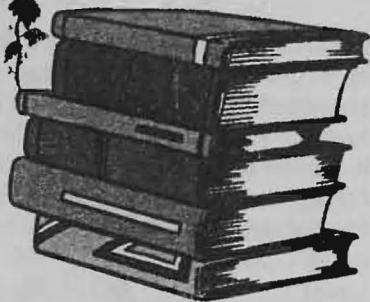


# The 2000 VINE

JUN  
2000  
Vol 6/2000

for internal circulation only



Greetings to all of you in Christ's precious name.

It is June and of course it is school holidays. In the present day context bringing up children is by no means an easy task. They grow up in an environment of television and Internet, video games and VCD shows. Many are immersed in interactive computer games and comics as well. Many therefore may face difficulties in communications, language comprehension and expression. To combat this problem, many child psychologists advise us to inculcate good reading habits in children as part of their healthy growing process. Reading can effect at least 10 positive influence on children.

1. It nurtures their ability to concentrate.
2. It stimulates their initiative.
3. It stimulates their imagination.
4. It enhances their analytical thinking.
5. It sharpens their language skill.
6. It widens their knowledge
7. It raises their intellectual and moral level
8. It helps them as a means of release from other pressure and establish their self-confidence.
9. Enable them to know about and enjoy the various facets of life.
10. It helps to expose them to other cultures and experiences.



# The Online VINE

For all those who regularly surf the Internet, THE VINE is now online. You can visit our website at

**<http://members.truepath.com/vine/>**

to download articles and pictures or just read The Vine Online. This website is provided free by a Christian organisation in the US so there is no cost incurred by JCC.

Of course parents must guide their children in what they read. Robert Benson is a Christian author, editor and publisher. He said his love for books stemmed from the influence of his father. Through his father he cultivated his love for books. Let us be an example ourselves as parents. We should make it a point to read some good Christian books regularly. Visit our own church library manned by Bro Irwin Kao. There are many good Christian books for the family, as well as VCDs and Christian music CDs. A good place to buy good Christian books is SKS Book Warehouse at Tan Boon Liat Building, Level 10. Tel : 2279700. The price is very reasonable. Another place is Life Bookstore at Jurong Point Shopping Centre Level 3, look out for good bargains for their ValuePrint yellow tagged book items. We can also buy good Christian books for our children.

*Pastor Martin Yee*

## Editorial

Besides The Vine Online, The Vine has another new branch just launched on the 4th June, called WORSHIP VINE. This is the work of the Music Ministry of JCC. John and I do not take credit for this, as it came as a pleasant surprise to us that The Vine has grown another shoot.

All in all, JCC now produces 4 newsletters:

- |                    |               |                    |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. The Vine        | Monthly       | General            |
| 2. The Links       | Quarterly     | Mission/Evangelism |
| 3. Worship Vine    | Occasionally  | Music              |
| 4. The Vine Online | Interactively | General            |

Keeping my ears to the ground, I hear that we may be merging all the various newsletters into one. This has its good and bad points. The good point is that there may be more content to fill up the pages. The bad point is that members may lose the focus because two of these newsletters are very focused on a particular ministry of the church.

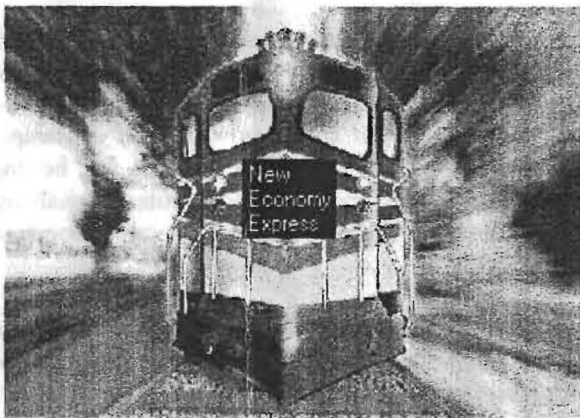
Someone has actually requested if I could sectionalize it like The Computer Times of the Straits Times. This is like publishing three newsletters but issuing it on the same day. This suggestion may have some merit although it does not serve the purpose of merging all the newsletters.

Here is where your feedback will be helpful to us in the editorial committee. Please give us your valuable suggestions.

Anyway, great work you guys and gals who produced the Worship Vine. Want to join our committee? We welcome the help.

*Martin Cheah*

# The New Economy Express



What do you see in the picture? A speeding train? Well, it is the New Economy Express!

Its promise? An exhilarating ride with ever changing scenic views along the way that challenge your imagination about what is to come in the horizon. As in anything exciting and inviting, there is no shortage of people who crave for a ride. Some manage to get on board; others are left behind at the station rueful about their missed opportunities at getting a seat.

As the train speeds on its journey, its passengers congratulate themselves on their good fortune to see the world sweeping by as their once familiar and sheltered surroundings, together with kith and kin, recede swiftly into the distance behind. It is not only the gap of physical distance that is widening at the awesome speed of the Train, but also the mental and emotional detachments of a people divided by the reality that the New Economy Express is unable to cater fairly to everyone's desire for a ride.

Meanwhile, at each new station stop, a fresh set of people rush and jostle for whatever standing space there remains. The law of the jungle comes into play, the fittest succeed and the less fit are bumped off in an alien environment – to swim or sink or crawl their way back home.

No matter how you try to be optimistic, the New Economy Express cannot be all good if only the fittest can hope to survive the journey to its far-flung destination – albeit one is never sure where the Train intends to make its final stop!

If you are tempted by the cheap economy fare of a new ECONOMY EXPRESS to buy a ticket without planning for the hidden costs that will build up in due course (both financial and intangible) once you are aboard, you are forewarned about *caveat emptor*. If you are drooling in contemplation of the gold mine the NEW ECONOMY Express is heading for, be cognizant that peoples around the world are facing the same titanic challenge from an unfamiliar economic creature dishing out both grand promises and great uncertainties simultaneously.

If you feel lost and wish to seek advice, don't go to the traditional gurus who seemed to be the know-alls of the Old Economy. All of them are as clueless as you and I. Don't believe me? Let's see:

- WORLD VIEW caption in Newsweek May 1<sup>st</sup>:  
“WHAT GREENSPAN DOESN'T KNOW ... about today's high-tech, global economy could fill a large book (and he's not alone)”  
(Greenspan is the U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman)
- Newsweek May 8<sup>th</sup>: When the Euro (Europe's common currency) dropped to new lows the previous week, even George Soros was baffled. He declared, “Maybe I don't understand the market” as he announced scaling back his hedge-fund operations after huge losses. (George Soros is a financier in charge of a huge hedge fund who had been blamed for the last crash of Asian markets.)
- Bill Gates & Co.: The father of all entrepreneurs could not predict the one-day fall of 80 billion dollars in value of Microsoft stocks. Not just that, the US market plunged more than \$2 trillion in just a week without batting an eyelid.
- Singapore: Even the economic experts in Singapore, whether from big private corporations or government institutions, are not great fortune tellers, going by the swings between vast profits and extensive losses in the news from time to time.

It looks like we all just have to wade and grope in darkness, hoping for the best outcome. We are not omniscient as God is. When we behold values in billions and trillions of dollars ("millions" has long gone out of fashion) swishing about in the cosmos of the New Economy, can we not be awestruck by the thought of where the money came from and where it went and what useful purpose it had served on its course? I am reminded of what John 3:8 says, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going." Do the huge movements of monies around the world daily, sometimes gentle and sometimes violent, resemble the way the winds blow? Can we ever be sure in our predictions? You want to chase after the breeze of comfort, but you may find a gale at your doorstep.

Let me quote from BG Lee Hsien Loong's speech at NUS Guild House (Guild Hall), 19<sup>th</sup> May 2000:

"Linking up with the global economy means enormous opportunities. The Internet is a new frontier. Underlying the dot-com frenzy are far-reaching advances in technology, especially in infocoms. After the froth of the Internet bubble has subsided, we will find that all parts of the economy and our lives have been affected."

You decide whether we will be affected for better or for worse, both as individuals and as a nation. Already, the signs are there: the rich (those who hitherto have managed a safe ride on the New Economy Express) are becoming richer and the poor (those without a chance to board the Train or were bumped off prematurely) are becoming poorer, at least relatively as measured by the widening income disparity reported by the Department of Statistics. If you look at the poorest whose average earning fell to \$133, is your heart moved? (Though a statistical average, it does suggest the gravity of the situation when we picture in our minds the retrenched and unemployed in significant numbers to drag down the average figure in a stark way.) Perhaps, there are people who do not see much of the DOS report; instead, they prefer to soothe themselves with the cheerier report from the HDB:

"It shows that HDBflat dwellers are 'getting richer'. Residents in one-room flats saw an average 4 per cent rise in household income over the last five years to \$1 336, while the average income of those in three-room flats was \$2 808. The majority of households earned between \$2 000 and almost \$7 000 a month."  
(BT editorial, 15<sup>th</sup> June)

As Christians, we have to grapple with the contradictions of the New Economy in a Godly way. (1 Tim 6:6 – “godliness with contentment is great gain”) You may be rich, you may be poor; you cannot hope for the wealth disparity to disappear into thin air. However, depending on your wealth status, your conscience can tell you either to spare a care for your poor neighbours or tell you to be pragmatic in your drives for betterment of your lives without wasting already thin resources in chasing after illusory rainbows.

Martin Luther advised, “Even if you should become rich justly and with God’s help ... do not make mammon your God. Property is not given to you for you to build your trust on or boast about, all of which is vanity and nothing, but for you to use, enjoy and share with others.”

Today, we are familiar with this truism, “When given an inch, people ask for a yard.” Centuries ago, the founder of the Reformation already saw the pattern of people’s greed. Writing about the avaricious human heart, he charged, “... the more it has the more it wants. If it possessed the whole world, it would like to have two worlds; if it had two, it would like to have ten. [As the servant of money] sinks deeper and deeper into greed, he gets farther and farther away from the Word of God, and finally he becomes completely hostile to it.” (Cf Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim 6:9-10)

It was not just the greed for individual riches that troubled Luther, corporate greed also came under Luther’s fire: “Even in secular law, it is decreed that everyone should carry on his business in such a way that others can still get along and support themselves. But now there is no room for anyone next to these ... lions, who monopolize every kind of business. And meanwhile they want to be called pious and honorable people.”

(Amazingly, Luther’s criticisms meant for his time are still very relevant in today’s societies and business environments!)

The poor and browbeaten in the uneven playing field of the New Economy need not fret. They can be assured that God does take a special interest in them. Bible texts abound to show this:

- God delivered the poor and oppressed from the rich Egyptians. (Exodus 3:7-8; 6:5-7)
- In Luke 1:46, 53, Mary sang in praise of God who filled the hungry but sent the rich away.

- From James 5:1-6, we understand how the rich who hoarded wealth for themselves with nary a care for the poor would have misery befall them. (This was also the common theme of the psalmist and prophets – Ps 10; Isa 3:14-25; Jer 22:13-19) The warning of James should resonate in the ears of rich employers today who pay indecently low wages to their poor workers, or even cheat their foreign labourers of their proper dues.
- God places a burden on the rich to have regards for the poor. This is evident in Matt. 25:40,46; Lk 16:19-31; 1Jn3:17
- God encourages help for the poor and the oppressed. (Prov. 19:17 ; Prov. 14:31; Isa 1:17 & 58:6-7)

The above is just a sample of Bible texts that assure the poor that they are not forgotten in God's plan of things and also advocate that the rich build on their sharing-and-caring ways to complement their faithfulness and seriousness in worship.

“Why am I rich or poor in this place, at this time and under these circumstances driven by the New Economy?” “What roles can I play in the Church – whether I am rich or poor?” Ultimately, it is not wealth or poverty *per se* that determines a dynamic church. It is the dynamism of members – rich and poor – jelling together in a congenial caring relationship, upholding one another in needs and service to God. Bro. Andrew Goh (Editor of Impact magazine) shared at the JCC tea gathering on 17<sup>th</sup> June about how Esther, a Jewish maiden of ordinary intellect who went to the King unbidden, which was not according to the law, saved her people from extermination. The message was that she was at the particular place at the particular time and under the particular circumstance not by her choice but according to divine plan for her to serve a divine calling in saving the Jews. If she had decided for herself not to pick up courage to go to the King unbidden and be used as a saviour of the Jews at that point, God would simply raise up another person somewhere else at some time to carry out the necessary task. Likewise, we in JCC of different stations in life, are here at this time and under the particular set of circumstances according to divine purpose. We should not shirk our Christian duty in building the Church as one people of God or else God can simply dispense with us and raise up others to do the task of building the Church.



Roy Ang Chan Yoke Meng Ronnie Lim James Tan Wilfred Kao

# Installation of New English Council



## Pastor Michael Christian

# The Picture Page



Pastor Michael Christian receiving some gifts from Redeemer Church for the Nias Orphans. He brought these gifts, which comprise a sewing machine and some alarm clocks among other things, to the Nias children in his latest trip there in May 2000.





Building the Church is all about giving ourselves to invest in building a spirit of community, about personal sacrifices. A sad realisation I had listening to Pastor Michael Christian's sermon on Sunday (18<sup>th</sup> June) was that people in Singapore are nowadays sacrificing more of themselves for secular objectives than for God. Many Christians are soaking up values of materialism from secular institutions and the mass media more quickly than the Church can impart values of spirituality! If (according to Christian ethicists) societies are ultimately judged by how they treat their poorest members, a parallel may be drawn that the Christian communities are ultimately judged by how they treat less-privileged members who are in need of manna. People can argue about prudence, about circumspection, about discretion, about ... and ask, "How far should I go in dishing out my love for sharing without being taken advantage of?" The counter-question would be, "How far did the Son of God go in redeeming us from our Sin?"

Be not mistaken that sharing of love is simply digging into the pocket and throwing out monies to have the conscience appeased and a Christian duty done with. Sharing of love is not materialism, but a social responsibility to treat the underprivileged properly as we would not expect abuse, or for the fact that we had been delivered by God from similar circumstances of deprivations. (Ex. 22:21-24 – God's command to Israel not to mistreat aliens, widows and orphans based on the Israelites' own experience in Egypt); Sharing of love is not to be condescending towards the poor and not to ignore the strangers, but to regard them worthy of our entertainment (Lk 14:12-14; Heb 13:1-3.) Sharing of love is also about giving to our servants what we ourselves have been blessed with the redemptive grace and mercy of God. (Deut 15:13-15)

It is not just the New Economy, but also a New Politics, that is driving



the world dizzy. As the New Economy Express speeds on, politicians themselves are struggling with the heavy New Politics banner frantically waving people on to catch the Train. Only a few among the people succeed, and in their

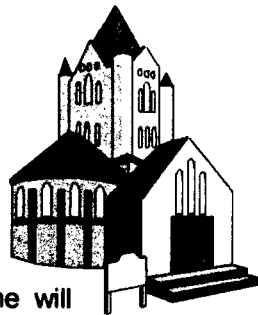
hands lay the ephemeral hopes of wealth; the majority are left behind to live on broken hopes and what little is available just to sustain life day by day. The wisdom of the world is foolishness in God's sight. (1 Cor. 1:20) Do we want to be led by the world? If not, are we earnest about Christ and God's Holy Word? In Jesus' time with His disciples, the poor never doubted their livelihood as they worked hard in spreading the Good News. Today, where are the faithful Christians? We need not burden ourselves with WHY THIS or WHY THAT regarding our place and time of existence, and our circumstances, but just do as Esther did in abiding by God's calling for each and everyone of us. As we cooperate and support one another in building the Church, we may then shine as a true Christian community and attract outsiders to come in. Conversely, if we are lukewarm in our own community living, we cannot blame outsiders for their skepticism about our seriousness about Christ. Without being baited by the temptations of the world, we should include this in our daily prayer:

“Lord Jesus, teach my heart to share your love.”

*John Lee*



# Zeal for the LORD'S House



When I first came to JCC, I did not own a car and there were not many that drove. Then over time, more and more members bought cars and now the car park is almost full most Sundays.

I know some will say that God's house is our body.

1Corinthians 6:19-20

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Lately, I notice that I have been invited to more and more house blessings. Is this the next wave of God's blessing to our brothers and sisters?

But how many of us honor God with our bodies? Do you really take care of your bodies or are you so busy with work that you constantly fall sick due to lack of exercise or work stress?

Yet our church is run down and leaks whenever it rains heavily. Has God blessed us enough to rebuild His church building? We have the land for at least another 60 years. Are we going to waste it by having this dilapidated building?

The Bible is full of promises but don't forget that it is also full of warnings. Let us therefore heed the warnings lest the Lord removes His hand of blessing from us.

The Lord's Word contains a warning in Haggai 1:7-9 about leaving His House in ruin while we go about busy with our own house.

Let us therefore consider how we can rebuild or restore the Lord's House in Jurong.

Haggai 1:7-9

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD. "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house.

1Kings 6:11-13

The word of the LORD came to Solomon: "As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel."

Though it may not be easy, do not be discouraged.

Ezra 4:4

Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building.

It is not going to be easy to raise something like \$6 million dollars but we have an advantage over other churches. The land is ours so there is no additional cost to purchase a piece of land. The amount looks like a mountain but will not God remove the mountain if we exercise faith in Him?

The building may not be built in our generation but will we not want to have the money collected so that it will be ready for our children's generation? Do we want our children to remain in Jurong Christian Church or run away to join those churches with new buildings and fancy facilities like theatres, lifts and underground car parks?

Just treat this as the rumblings of an old man thinking of what legacy he wants to leave behind before he goes home and the Earth remembers him no more.

*Martin Cheah*

## **AN AFTERNOON WITH ANDREW GOH**

Among his various portfolios, Mr. Andrew Goh is probably most famous in his role as the editor of **IMPACT** magazine. He was invited by Bro Thomas Tan to speak on seeing the big picture.

He shared from the book of Esther. Relating about how the devil tried to destroy the Jews so as to frustrate God's plan to bring salvation through the Jews. He highlighted God's hand in moving people into places so that His plan can be accomplished and also the possibility of being left out of God's plan if we refuse to co-operate.

He shared with us the vision of a mighty harvest of souls. He then commented about the capacity of our building and the inability of JCC to absorb the expected harvest of souls even if we were to hold 5 services on Sundays. As he shared this, I realized that I had already written this article about rebuilding JCC - how coincidental!

The gist of his message to JCC is from Esther 4:14 "....and who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" In other words, is JCC put here for no reason or for the purpose of gathering the end-time harvest? Pray that God will reveal His purposes to us.

*Martin Cheah*

# Reaching to Grace Eternity

Struggle is a part and parcel of life. We struggle in our fleshly efforts with our own abilities, fighting thoroughly hard when we face trials and tribulations that come our way. Some people want perfection, and to be the best — the conqueror of all others. Whatever we desire for ourselves, the path we travel on is paved with uncertainties. Unexpected, desirable and undesirable events happen intermittently, bringing spontaneous joy or engendering bitter sorrow. Fear and anxiety are not totally avoidable. In times of disappointment with events or with people, how would your reaction be?



Man may desire to be the best he can be, like running a race in competing with time. Nevertheless, our weakest point and greatest pitfall is that when we falter, we tend to give in to our problems entirely and never again get to our feet and walk. Our worries and anxieties often make us so problem-centred that we are loaded with heavy burdens on our shoulders. Our problems hinder us in all that we do and make us lose sight of proper perspectives in life.

The painting you see above is based on the theme "Reaching to Grace Eternity". (For the picture in full colour, you may refer to the Vine-On-line) Through this painting, I display my thoughts. The elements in the picture suggest the basic character of life. We may observe a landscape with a path that branches in many directions, passing high ground and low valleys, overcoming potholes and reaching for the sky.

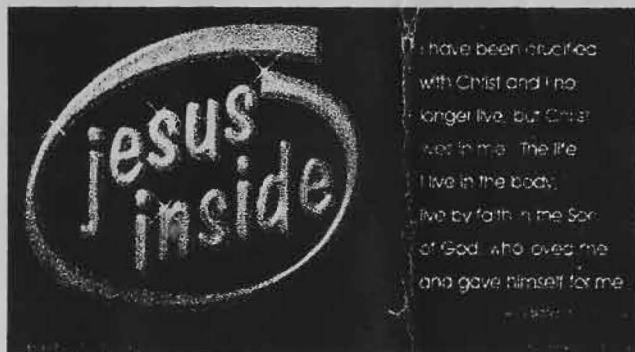
I have used the features of nature to illustrate the reality of life. The valleys symbolise the undesirable circumstances, daily uncertainties and temptations that present themselves along our journey.

The branching lines illustrate the confusing choices we have to take control of our destiny. No matter how life begins, there is always accountability to an end eventually.

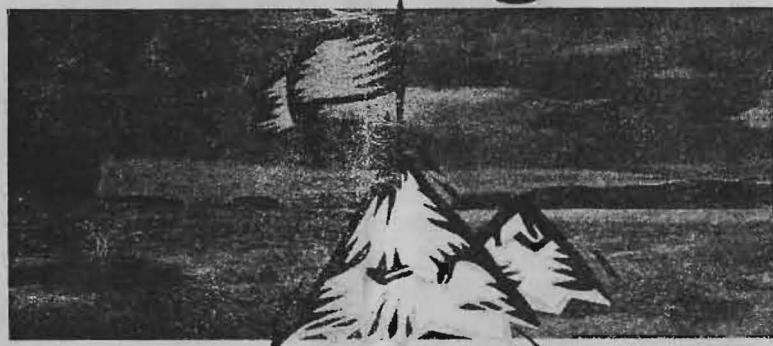
The summer-orange sky shows the depth of our life struggles towards seeking peace and everlasting happiness.

In all, my painting sums up life's complexity. There are many distractions, but only one way to a sweet destiny at life's journey's end.

*Yap Wee Hin*



# Challenge



**Life can be a rocky road. The Challenge is not to let it grind you into dust, but to polish you into a brilliant gem - J.M.Fogg**

A routine of constant challenge builds strong beings, much as a good gym workout builds strong bodies.