

Jurong Christian Church

The Vine Committee

Editors:

Martin Cheah mart5003@yahoo.com ;

John Lee jpbislee@starhub.net.sg

Publisher:

Nick Wong

The Vine

For internal circulation only

Volume 1/2007

EDITOR'S WORD

In the last issue of The Vine, I might have rather harshly pointed that there was a lack of thankfulness in our members. Let me apologize for being judgmental. However, interestingly, I received two types of response to my editorial. One was encouraged to write her testimony and the other told me that she was thankful but her testimony would not make interesting reading because it was too mundane, maybe even too ordinary to be written down.

Let me encourage us that nothing is ordinary where God is concerned. If the Gospel writers were to drop off all the nitty gritty stuff from the Bible, then we would not read about the poor widow with the 2 copper coins (Mark 12:42, Luke 21:2). It is truly an insignificant event in our eyes but not to God.

As we reach our 40th year as a church, I come to realize that because we did not write down many of the blessings we received in the early years, we are

unable to look back and count our blessings. We keep thinking that nothing happened, that the church has not grown. How many members were there in the beginning, I don't know but I venture to guess that there could not be half as many as there are today.

Can I count of our 1st generation brothers and sisters to fill in the blanks by writing their memoirs of the 1st 20 years of JCC history? No, not the statistical stuff, like membership numbers, financial reports, etc but rather the personal stuff, like what brought you to JCC, any memorable event, how God's Hand seem to be working in and through JCC, comparison of then and now, etc.

The Vine has been going on for the past 16 over years, so in a sense, we have a record of these years, although many miracles have been missed because the editors were not able to record them for posterity. We need more writers to help us keep a good record of God's work in JCC.

Martin Cheah

JCC - 40 YEARS SERVING IN JURONG

CAMBODIA – A Land crying out in pain and need



I joined the Mission team from Yishun Church to Cambodia from 5-7 Dec 2006. This trip was for 8 days until 12 December, Jim and I had gone there principally to observe, understand the work and how we can focus on Cambodia as a field for missions by JCC. Anthony and Pei Ping were with the YCC team for the entire duration of the trip.

This trip was my second missions trip, I had gone to Chiang Rai in 1990, which was the first missions trip in JCC.

LCS is exploring the possibility of engaging in Missions work in Cambodia. Our sister Church Yishun led by Pastor William Chang had made a number of trips to Cambodia over the last 3 years. So together with 26 fellow trippers from Yishun and other churches, we embark on this trip. LCS has identified Cambodia as the focal country for engagement in Missions work.



Cambodia – land with a troubled past

30 years of civil war including the genocide which mercilessly killed 1.6 million and the ensuing systematic destruction of infrastructure under the Khmer Rouge regime from 1974-79 created the dire situation Cambodia finds herself today. A Peace Accord signed in Paris in 1991 and the UN

brokered election held in early 1990 promised a new beginning for Cambodia. Unfortunately recovery was crippled by an internal coup in 1997 and the subsequent Asia financial crisis from 1997-1999. It was only in the past decade that Cambodia made progress towards rebuilding the country. The task is daunting and saddled with many challenges.

85% of the population resides in rural areas with inadequate access to basic services.

Cambodia has a land area of 176,520 sq km about 260 times that of Singapore. Its population based on July 2006 estimate is 13.9 m. Cambodia economy is dominated by the agricultural sector, which contributes 41% of GDP (gross domestic product) and employs three-quarters of the labor force. Services account for 42% of the GDP, and industry 17%. The official religion is Theravada Buddhism, 95% of Khmer religion. The country also has minority religions of about half a million Muslims, and 60,000 Christians

Some social and economic data with comparative to Singapore:

	(In US\$)	
	Cambodia	Singapore
GDP(Purchasing power parity) (2005 est)	\$34.08 bn	126.5
Per capita GDP	2,500	28,600
Population below poverty line	40%	NA
Infant mortality/1,000	68	2.29
Life expectancy	59 years	81.7
HIV prevalence rate(2003 est)	2.6%	0.2%
People living with AIDS(2003 est)	170,000	4,100
Birth rate/1000 population(2006 est)	26.9	9.34
Death rate/1000 population(2006 est)	9.06	4.28
Population growth % (2006 est)	1.78	1.42
% of Christians	0.38	14.6%

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2003 Human Development Index which measures a country's achievement in life expectancy, education attainment and real adjusted income, Cambodia ranks 137 out of 170 countries.

Poverty, malnutrition and poor and non-existent health services have resulted in some of the worst health conditions in the world. Nearly one in 10 babies will die before they reach their first birthday. Low vaccination

rate for preventable diseases are primary causes for almost half of the very high under five mortality rate estimated at 14% of live births (2003 est). Chronic malnutrition among Cambodian children is common with 45% of children moderately stunted and more than one in five severely stunted. The cycle of poverty, ill health and debt continue to cripple the country development. Cambodia has the highest measured prevalence of HIV in Asia. The national 2002 HIV Sentinel Surveillance survey indicated an estimated prevalence rate of 2.6%. AIDS threatens to undermine the success that could be achieved in economic growth and reduction of mortality.

Cambodia is a source, destination and transit country for men, women and children trafficked for purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labor.



It is in the context of such dire situation that Cambodia is opening itself up to NGO and other social and religious organizations to help the country resolve some of the desperate condition it is in.

Love Cambodia

It is into this needy land crying out for help that we embarked on this trip. The stark reality of its troubled past is evidenced as we travel through Phnom Penh. The city reminds me of Singapore in the 60's my childhood years, time has stood still for the country. The city is cramped with unkempt building, dusty roads pervaded by a motley number of bicycles, motor cycles, lorries punctuated with the persistent sounding of the horn, electrical cables strung untidily across road junctions.

A visit to the innocuous school building call Toul Seng houses the infamous genocide centre where many innocent Cambodians were ruthlessly tortured and murdered by the Khmer Rouge. The building is preserved as a memorial and a lesson from the past. We visited a home for children with Aids, it rends your heart to see young lives ravaged with a terminal disease. Even as we watch them lined up to receive their medication as part of their daily routine, these carefree children hardly ten

in age, don't understand what they are afflicted with. Some who contract infectious diseases as a result of Aids are isolated, the rest romp around, unaware of the fate that befall them. But then, these are the fortunate children, they are many, probably in the thousands who are dying uncared and untreated.

Due to the high death rate as a result of war and poverty, there are many orphans, many uncared for children who roam the streets – the street kids. They are vulnerable targets for child trafficking, forced labour, prostitution and other forms of exploitation. Many NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) are engaged with helping street kids, with schooling and play areas to keep them off the streets.



Traveling to the province of Kg Chhnang (pronounced Chi-nang) which is the main centre for work in Cambodia by LCS, we are greeted by the sight of padi fields lining the road. The farming method were primitive and fields were not well kept.

Missions work

Arriving in Kg Chhnang we were warmly welcomed by the Christian villages which had put a tent decked in ceremonial banners of blue, red and yellow. The villagers lined up forming an aisle with hands clasped together warmly welcomed us. A band was playing traditional Khmer music, the air was filled with warmth and festivity. A simple table backdrop emblazoned with a cross in red provided the altar.

A group of villagers, including the elderly, the middle aged, youths and children had gathered in eager anticipation. The leaders of various cell groups in the neighboring villages were introduced, some have come from as far away as 70 km.

The work in Kg Chhnang was started by Pastor Pyne Chen about 6 years ago. He was an ex-military person and out of his own initiative, love and fervency for the Lord established 26 church groups in the surrounding villages, with 52 leaders and around 1,000 members. His own home doubles up as the Church meeting place, with about 60 members. His son, son-in law and children are all actively engaged in the works a number of them full time. One unassuming man in a land dominated by

Buddhism, out of his love for God has spread the gospel and brought many into the Kingdom.

During the trip we conducted clinic for the sick, programs for the youths and children. The activities were well attended. Because of the great need in Cambodia, different villages had to be invited for different sessions. Most of the villagers who came were unbelievers and before the activities, the gospel was preached and call made for the villages to respond. The villagers probably hearing a foreigner for the first time listened in rapt attention and many responded to the gospel message. The mission team members each with their assigned tasks, engaged enthusiastically in the



work and activities. The greatest need was for medical help, where nearly a hundred each session would patiently wait to consult the doctor and receive the required medication. The trip lasting 6 days would have helped more than a thousand needy villagers.

The children enjoyed themselves with Bible lessons, learning simple English, playing fun games and receiving small treats and gifts. The Cambodian youths joined the Singaporean youths in games, interaction and were eager to learn English.

There were many happy faces all round, used clothing and small gift items were given away and the recipients were wildly excited.

Our extremely gracious host even prepared dinner for the entire team and witnessing their diligence and effort they expressed love and sacrifice.

Lessons and call

Going to Cambodia was poignant, learning about the history and the situation in the country I am much moved. In fact for several days after the trip, each morning I awake, my heart cried out for Cambodia. The images of poverty and deprivation, the neediness, the suffering children with Aids and the many uncared for stays in the mind. This land with such a tragic and sad past, people so scarred with such violence and degradation, and

entire country marred by the sinfulness and depravity of man. Cambodia is in dire need of love, God's love through his salvation message and also the visible demonstration of love in tangible ways to help alleviate poverty, support those who are engaged in God's work and to upgrade the economic livelihood of the people. The Christians in Singapore and indeed in JCC are in a position to reach out and touch their lives. Many Singapore Churches are already active in Cambodia.

LCS has endorsed the planned work for Cambodia. We will launch our mission support and engagement for Cambodia as part of the work under LCS. LCS has registered an NGO under Lutheran World Mission – bringing God's love to the World. There are indeed many opportunities for us to “Love Cambodia“.

A call will be made, will you respond by first learning about the work planned for Kg Chnnang and how you can be personally involved. Let's extend our love to the oppressed, the poor and the harassed.

Tan Swee Leong



The consequence of our sin

It snowed at the height of summer in Australia while it felt like autumn with little snow in the depth of winter in Europe and the U.S., the New Paper reported last month. Right here in Singapore, we are experiencing an unusual spell of rainy season giving rise to floods, landslides and damaged roads.

We are familiar with the biblical story of the Great Flood. Unbelievers would of course say that it is unbelievable. Also unbelievable that whole ancient civilizations of Peru were exterminated by the El Niño events? While the term “El Niño” came into man’s vocabulary only in the 1990’s, the unusual weather conditions were already observed way back before the first World War, except that they were less understood and were not officially defined by the weather experts. In case you are wondering what

El Niño is, it refers to weather upheavals caused by warm currents rising just a little every three to seven years in the eastern Pacific Ocean. Imagine this: Normally, the current is cold here while at the other end of the ocean it is warm. When the unusual happens, the end that is supposed to be cold becomes warm and the end supposed to be warm becomes cold, just by a few degrees. No big deal and quite tolerable like when your room temperature goes up or down by one or two degrees? Really, the temperature see-saw is quite a big deal when the inexplicable variation stirs up storms and disastrous floods in one part of the world, and droughts and famines in another part, and ecological balances are also thrown into disarray. No thanks to global warming enhancing the calamitous effects.

The tsunamis, the formation of a new ice island in the Arctic (due to a gigantic piece of ice shelf breaking off) and a host of other nature's catastrophes are fresh in our memories. Would it be too imponderable for another great flood and another great earthquake above the scale of 8* (due to the tectonic plates taking too much shock from stronger and stronger subterranean nuclear tests) to challenge Man's destiny? Snow may yet fall unexpectedly in Singapore on an otherwise fine day, the Earth spew radioactivity instead of mud (due to all the underground nuclear tests spilling contamination), low-lying islands disappear from the world map overnight, and whatever else one would normally attribute to wild imaginations catch us unprepared.

*(*Note that when the Richter Scale measure of an earthquake increases by 1, it means that the earthquake's intensity/strength is doubled. If it increases by 1 again, the strength is doubled again, and so on for every unit increase in the scale reading.)*

God creates, man destroys. As I think of the unspoiled moonscape and the natural beauty of the Mars-scape, I visualize how Earth was in the beginning, and how great man is capable of destruction. No, I am not now referring to his devastation of the environment, but the destruction of his own survival – call it suicide if you wish. Think of the Earth-unfriendly habits we encourage or condone, and we can see that the only way we are different from the suicide terrorists is that we terrorize the Earth and life in a not-so-instant albeit certain way by our sin against creation.

The whole plain of the Jordan was well-watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen. 13:10) Look at the Sodoms and the Gomorrahs of today's world and contemplate what the present sins of man are that were detestable to the LORD during the time of Lot.

It is common for people to think of the great sinfulness of Sodom (linking it with the English word 'sodomy') as relating to sexual depravity, spiritual darkness and great evil that are an immediate affront even to our present day loosened standards of right and wrong, good and bad. Read what Ezekiel 16:49-50 says:

“Now this was the sin of Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen.”

What of man's modern-day conduct would be more unbearable than Sodom during the time of Lot? Matt. 10:14-15 tells us what Jesus said:

“If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.”

According to Josephus (a Jewish historian of the 1st Century):

“Now, about this time the Sodomites, overweeningly proud of their numbers and the extent of their wealth, showed themselves insolent to men and impious to the Divinity, insomuch that they no more remembered the benefits that they had received from Him, hated foreigners and avoided any contact with others. Indignant at this conduct, God accordingly resolved to chastise them for their arrogance, and not only to uproot their city, but to blast their land so completely that it should yield neither plant nor fruit whatsoever from that time forward.”

Selfishness (“What is mine is mine, what is yours is yours,” regarding material possessions) and economic wrongdoing were all mentioned in Jewish writings as the dreadful and frequent transgressions of the Sodomites.

I believe that the evil of the people of Gomorrah were not much different from the Sodomites.

Are the inhabitants of today’s Sodoms and Gomorrahs any better than their counterparts in the Bible to avoid God’s wrath, which would mean overthrowing of those cities with burning sulphur raining down from above, including all those living therein and the vegetation in the land? (Gen. 19:24-25)

In the Greek OT, the word “katestrophe” is used to describe God’s way of destroying the wicked. Thankfully, we can escape catastrophes by being God’s select to be saved from destruction – like Noah and Lot, when a great flood comes or when the Earth trembles with fire and brimstones falling everywhere on the Sodoms and the Gomorrahs. We can, with God’s favour, be like Noah, prepared; or we can be like Lot, taking heed of God’s warning to escape. God has many destruction-of-evil methods in His arsenal, and He is not restricted to use exactly the ones He has thus far used. Similarly, how we get ourselves prepared need not in detail be the same as the ways of Noah and Lot, but the bottomline is that we must flee from every pool of sin that we wallow in. There is a great difference between falling into sin and wallowing in sin.

Societies have become more and more permissive. Last time, young girls baring just a little skin would surely invite a good dressing-down by their parents; but today, what is there to shout about lower and lower necklines, higher and higher hemlines, and all the rage about appearing sexy being the pop fashion chase and locking lips between the sexes for a public boasting of “we’re in love”? Last time, parents with puckered brows and scowls would strike at the children who dared to even gamble 5 cents on marbles or some “tikam” games (a kind of wagering activity young children played for small gains that would excite them a lot). Today, children buying and selling picture cards in schools is evidence of their business enterprise and a good indulgence to hone their entrepreneurial

skills from a young age; and teens joining their parents at the mahjong table or buying 4Ds are just being with the times, nothing to bat an eyelid at. So it is with all forms and all levels of gambling – our minds, once dead set against something, can be changed to be updated with the times and with what others are doing. What this means is that:

- What was wrong in the past can become right now, and what is right today can become wrong tomorrow. (Don't talk about gambling. Maybe homosexuality can become alright tomorrow because more and more people are growing to accept it.) There is no absolute standard of right and wrong; every right or wrong is relative to the fickleness of Man's sense of permissibility.
- Right or wrong is like a fashion statement, moving forward (sometimes backward) with the times.
- Advantage to be gained from joining a crowd is good enough justification for the adoption of any 'moral' way.
- The moral compass is flexible.

The four meanings above are not just disconcerting to Christians, but to all followers of religions with established moral codes on right and wrong.

Non-religious people stand alone with their worldviews of right and wrong, swaying with how the world's winds blow. It is attractive but, by common sense, attractiveness is not equal to correctness. Do we blame them for our own sins? No, we don't. As Christians, we know of no justification to do so when we have to plead for God's favour. Heed the words of Mark 7:14-15:

“Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’ “ ”

John Lee

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

Thank God for a fruitful year in 2006.

It is a great blessing from the Lord to be able to study His Word in BSF. Early this year, we studied the book of Genesis and learnt that God created everything before He created man. All things are ready for Adam to use. We, like Adam are guests invited to God's house and yet we disobey the house rules, we became ungrateful to the owner, our God. Despite our sins, God came to restore us to Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Being a housewife is as busy as working in the office. As I am being asked "Is God important to me, do I have time for Him?" This is like a wake up call for me, He is important to me and I want to set aside time for Him. So, every morning, I set the alarm at 5am to wake up to read His Word and pray.

I also learnt from Amy Saw to be creative in using my time, the little time I have in between, I break up jobs like spray the toilet wall with stain remover, and clean it off when I come back or memorized a Hokkien song on a bus journey.

Monday do BSF home work, Tues attend BSF, Wed visitation with Ps Sam, Lam Chen, Mandy and Lucy, Thurs meet with mothers to pray, Fri volunteer work in Concern & Care at Bukit Batok, Sat house cleaning. On top of that, start giving tuition to a special girl who has a world of her own, strong willed and cannot sit still for more than 10 minutes.

God speaks to me in 2 Cor 9:6-15 during my quiet time, I was pondering about "God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things at all time having all that you need you will abound in every good work. The explanation given in "Our Daily Bread" "...only as we lose our lives in Him that we find true life. God blesses those who give of their lives and resources. Give out the truth you know, and He gives you more to give away. Give your time, and you'll have more time to give. Set no limit on your love and you'll have more love for others than before".

I asked God's Holy Spirit for wisdom to teach. Though friends' prayers and guidance, I learnt many lessons from God through this girl. We, adults sometimes do not trust God enough that He can help us, we struggle and refused to be taught by our Teacher. Her mom once shared that what God gives her is the BEST.

In the process of growing in the Lord, my spiritual life is like a “yoyo” I hold fast to the Lord. He humbled me to nothing and I feel so small. A Godly couple reminded me that Christ had given up His right and become nothing, I need to do likewise. It is painful initially, after I obeyed, God works in me. I feel so light and free and able to forgive. When we are willing to be used by Him, He will enable us.

Dorothy Ow



80

Even as JCC turns 40 year old this year, one of her founding fathers celebrated his 80th birthday on 1 Jan 2007. He is none other than Mr P S George. Mr George hails from India,

one of the pioneer foreign workers. A quiet man although he worked in the then RTS as an engineer. He is quietly spreading the Word of God through his ministry with The Bible Society.

Happy Birthday to you, Uncle George!



INTRODUCING THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SINGAPORE

The Origin of the Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church originated when Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and Professor of Theology at Wittenberg University, began to raise his objections against many of the religious abuses of the Roman Catholic Church of his day. On October 31, 1517, Luther posted his "95 Theses" to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. These 95 Theses were an invitation to debate the practice of the sale of indulgences which were certificates which could be purchased to forgive sin or reduce the time a soul had to stay in purgatory. Luther had learned from his study of scripture that forgiveness of sin could not be purchased nor could it be earned through the performance of meritorious works. Full forgiveness of sin came only through faith in the mercy of God revealed in Christ Jesus. This central idea led Luther to criticize many of the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther, despite his theological disagreements, was a devoted Roman Catholic Priest who loved the church and had no intention of separating from it. He only intended a reform of the existing abuses. However, when he was excommunicated by the Pope for his writings and teachings, his break with the Roman Catholic Church was made inevitable.

The basics of our Lutheran Church

- ◆ Apostolic - The origin of our church is in the apostles of Jesus Christ and in their traditions, practices, and statements of faith
- ◆ Evangelical - we actively share the Good News (Gospel) and invite others to receive salvation by faith in Christ
- ◆ Biblical - the basis of our beliefs is the Bible
- ◆ Sacramental - the main emphasis of our worship experience, practice and outreach into the community is on baptism, the way God adopts us into the family, and on communion, the way we gather and celebrate God's presence with us now.
- ◆ Confessional - we have written documents which state what we believe and we treat them as very important

- ◆ Catholic - we believe we are part of the universal Christian church around the world
- ◆ Ecumenical - we recognise believers of most other denominations, as well as our own, as God's legitimate sons and daughters
- ◆ Liturgical - we follow an order of service and a church year
- ◆ Fluidity in Governance and Structure: Any structure that can lend itself best to the correct preaching of the Gospel and the Sacraments

About the Lutheran Church in Singapore

In 1953, shortly after China closed its doors to contacts with the international mission movement, missionaries were sent to northern Malaysia by the United Lutheran Church in America, one of the ELCA's predecessor churches, to begin Lutheran mission work among the ethnic Chinese community in Malaysia. At that time, present-day Malaysia and Singapore were linked in one political unit. Gradually the pioneer mission efforts moved toward the south, first to metropolitan Kuala Lumpur, and soon after that to Singapore. The Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer was built in 1960 and became the leading congregation of the Singapore district of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore. Redeemer became a centre for worship, service and fellowship, with an outreach in the housing projects which the Singapore government was carrying out to accommodate the multitudes of new immigrants as well as thousands of young people streaming into the cities from rural areas. One outreach effort was family counselling, since families in Singapore often faced conflicting value systems -- the expectations of traditional culture represented by older generations, and the fast-paced modern life with its high expectations of material success represented by younger generations.

Mission efforts led to the formation of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore (LCMS) in 1963, with two districts within Malaysia and one district encompassing the island of Singapore. By 1978, all established congregations attained financial self-support, and together assumed support for the administrative budget of the LCMS central office.

The LCMS developed ministries and built facilities which are a model for urban industrial evangelism. Congregations in Queenstown,

Jurong and Bedok New Town have flourished as they responded to the needs and lifestyle of people in large industrial housing complexes. Since land space is very limited and extremely expensive, congregations often locate their worship facilities within high-rise apartment buildings.

For many years, by mutual agreement, the congregations and districts of Malaysia worked to organize a separate church for Malaysia alone, and their counterparts in Singapore have also been committed to setting up a separate Lutheran church to serve and witness within Singapore. This reflects the fact that Malaysia and Singapore have been separate countries politically since 1965, and their activities have also been independent of each other. The Lutheran Church in Singapore was officially constituted on 30th October 1997. The LCMS divided into the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore (in Malaysia -- current legal name is maintained for the time being) and the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS) on January 1, 1998.

The LCS has about three thousand over members in seven congregations.

A significant development within the Church is its growing mission program. In addition to local outreach, the Church participates in mission work in Mongolia, China, Cambodia, and Thailand. It also has outreach ministries to local Thai workers at Thai Good News Centre (TGNC) and to the seafarers through the International Lutheran Seafarers' Mission (ILSM). The LCS also has a social services arm called Lutheran Community Care Services Ltd (LCCS).

Revd Martin Yee

From my longtime participation in and observation of church congregations, I've learned not to measure church growth solely by size. A big church isn't weak or strong only because of its size—and neither is a small church. There's a more elemental way to measure growth: by how faithful the people are to God, his Word, and each other.

We're all aware of churches that are both big and strong. But I know a church of approximately 200 people that honors God through strong preaching, active evangelism, and stellar care for each other. This small-town church has been slowly and steadily growing in numbers.

Lee Dean (BuildingChurchLeaders.com Editor)

Christmas Camp in Melaka

Knowing that we were going to have a fun camp in Meleka was a most pleasant surprise. It has been exactly 10 years since we (the BB) last ventured into the deep jungles of Melaka. I was in sec 1 at that time but still the fond memories of my first camp were deeply etched in my mind.

10 years ago, I set my foot on that hill. I was only a boy then. Possibly due to the fact that we knew little of the campsite, we landed with no preconceived ideas or expectations.



It was different this time. Upon reaching the entrance of the dense and humid jungle, ominous questions began to resonate in my mind: will the campsite be deluged by the heavy monsoon rains? Will the dark clouds surrender to the humid environment? Will the programmes be executed with ease? Will the bunks be cramp and will the food be distasteful?

After alighting from the bus, a 10 mins walk led us to the heart of the forest. At the campsite, the ground was literally awash with muddy patches, and, together with the streams of water flowing continuously from the higher grounds, it portrayed a surreal scene reminiscent of the recent floods back home.

Worse was to come; the area was infested with “commando” mosquitoes (NS guys will know what I mean). A casual slap on your back can give you up to 3 dead mosquitoes. The mosquitoes are not the only pests we had to deal with. Having a simple meal at the canteen was a challenge as we had to deal with the scavengers of the jungle: monkeys. These little freaks are pretty aggressive and persistent, and display much teamwork in the way that they attempt to hunt down our packet rice and fruits. We have to watch all the 4 corners of our dilapidated roof as we chew our food. Mr Chin joked that these little freaks are actually here to meet their Singaporean relatives. LOL

Since the officers have, more often than not, presented a no-nonsense persona before our Boys, this time, we decided unanimously and telepathically to tone down for this camp and be buddies with our Boys. It was going to be a fun camp even for the officers.

In one of the night games, we played “Candle fight”. It turned out to be a scheming game for the tribe officers. We have officers and primers manipulating each other like what happens in “Survivor”. There was a lot of friendly backstabbing amongst the officers as we team up with tribes that eventually killed us accidentally...LOL

During the lashing or knot tying session, the instructors - Zhenhui, Wen Wei and I (Justin) – decided to stunt our Boys by pretending to be asleep. When our Boys pushed ajar the creaky door, they found us unblushingly asleep on the floor with nary a glance at them. When they finally woke us up, what shocked them more was that we told them not to bother us and read their own “lecture” notes while we continue our nice nap. They were shocked! Ha, ha! Don’t blame us Boys. It has been such long time since we played a serious joke on you. LOL.



The cool weather was so gratifying for sleep that we, the younger officers, thought of a crappy idea. We started to confess to our Captain, Zewen, some of the inconsequential mistakes we had made during the camp (like waking up 5 mins late or being too enthusiastic) and volunteered ourselves for “punishment”. We suggested that for the “punishment”, each of us will stay in our bunks to do

self-reflection (in Chinese this is call “mian bi si guo”). This was obviously a chance for us to nap. LOL. Next time our Captain will know what we mean when we asked for such self-inflicted “punishments” during camp.

Besides the strong fellowship experience during the camp, we also spent quality time resting in God's presence.

Our camp objective was to experience God's wonder in Nature. Our camp verse was aptly chosen by Mr Chin:

Stop and consider God's wonders. The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power. (Job 37:14, 28)

Indeed, Nature was an excellent reminder that our Father is the creator of all the flora and fauna that surrounded us. It also reminded us that God more than just provided nature for us; He actually delights in giving us good things and being in our midst.

Our camp motto was challenging for all of us, including the officers. We call it the "O3". It comprises of three elements: Outwitting the devil, Outlasting temptations and Outreach to the Boys.

I guess our Boys were able to relate well to the spiritual aspect of the camp. Our Boys, especially Lek Wei, were always on a "high" when they sang their hearts out in the deep forest praising God. Well, I guess nobody will complain except the monkeys.



The devotions were refreshing as well. We got to know how some of our senior officers came to know Christ and how they came into this ministry. Most notably, we got to know how God used a piece of BB poster outside the church to bring Mr Chin to JCC and left him "trapped" with us for close to 30 years. LOL.

Overall, God's presence was clearly evident throughout the camp.

While it was pouring cats and dogs in Singapore and Johor - and we have parents calling us frequently to check on their "princes"- the weather was pleasant for most of the days save

for a couple of drizzles at the break of dawn and the in the evening. God cooled the place for our sleep and then brought out the sun when we started our activities.

Ironically, we even have a mini drought on the last day when our mechanical “wells” broke down; all other places around us were flooded. We had to carry water from the nearby water tanks. God has indeed kept the rain from us!

I can truly say that this was one of the best camps where the officers and primers really got a chance to mingle with the Boys and put aside our officer-boy relationship for a couple of days. Most of our Boys would also attest that they never knew that their officer and primers can go bonkers more than they do – for a couple of days.

In the midst of this camaraderie and fun, some respect was also earned. Now, our dear Boys will know that their dear officers are a force to reckon with; whatever tricks they dish out on us, we already know them fully well, because we have been there - literally - and done that.



Dear Boys, the only way to outdo us is to join us. LOL.

This was indeed one amazing and fruitful camp. Thanks be to God!

Justin Fay

WHAT LIGHT ARE YOU SHINING?

Jesus spoke directly about our responsibility to represent him in Matthew 5:16 when he said, "In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" (NLT).

We need to let our good deeds shine out for all to see, but we also need to recognize that our bad deeds are out there shining for the world to see too. The non-believers around us are watching our bad deeds far more closely than our good deeds. We owe it to Jesus to do the best we can to honor his sacrifice, and we need to recognize that the lost of the world are watching to see how we're doing.

—John Atkinson is a pastor at Bay Area Fellowship in Corpus Christi Texas