn us, the giraffe community closer to one another; trustworthiness and teamwork have been built at the same time.

The other part of personal growth was conducted by Peter.E. The drawing out of my own timeline has also helped me recall and count the blessings of God through my life which I had often neglected. The spiritual gifting assessment has assured me the spiritual gifts given by the grace of God and this assurance has given me the encouragement and confidence in the areas I'm serving in.

Devotion, prayer partners, small groups, journaling, sharing, solitude are some of the practical aspect that have helped in our faith journey. Not only did I learn to be more open in sharing my life with the community, I've also learnt a lot from the life of others.

The Christian Faith

Looking through the eyes of people from older days, the eyes of the people today and looking through the eyes of God, the words in the Bible seems to appear

differently in the eyes of different people. That's why there are so many versions of the Bible, so many different interpretations and so many denominations.

Nevertheless, I have interestingly found out a different kind of way to read each passage in the Bible from Basil, our speaker. That is to differentiate the passages between history and parable and assigning color(s) to each of these passages. As we read the Bible each time, the Holy Spirit's prompting may be different. It is important to know what God is trying to say to all of us in today's context.

"Walk in the dust of your rabbi" was something I've learnt in the session on discipleship. Ricky, who was our speaker, showed us a video on the process on the things that a person need to do before one could become a disciple of the rabbi. When one has decided to follow the rabbi, he would have to follow and obey everything that the rabbi says and does. A common question was prompted to us as well, "What does it mean to take up your cross daily?" Though it's a common question, it has set me thinking on what "the cross" that I'm carrying everyday actually represents.

Throughout the sessions by Basil and Ricky, many deep questions were being given to us. I have found it beneficial though I was struggling initially as I'm someone who sees things in its simple form and not to complicate them. However, those training of my brain had helped me grow deeper in understanding His words. It was really an eye opener to me as both of them are deep thinkers and I have learnt many things in different perspective.

The community worship has also taught me a different way to worship God. In the beginning, the picture that was on my mind was everyone sitting around and singing praises and praying; the usual kind of worship we usually have in Singapore. Some examples of the different things we did during the community worship other than singing praises and praying were getting rid of the weeds in the bush, singing Taize worship which is a reflective and meditative kind of songs.

Ministry Skills

As we were a community made up of Australians, Indonesians and Singaporeans, cross-cultural communication played a very important role. To minimize the misunderstanding of each other's culture and to increase the sensitivity to each other's culture, Garry through his sessions equipped us better in these areas.

The use of the iceberg and onion as an illustration has been interesting. The expose surface of the ice and onion are the things we can see within a short period of time in a culture or even in a person. In order to truly understand a culture or a person; knowing why things are done in that way, communication and being sensitive to their feedbacks are important.

Upon being equipped with the knowledge, we have practical exposure outside the Giraffe community. As we visit the different churches each week and spending time with the Aboriginal community, we tried our best to apply what we learnt. Many who had been with the Aborigines say that they are a close community. Hence, it wasn't easy to converse with them.

Other ministry exposure were,

- High Ropes by Youth for Christ; it has built up teamwork, self confidence, even lessons that apply to our Christian life.
- Drama and Clowning were something that I'm never good at but I enjoyed myself in those sessions. It's a ministry that could bring laughter and different emotions to people; it's another creative gospel sharing.
- The leading of opening of the day, devotions, worship, prayer... etc has certainly built up a level of leadership in a way. I've seen and learnt different leadership skills from the giraffe community.

The people

What has made Giraffe so special is the community, the people! Knowing brothers and sisters in Christ from different nations has been a blessing to me. Despite the culture differences, background differences, even difficulty in speaking simple and clear English with the Indonesian and understanding the slang of the Australian, we lived through the one month as close as a family.

In the one month plus period, we shared our lives and our struggles with one another. At times, I felt that my struggles are nothing compares to some of the others. However, all of us share a common thing; through the struggles and trials, we became a stronger Christian and we have all seen God's faithfulness and His presence all the time through.

In addition, what really encourages me is the times we prayed for each other during our small group and prayer partner time.

Other things that has helped us to bond are; activities and games we participated, preparing the "opening of the day" and housekeeping. As we do things together, we learnt new ideas and insights from each other.

Conclusion

I appreciate the leaders for their efforts and time in planning the whole course and searching for sponsors for the international participants. I admire them for their willingness to sacrifice their time and finances from the off days they have taken from work.

Giraffe has been a platform of learning. Though it has been a tough and brain draining course, I had learnt many fruitful, valuable lessons.

The moment I receive the names of my sponsors, I was amazed by their willingness to give even though they do not know us. It has been an encouragement to see how others are so supportive in this course. At the same time, I felt remorseful of my selfishness.

Ever since I came back, I realized some changes in me. I have learnt to question myself more; the motives and purpose of the things I do. I have also learnt to look at things deeper to understand the root of the situation. This has helped me to better understand friends' struggles and being able to give the right encouragement to them. Some of the questions prompted to us in Giraffe are still in my mind till today.

The new and creative ideas I have experienced has given me a fresh perspective to look at life and organizing activities.

It is an unforgettable experience.

Letter from GOSPEL MISSION TO THE BLIND

Dear Praying Friends,

Greetings to you from all at GMB.

We will be organizing two Christmas outreach celebrations in the month of December. The event on 9th December will be for the Chinese-speaking group; and the English-speaking group will be celebrating on 16th December. Please pray with us that pre-believers will come to our events so that the Gospel seed might be sown into their hearts.

2 Cor. 4:4 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Please pray for our new contact, Mdm Tay, who was actively serving in a Buddhist association till this year. She came to visit GMB on 27th September, although she is not ready to participate in our activities. Pray that the spiritual blindness be removed from her; and for her mind and heart to be opened to see the light of the Gospel, and that she will soon receive salvation.

Please pray for Siew Ping's father, Mr Low Yam Seng, who is in a coma. Pray for his salvation and also against the cancer that is robbing him of his life.

In John 7:37-39, the Lord Jesus says that out of the hearts of those who believe in Him will flow rivers of living water. And in Ezekiel 47:9 we are told that swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.

We thank God for giving us His Holy Spirit who is the breath of life. It is so wonderful that His Spirit can flow out of the hearts of believers like rivers of living water to bless many people. And we thank the Lord for the river that is flowing out of your generous heart towards us. We can testify that together, our rivers of living water are bringing life and hope to many blind people. All praise and glory be to the Lord!

Your sister in the Lord,

Cheong Cheng Choo
Gospel Mission to the Blind Ltd

BAYARIN MEDEE CHURCH

Exciting Evangelism

Traveling about 400 kilometers to the sum (village) called Zuil, Uvurkhangai, where there is no church is exciting and at the same time challenging, especially, when it is a coldest time of the year (January), and the evangelists are aged between 17 and 25. A church member Naraa, who has been



working in that area for three years with VETNet Mongolia, witnessed Christ every time she had opportunity. As she has suggested, Bayariin Medee Church has taken the opportunity to send 7 youth to evangelize the village. With fear and uncertainties, our youth approached local secondary school. Amazingly the principal of the school offered them to take over some classes to fulfill their purpose, the presenting of the Gospel. God always moves before us! After contacting with local people, they are befriended many pupils and had several of them interested in knowing about Jesus. We already have sent them three

times this year! Next step that we are planning to do is to bring TEE material to teach those interested, so that when next time we come, they would have known much more about God and of course they would have plenty of questions to ask and talk further about God and His love. In two years time, one



of our church members would go with his family of two children and serve them until God would bring forth local leaders or a pastor. May God help us!

Youth Leadership Training

Those youth are the ones who were attending Youth Leadership Training Seminar (January, April, and will be in October), suggested by Pastor Jimmy Khoo from Singapore. He had to come to Mongolia several times (Apr, June, Aug) to teach and contribute for youth development of our church. In this seminar, we are aiming to develop our youth to participate in leadership roles of the church and also to encourage them to serve the church and ultimately to become bold evangelists. Seeing God at work in the lives of youth is a priceless reward for me!

Partnership

Last October 2006 was a historic date for our church. We have agreed to partner a church 1300 kilometers away from the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. There are about 70-90 believers, mostly youth, gathering every Sunday. A church leader is a single lady named Munkhgerel, who after her theological education (BTh) came back to her own province to take care of

believers with God’s precious Word and her motherly advices. She has been serving the church for last 4 years with no proper rest, holiday and income. Tired, single-handed, mocked by authorities and weakened with health, she approached me, if our church could be a partner to pray for her and the church. With deep understanding and compassion, we started to pray and decided to partner. Since our partnership has started, God has been blessing this church (Shine Amidral, which means New Life) with many good things. They could go to evangelize Mankhan sum (80 kms) and Erdeneburen sum (80 kms) and sowed seeds of the kingdom of God, which they have wished and dreamt about for last three years. There are three persons from that church who are studying in the Bible School in Ulaanbaatar. Their old, weary church building is renovated and installed with heating system for the winter. We want to see this church evangelize their people. May God continue to bless them for His Kingdom!



Micro-enterprise

One of the blessings God has given us this year is micro-enterprise projects: green house, carpentry, sewing and bakery. Because of limitations of time and space, I will only mention about green house project, which is exemplary to others. Our church in Darhan has built a Green House for trial and planted cucumber and green pepper. The idea is that we may let our church members try and learn how to grow vegetables and support themselves



financially, since more than half of our church members are unemployed. The project was a success! God has taught and encouraged many of our church members to grow vegetables to support themselves and the church. Next year, we would extend our green house and invite more believers to join in this project. “Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou Art”!

UNION BIBLE TRAINING CENTER

Academic Dean

Pioneers are always pioneers. Despite my inadequateness, God has been using me greatly to be a pioneer for many tasks (which I still could not believe), one of which is the Academic Dean role for the Bible School. Knowing my incapability of being such a responsible person, I hold on to God and pray that He would be my strength. We, the Bible School, have been offering 7 different programs of certificate (2 years) and bachelor degree (4 years) levels for the churches in Mongolia and having about 140 students every year. Although we have lack of faculty and facilities, we have



decided to start another 2 programs this year, because we saw the need of the church. One of the programs is Diploma in Ministry, a three-year program, which would provide students practical ministry skills and knowledge to become church planters and leaders. Another one is Certificate of Christian Ministry, a two-year modular program that students will only come once or twice a year to take certain classes. Their practicum would be held in their own churches. This allows many leaders, who have no possibility to leave their churches behind and come and stay in Ulaanbaatar as long as two or four years. Besides that we are committing ourselves for the churches, we are not forgetting the importance of developing national teachers. I have let go my assistant, Tumee to Singapore for further study at Singapore Bible College (M.Div.) under our “National Teachers’ Development” 10-year Program. My load would be even little heavier this year. But I believe in God, who brought me through tough times, that He would enable me to trust in Him continuously, so He would work through me. His grace is sufficient!

Further Education

I never ever thought of studying so much. I was a music fanatic, before I heard His calling to be a fisher of men. I wanted to go easy with life and enjoy it daily with celebrations of music compositions. But here I am teaching deep and tough stuffs like hermeneutics, homiletics and even subjects with big words like contextualization (mission theology). What in the world am I doing? Whenever I ask myself this question, I overwhelmed by His love and humbled by His patience with me. I had reservations to teach at the Bible School, but it looks like a theological education is my passion now. I would like to study more from God and be useful for the people of God in Mongolia. God always reminds me that “Mongolian Church should dig deep and place solid rock to build our House.” For that reason and need, I am going to study further at School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary for Ph.D. I should go to Pasadena, CA, every year for one or two months to take courses. Things are not all in place to say “ready.” But God has taught me that I will never be ready if I do not rely on Him. Help me, Lord!



FAMILY

One of the things that we, as parents, are very happy about is that our daughter Namuun, and son Ermuun are (13 and 11) growing in the knowledge of God. Namuun is now in the 7th grade and Ermuun is in 5th grade and both have excelled in their study last academic year. It

is not to boast about them but to praise God for His graciousness in their study, despite our busy-ness and giving not enough time of attention to our children. We truly hope and pray that they will influence their little sister Uyaruun (6) and little brother Tenuun (5). Uyaruun is now entering primary school and it would be a total change for her and for Tenuun, because they are so close and depend on each other.



I am so blessed having such a lovely family. My wife, Amaraa has finished her MA. in Education, and that gave us a big relief. She teaches and works as the Dean of women students at UBTC and serves at the church more or less voluntary full-time. At the church, she takes care of Sunday school teachers and worship team.

NEXT ALBUM

It has been almost 5 years since we have produced our second album. Recently, we have sung at the National Church Congress and Mongol Festival (evangelistic) in which God reminded us to work toward recording our third one. We have enough songs composed by us. And many friends encouraged us to continue to contribute Mongolian flavor music and songs into Mongolian Church. I believe that God has put special melody/harmony in us as Mongols and pleased to hear when we use it for His praise!

A WORD OF THANKFULNESS

- Thank God for bringing us through another year in His grace.
- Thank you all those who prayed for us and contributed to our ministry and even to our lives.
- Thank you all those who loved our children and helped them study continuously.
- Thank you all those who read my newsletter!

PRAY FOR US:

Your fervent prayers are needed and appreciated!

- To be able to send more believers to Zuil and start home group there.
- To be able to train more youth for the evangelism and church planting.
- To be able to help Shine Amidral Church for 2007.
- For Munkhgerel's health as she goes through some health problem.
- To be able to continue micro-enterprise projects to help poor and needy, and furthermore the church.
- Pray that God will see me through another academic year as a dean for His glory.
- Pray for Tumee, Narantuya, Javkhlan, Ganaa, who are studying abroad from UBTC.
- Pray that I could start my study at Fuller.
- Pray that my family would glorify God with our life as we continue to hold on to Him.
- Pray that we could start our next album end of this year.

PUREVDORJ JAMSRAN CHINGGIS (PUJE)

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Mission Month 2006

Each Sunday at 9.00 am, Vision Network staffs were on hand to present their mission work to JCC members. The focus of their presentations was their work with the unreached people groups through a method called Community Development which attempts to build a platform from which they can launch out into church planting.



Then during the sermon, we had invited speakers from various missionary organizations to share God's perspective on missions.

The leaders and the Mission Committee hopes that through all these activities, we will all be more aware of our duty as Christians, who have a Great Commission to fulfill before our Lord returns.



15th October 2006
Kong Zhen Wei was confirmed to the joy of his family and friends. Zhen Wei heard the voice of God calling him back after he had stayed away from church for a few years.
Praise the Lord!!



Happenings in October



Dialect Ministry's



MoonCake Celebrations 7 Oct

