



Happy New Year

As I was pondering over the Christmas story which I tried to relate to my guests during the Christmas Party, I found that only two groups of people welcomed the baby Jesus. One was the poor and lowly shepherds and the other was the wise men. What about the rich and powerful? Apparently, King Herod tried to kill the baby Jesus.

In our day and age, do only the poor and wise accept the gift of Christmas? I guess not because many rich and famous personalities are proclaiming Christians, not hidden ones. Take for instance in a recent newspaper report, Sammi Cheng was reported as trying to convert her ex-beau. I also notice that quite a number of TCS stars thanked God during their award acceptance speeches.

So, whether you are poor or wise, rich or famous, God's Gift this Christmas is for you. Why delay? Now is already 2008 and in John 6:40a "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life...." What is holding you back from believing and accepting God's Gift, Jesus?

2 Peter 3:9b "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to

come to repentance."

On 7 Jan 2008, my prayer for my colleague, who was injured in a forklift accident about 2 years ago, was finally answered. The answer was "No". I had prayed for him almost daily for these past 2 years and when I visited him 3 days before, he had already slipped into a coma again. In the High Dependency ward of NUH, together with two other colleagues, I prayed for him again. A few days later, he was gone.

He was so looking forward to collecting his CPF but he did not get to spend it because he got into the accident a few months earlier than his CPF was due.

What if he had collected his CPF and retired? "Retirement means Death", so said our able mentor. The Bible says that man is destined to die once (Heb 9:27). Death is inevitable. My suggestion is to live like you are not going anytime soon but be prepared like you are going tomorrow.

Remember **MC King**. He went off a few days earlier. So do not delay because "No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death." (Ecc 8:8)

Martin Cheah

Jurong West Bethany Deck the Halls

22 Dec 2007 – A gathering of almost 90 people, friends, colleagues and relatives of Jurong West CG and Bethany CG members forming an 8 to 5 ratio of pre-Christians to Christians had a fun time at JCC MPH. The original objective was to have a food, fellowship and fun time and I think we managed to achieve that. A secondary objective of sharing the Word may have fallen on deaf ears. However, I leave it to the Almighty to work His Will in His mysterious Ways as we don't know how lives may have been impacted through this party. Maybe, through this event, those who stepped into church for the first time in their lives may find it not so threatening and will come again. My colleague's mother comes to mind. She will be moving into the new blocks facing our front gate next year. Maybe she will come to future Dialect Ministry outreach programs.

What initially started out as a small gathering of colleagues picked up steam at the last moment and suddenly grew into a party too big for the organizers to handle. With so many pre-Christians in our midst, I think we were overwhelmed and may not have effectively relayed



the message of Christmas. A party this size will cost you about \$800 to organize without counting some of the other costs which were not claimed. Obviously, we may not be able to do this every year. A special thanks to those who were not from our CGs but came along to lend a hand.

Some problems we have to resolve the next time, like half the CG busy with the food arrangements and some busy with the PA system. That left only a handful to do the



crowd control. This is the Martha/Mary problem. We were busy like Martha when we should have been like Mary, sitting with the people and talking to them. A lesson to learn for the next party! Are we ready to party again?

Martin Cheah



"It's strange, but ever since that star appeared I've had this overwhelming urge to go shopping."



Abundance Joy to the World

During the CHRISTmas season, the Abundance Cell did not forget presenting their glad tidings through carols in home visits to Auntie Margaret and

the Sanjay family.

Immanuel – God with us! This was the reason for the season as visitors and the hosts mingled merrily. At the void deck of the home of Auntie Margaret, it was a great time for all as JOY TO THE WORLD and other carols resonated with senior citizens and domestic helpers from Indonesia joining the Christmas cheer.



May all glad tidings fill the whole year of 2008 through and through as each and every one who partook in the blessings of Christmas continue in regular faithful worship in church.

Tony Koh



Dreaming of a White Christmas

Part 1

While most care groups chose to celebrate Christmas on 22 Dec, YAM decided on an early Christmas celebration on 15 Dec 07 at the Social Lounge of Northvale, residence of Wilfred and Julie. God was good. Despite the popularity of the lounge during the festive season, Wilfred finally managed to book the lounge after some initial failure doing so online. What a relief!



David was appointed the coordinator and in no time, the e-invitation card was out. Carols and games were prepared by Joseph and Peh Ping in the midst of their preparation for the Cambodia Mission trip. Seline and Beng Lay were assigned the important job of deciding on the menu.

On the day of celebration, it rained very heavily but by evening, the weather had cleared up a fair bit. As I stepped into the lounge, I noticed that the furniture was already neatly arranged, thanks to Kin Siong, Wilfred, Wong Mui and their spouses! The Welcome Gift of Christmas cookie was lovingly baked and very nicely packed by Seline, who stayed up all night to prepare it. We were also very impressed with the decorations, done single-handedly by Wilfred. With Christmas carols playing in the background, YAM was ready to receive our guests.

By 6.30pm our guests started streaming in. We thank God for close to 20 new and old friends who joined us for the celebration. Besides the catered dinner, Seline had also prepared some multi-coloured, techno-coloured, mouth-watering jelly and a mini chocolate fondue for desserts. The fondue was a hit with everyone.

After we had our fill, Peh Ping got everyone to sit down for the games. In the first game we had to find our “family members” and later to come up with an action for each family member group. This game allowed us to get to know

one another a little bit more. In the next game, we had to be very imaginative to guess what 20 items she had put in a tiny box! The games may be simple but we had great fun.

Next on the programme was carol singing. We sang familiar carols with gusto. Even our pre-Christian friends joined in the singing. We sang so well it was as if the angels in heaven were proclaiming the birth of Christ. I am not joking. We were that good! Wong Mui shared a short message on the meaning of Christmas and presented a solo piece “Everyday Christmas”.

Our special item was a dance choreographed by our own YAMster, Joyce, to the tune of “King of kings & Lord of lords”. It involved some simple steps to the left and right, with a turn somewhere along the steps. The result was more laughter with a few of us left without a dance partner in the middle of the dance!



Last on the list was gift exchange. It was not your ordinary way of drawing numbers or lucky dip for the gift exchange. Instead, we had Wilfred read out a story while the rest of us sat in a circle with a gift in our hand. While the story was read, we had to pass the gift to our right each time the word “right” was mentioned, and pass the gift to our left when the word “left” was mentioned. It was hilarious and we had to ask Wilfred to go slow on his story!



We also took the opportunity to celebrate the birthday of one of our guests, Sharon, who had her birthday the day before. And because my birthday also falls in December, I got to blow the candle with her too.

All too soon it was time to say goodbye. We trust that this is not the end but the beginning of new friendships forged. We pray that the songs that we sang and the message that was shared will stay in the hearts of our new friends. We

pray that one day they will come to know our Lord and Savior personally and celebrate Christmas with new-found meaning.

Part II

We had such a great time on 15 Dec that YAM decided to gather together again on 25 Dec, right after Christmas Day Service. Wong Mui and Beng Lay hosted a simple lunch of curry chicken with bread, pizza and salad. It was actually not that simple because Beng Lay told me she got up at 6 a.m. that morning to make the preparations. Thanks Beng Lay!

What made the occasion special was that the older youths from DOT (Patrick, Jonathan, Jason, Samuel Tan, Samuel Tay, Angeline, Mindy, Stephanie) and some new friends joined us in the Christmas celebration. The DOT group was happily playing NERD once they had their lunch.

Oblivious to the rest, Beng Lay, Joseph and I were in the kitchen opening a bottle of champagne and red wine when suddenly the red wine gushed out of the bottle, splashing the kitchen wall, Joseph's and Beng Lay's white clothings red! After Joseph cleaned up his shirt and Beng Lay and I cleaned up the floor and wall, it happened a second time! We did not know whether to laugh or to cry at the freak accident. We had to clean up the place and Joseph his shirt all over again...



As part of my birthday wish (which I had forgotten) I was treated to a nice home-baked oreo cheesecake by Beng Lay. YAM has always enjoyed cakes baked by Beng Lay and also Julie's cheesecake for our birthdays. We are indeed blessed by the mothers in the YAM group with their wonderful cooking!

It was a joyous occasion as we celebrated Christmas with our fellow brothers and sisters. YAM look forward to having the older youths join us in our future meetings.

Christina Ang

TAMAN JURONG *Home for Christmas*

Taman Jurong Care Group organised a Christmas Celebration on 20th December 2007, a public holiday, at the home of Yew Moi and Sek Hoong. Most of the invited guests turned up for the occasion, among whom were some pre-believers. In total, there were about 40 people.

The programme was simple but meaningful. After dinner at about 6pm, we sang carols, played games (led by Christopher Wang) and had a time of sharing. Swee Leong presented the Christmas message and then a video about the life story of a Mr. Kevin Soh was shown.

Kevin was a hard-core drug addict since young and grew up in a broken family. His grandmother brought him up. Kevin went in and out of the drug rehabilitation centre many times and never seemed to be able to get rid of his addiction. It was only when he read a Bible out of boredom that God's Word touched his heart. Since then, he became a changed man as a Christian and managed to kick off the drug habit. After discharge from the drug rehabilitation centre, he worked with Breakthrough Ministry and went round sharing his testimony. Kevin's changed life was so drastic that even his grandmother believed that God was behind his renewed life and became a Christian too.



The video spoke to all viewers that God is real and can change lives no matter how hardened the lives may be. It is relevant to the Christmas message that God is with us and knows our hardship. We pray that the video would make an impact in the lives of the pre-believers who watched it.

Yew Moi

Bethel Silent Night



22 Dec 2007, Bethel CG celebrated Christmas at Young Kwang's house. Their story missed the deadline, so it is here titled as Silent Night. However we can see from the photos that the night was far from silent.

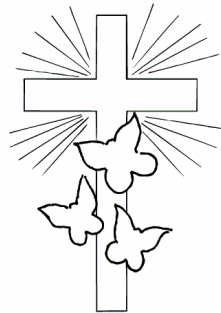


Church Seasons

Christmas is over with the celebration of Epiphany on the 6th of January. Before Christmas, we excitedly awaited through the season of Advent for the day of Christ's birth. Now, we enter the season of Lent, which will lead us on to Easter. The Church Year is filled with many festival days – included among them are Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. There are still other festival days in the Lutheran liturgical calendar: Nativity, Baptism of our Lord, Transfiguration, Annunciation, Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Trinity, All Saints, Christ the King, etc.

No need to overwork your brains on all the days marked out in the Christian calendar. Here, I lay out a brief outline of some of these days just for some light reading, and a little leisure diversion will follow. If you wish, you may of course make the effort to meditate on the meanings of the important and widespread observances.

Epiphany (6th January) – As the song “The Twelve Days of Christmas” reminds us, the Christmas season is not just a day. The 12 days count from 25th December to 5th January. Epiphany, observed on 6th January, is the climax of the Christmas season. The word “Epiphany” had its origin in Greek that means “shining forth” or “manifestation”. Understanding the meaning of this season, and of every other season, is good for our spiritual instruction. For example, as we think of Epiphany, we remember Christ as the true light that shines forth into a world of darkness. He “is made manifest ... to all nations for the obedience of faith. To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.” (Rom 16:26-27 KJV)



Ash Wednesday (6th Feb 2008) – This is the first day of Lent. We begin to journey with Jesus through his suffering in bearing the burden of our sin. It is not cheerful as Christmas; rather, a time of wretchedness to contemplate

the extreme price for our redemption. The ash is a Biblical symbol of mourning and contrition. (2 Sam 13:19, Est 4:1-3, Jer 6:26, Daniel 9:3, Jonah 3:6) Jesus himself mentions about such use of ashes in Matt 11:21. (Also recorded in Luke 10:13)

Palm Sunday (16th March 2008) – Hosanna in the highest! Jesus riding a donkey makes his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, received by large crowds waving palm branches with gusto. This is recorded in all four gospels: Matt 21:1-11, Mk 11:1-11, Lk 19:28-44, Jn 12:12-29.



Maundy Thursday (20th March 2008) – This is the day before Good Friday. “*mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos ut et vos diligatis invicem*” (Ioannes 13:34)¹ The first word of this verse (i.e., John 13:34) gave the old French derivation *mandé*, which developed into the English word *maundy* (*maunde* in Middle English). The etymology tells us the significance of Maundy Thursday, to remember it by the Lord’s instruction, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” This day before Good Friday when Christ is ready to give Himself on the Cross as propitiation for our sin, He predicts that Peter would deny Him when push comes to shove. Who among us are as great as Peter in “bravado” to want to follow where Jesus goes, to declare “I will lay down my life for you” in the very literal sense of partaking the climax of the Passion of Christ? Obviously, more practically and meaningfully would be for us to (1) follow Christ in the humility He demonstrated by the washing of His disciples’ feet and (2) follow the pivotal love command He leaves us with.



Good Friday (21st March 2008) – A day of lamentation, when Jesus Christ is betrayed by Judas Iscariot. Why is such a day so good? Well, it is a day of special sanctity. “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive

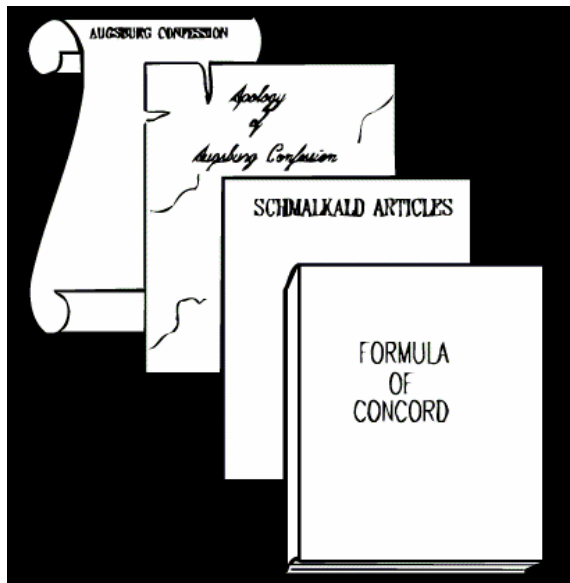
¹ Biblia Sacra Vulgata: The Latin Vulgate, accessible at <http://www.biblegateway.com/>.

by the Spirit.” (1 Pet 3:18) The Cross of lamentation is also the Cross of our liberation from damnation due to sin.

Lent (6th Feb –22nd March 2008, excluding Sundays) – This is a period of 40 days, commemorating the 40 days and nights Jesus spent in the desert. It is a solemn period for our introspection as we contemplate what is to come, according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor 15:3-4)

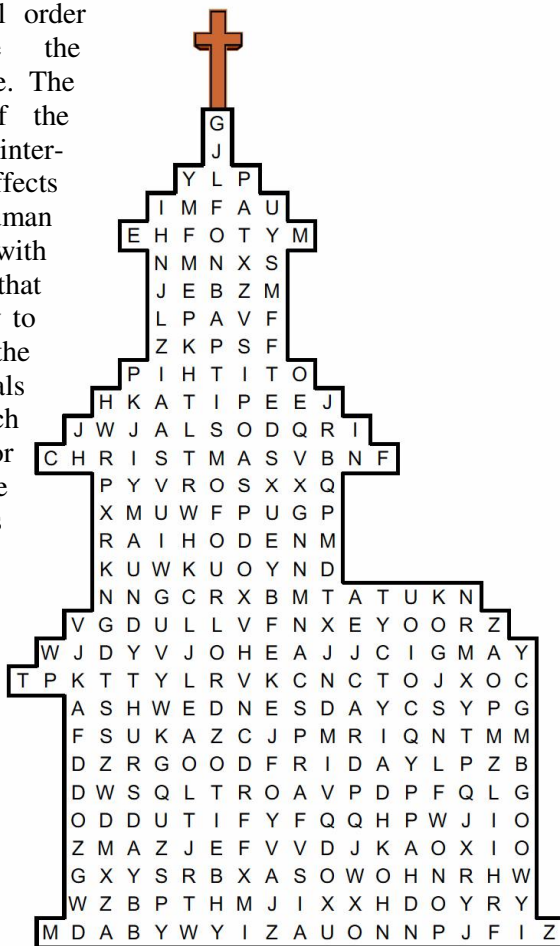
Easter Sunday (23rd March 2008) – Interestingly, for orthodox churches, there is a different date for Easter; i.e., 27th April 2008. (The difference is due to different methods used to determine the date.) This difference is not really crucial to Christians’ harmony that Jesus died on the Cross and was resurrected on the third day; thus, all that He had preached and all that Scripture had prophesied came true. The resurrection, and hence the verity of everything according to the Scriptures lay at the foundation of our faith. It was a fact of first importance for Paul to pass it on. (1 Cor 15: 1- 9)

Reformation Day (31st October) – This is also a big occasion for the Lutherans, to commemorate the Reformation of the Church in 1517 by Martin Luther. Before the Reformation, Christians were misguided by the Roman Catholic Church into believing in unscriptural doctrines like purgatory and salvation through good works. Corruption in the Church was rife with the sale of indulgences that gave ignorant lay people false hope. Thankfully, the Reformation has brought out a re-discovery of the great truth of *sola fide*; we are saved not because of our works, but by faith in Christ because the Lord has paid the penalty for our sin.



While it is not obligatory for everyone to know every season through and through, an awareness of the main ones in their chronological order will definitely illumine the checkpoints on the timeline. The sequential development of the events shows up the inter-relationship of causes and effects enfolding all the human participants. It brings out with greater clarity the thread that runs through from prophecy to fulfilment. It paints vividly the unity of Scripture and reveals the gradual way in which God's plan unfolds for humanity. As we observe the various important festivals of the Church, may we be constantly reminded of what God in Christ has done for us in life and mission.

Now, here is the little leisure diversion I mentioned earlier. Pick out 12 seasons in the church on the right. The words may be horizontal, vertical or diagonal. Give it a try; it is not difficult.



John Lee

Baptism

10 January 2008

Dear Peter and all beloved brothers and sisters in JCC

We were very encouraged by your supports and prayers and how God allowed everything to be carried out smoothly and my father was nearly in tears when he was baptised. I always believe our gracious God is good all the times, He is in control of everything and He'll never forsake us.

My father was able to regain consciousness after nine days of coma and pulled through many episodes of medical conditions because God is merciful and He is in control.

When I sms to inform all my siblings about my father's decision to be baptised after talking to him, two of my brothers strongly objected but I committed the matter to God and also asked some church members to pray too.



The day before baptism, my eldest brother called my mum around 10pm and asked my mum to stop the baptism because he was worried it will cause chaos and jeopardize the family and the ancestors as all are Non-Christians. My mum then asked my sister to call me but I told them it is my dad's own decision and nobody can interfere.



One hour prior to the baptism, he came to visit my father and ask him to reconsider. I was glad that God is in control. When I went there around 7.45pm, my sister asked me, "you sure you want to go ahead to baptise father, will there be any harm?" After assuring her and telling her my father will gain and not lose anything if he is baptised, I went to talk to my father again and in front of my sister he again said yes. Then I introduced Pastor Ng to him and Pastor Ng also asked him, his answer was positive and he said God will heal.

I strongly believed God is going to allow a break through in my family once my father receives Christ as his Savior because through his past actions, my family had gone through a lot of ups and downs and painful times all these years, just like living in a live mine field. Let's continue to pray for God to work in each and everyone of my siblings' life and deliver them from all bondages.

Seline

25 December 2007

On Christmas Day 2007, JCC welcomed 2 new members into our family.

Joyce Tan Wei Ling, Teck Chye's wife and **Gladys Lim**, the daughter of Francis and Geok Wah.

May the Lord grant you spiritual growth as you walk with Him in the light of His Love and Grace.



Inside Story on Our South Africa Trip - Western Cape

Before even proceeding further, I take this golden opportunity in wishing one and all:

A Very Blessed Chinese New Year, 2008 and also thanks to all who upheld us in prayer during our recent trip.

In the last issue of The Vine, my wife, Margaret had written quite extensively on the trip together with her personal encounters during the African - Western Cape Trip, from 19th to 28th Nov 2007.

It was a trip that was planned as early as August with some members of our TJCG. We met and discussed and emailed concerning better deals on accommodations, car rentals, certain types of foods to take along as supplement, (well, you know, Singaporean style, right, i.e. kia su, lor) etc. Thank God that we took according to plan because most of the time, we had to move off as early as 8am due to so many sights to see and explore and also because we had to reach our next destination, which can be some 100 to 300kms away before sunset to search for our night's accommodation.

All in all, 10 of us went for this trip: - Cecilia, Keat, Theresa and Christopher, Richard, Margaret Matthias, Rachel and Bjorn. Nick took this photo.



Two cars were rented for the entire trip ("lead car" driven either by Keat or Teresa, and navigated by Christopher). As Margaret has written quite a bit on the itineraries, I shall not dwell into it any more (sparing you boredom, HeHeHe).

Instead I take this opportunity for my personal reflection in thanking our Lord God Almighty for all that were experienced, as well as, for His Omnipresence during the entire trip.

The Mercy of God.

Journey mercies for:

Air (flight to and fro, some 23 hours, and some 13,000kms)

Land (sight seeing, 9 days and some 2,000kms)

Sea (Seals observatory in a boat around The Seals' Island).

The Wonders and Creations of God.

Breath-taking, eye-catching mountain ranges, magnificent valleys, beautiful flat plains covered with myriads of plants.

Amazing and spectacular views of the "stalagmites and stalactites" formations in the "Cango Cave".

Warm rays of sun-rise and refreshing sea-breeze of the gorgeous sea fronts of Mossel Bay and Hermanus.

The Goodness of God.

Providence of directions from the locals. While checking out off the "Safari's", an elderly ranger, whilst giving us an alternate route to Kysna, advised us that we can stay at the town of Wilderness. Thank God that we took his advice as later in the evening, we heard news that Kysna was flooded and the residents there had to be evacuated. Also that traffic to and out of Kysna was blocked off.

The Protection of God.

If, not for God's Loving Protection, would have had several mishaps:

The lead car just slowed down and with last minute's signal just turned right into - what the driver, Keat, thought was a place for lodging, but, was in fact, a "joint" for the locals to meet for drinks and chit-chatting. The following car skidded slightly due to sandy surface.

Avoiding a wide and deep pothole along the road cause car to swerve from side to side but did not end up in the ditch.

After receiving directions from a local, and seeing the sign (N1 to Cape Town - with Margaret and Rachel seeing it too), we turned into the highway, but to our horror, it was against the traffic flow, with headlights coming towards us. Thank God, no cars were turning then into the town, but, instead were going straight ahead towards Parrl. While reversing to face the car in the right direction, Rachel excitedly told me there was a car coming towards us. Praise God, within seconds of driving forward, the oncoming car went past where I had just reversed off. Till now, I still do not understand and wonder how it could have happened???

The Timing of God.

Where one would normally consider the slowing down of cars, due to road repairs, (winding and going down mountain roads), and heavy downpour (could hardly see 2 cars away, with wipers sweeping at max speed the rain waters hastily and crazily off the front windscreen) as a

waste of time, I consider it The Lord in His Timing gave us rest, easing our tension, especially for our eyes.

The Grace of God.

Not only in finding suitable accommodations all the way, but also with discounts, as well as supplied us with additional room, without additional charges at various locations.

The Love of God.

We had quite a bad incident in Capetown, with one of the people in the "Green Market" (local flea market). Locals, security personnel and police intervened for us and eventually police escorted us back to our cars, which were some 25 mins walk.

The Covenant of God.

God always keeps to His part of His Covenant whether we keep ours or not.

Blessed Be His Name, for indeed, "if we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us", as we desire to worship Him on The Lord's Day, (actually prior to our trip, Christopher, Margaret and myself were searching the Internet, if, possible a Lutheran church to worship in when we are over there). PTL, He provided us a church (Anglican/Catholic) ahead on Sat (25 Nov) as soon as we reached Hermanus. Apart from worshipping Him with "Whites" and "Blacks", God also provided us with the partaking of The Holy Communion, reminding me instantly of all of you, I believed that all of you are also having The Holy Communion then, right?

Indeed, reflecting back upon what had happened through the entire trip, I am truly blessed by HIM beyond measure. I am reminded to see and taste HIS Goodness.

Indeed, God is Good All the time, and, All the time, God is Good. Amen.

Personal evaluation:

Not easy to go by, as there were 10 individuals involved all the way.

Have our ups and downs.

In spite of it all, would personally give it a thump-up for the trip and to every trippers, well done.

In conclusion I thank God for His Presence in taking charge over the entire trip.

Richard Lee

Happy New Year, God Bless You!

Happy New Year! We are all familiar with this greeting, year after year. It makes me feel that every year is a new year, because every year I receive this greeting. It is not just a wish for happiness over a few days of celebration, but for the whole year. Every New Year is also a new beginning, a time to refresh and rewind – to treat the year gone by as history, the current year as a blessing of new opportunities for us to make the best use of. It is good to reminisce about the past only if there is any lesson to be learnt from the history and any encouragement for us to step forward courageously into the unknown of the arriving future. There is no need for regrets or fear.

If every year is a new year, every day can be a new day. For example, if you plan to read through the Bible this leap year in 366 portions, then each day should bring you fresh inspiration from God's word, for you to make a new discovery about His love and presence. If you should feel downcast by your affliction and wandering of the past days, you can have hope because "The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Now January 2008, we consider ourselves having stepped into a new year. Come February, the Chinese will again take a step forward into another New Year, the Chinese New Year! To the non-Chinese whom the Lunar New Year does not mean anything, most likely they also have their own New Year by their cultures. In cosmopolitan Singapore, a melting pot of diverse cultures, perhaps many months of the year by the Gregorian calendar are times for me to wish someone a Happy New Year. For example, if you hail from Andhra Pradesh, India, and celebrate the Ugadi (New Year's Day), I may extend to you my good wishes on that festive occasion in April. If you hail from Thailand, then when that month arrives, I shall be happy to splash water on you as an expression of good wishes. Incidentally, to the Cantonese (one of the Chinese dialect groups), water is also a good sign on New Year's Day, because a lot of water means a lot of wealth. ☺ It is cool to have many New Years in a year. People can agree to disagree on some cultural practices, but all can agree to agree that New Year celebrations with all the flowing good wishes are good starters for us

to make our bold forward strides with hope. Christians in the midst of unbelievers, while being sensitive and respectful to the cultural variety around them, may just find that festive reunions are opportunities for them as ambassadors of Christ with their sanctified lifestyle. The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips. (Prov. 16:23)

New Year in Chinese is 新年 (*xin nian*). According to a Chinese myth, 年 was an evil monster that would demand obeisance from people at the end of each year. Therefore, on New Year's Eve, families would plan a get-together for a grand final feast of the year to while their time away, keeping themselves awake and alert until the break of dawn. People would also beat gongs and light firecrackers to frighten off the monster. By morning, when they meet one another, they would exchange 恭喜 (*gong xi*) (congratulations) for being safe and sound. The Chinese also have various other practices with their symbolisms: Spring cleaning the whole house (discarding old, welcoming new), wear new clothes (be a new person), eat sweetcakes (May life be sweet and happy through the year!), etc. The list of traditional practices is long, but all point to a common objective of seeking the best in the new year, an objective that Christians also share as they wish one another God's blessings. The difference is that luck, myths, superstition and ignorance have no part to play in the Christian's outlook. 新年 (Chinese New Year), also known as 春节 (Spring Festival), is time for us to burst forth in song in God's praise:

*“What a wondrous time is spring
When all the trees are budding
The birds begin to sing, the flowers start their blooming
That's how it is with God's love
Once you've experienced it.
You want to sing, it's fresh like spring
You want to pass it on.”*

Apart from the above hymn celebrating Spring, a popular Mandarin song that is not to be missed during Chinese New Year is 大地回春.

(“欢迎大地回春，枝头朵朵花如锦，原野层层草如茵…小鸟歌唱唱不停，大地万象新，嘿 … 动人情。”) It is a very chirpy song that paints a brilliant

picture of vitality in nature when the Earth rejuvenates with the arrival of Spring. Brothers- & sisters-in-Christ, let us not restrict ourselves to just thinking about new clothes, new coat of paint for the house, new vacations and such ephemeral contentment, but visualize God’s purpose in the season and His handiwork. Spring is the time of refreshing in nature, a time not just for the birds and butterflies to take pleasure in, but also a time for us to think about a new beginning for us, a time of refreshing for humanity. This is what the Lord says, “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (Isa. 43:18-19)

新年快乐，上帝保佑您！

John Lee

EASY CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

(published in Dec 2007 Vine)

SOLUTION

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Cambodia-Feeding Centre

Many things we take for granted. The food on our table and the ample choices of food we have. Even for breakfast, we have so many spreads to go with our bread and when it comes to lunch and dinner, we often cannot decide what to eat. This is so common in Singapore but not so in Cambodia.

Generally the people are so poor that they eat a meal a day. Yes, one meal a day. Many of the children are malnourished. When I was there, I could not believe my eyes when some teenagers wrote down their ages during registration to consult the doctors. Initially a few of us (those doing medical support) thought it was just an error. We saw a seventeen old who looked more like an eleven year old. They were of a much smaller stature as compared to our well-fed children.

On that day, many of the mission trippers went to Angkor Watt and did some shopping. Only a small number went to the feeding centre together with Dr Castro. We were the more hardworking group, giving up our sightseeing! Actually, the truth is most of us had gone to Angkor Watt on our previous trips. We arrived at the feeding centre and were greeted by a group of children singing songs in their language but with familiar tunes.

Let me describe to you the centre and its “facilities”. Imagine a wooden house on stilts. The centre occupies the space below the stilts, just like our void deck except that the flooring is natural earth. The facilities included a bench and some chairs. That is it! This space is rented to the feeding centre and the landlord stays in the house above the centre.

According to Joseph who runs the centre single-handedly, the feeding is once a week (Fridays) and the children are from families who are the poorest of the poor. They apply and are selected to go into the feeding program.

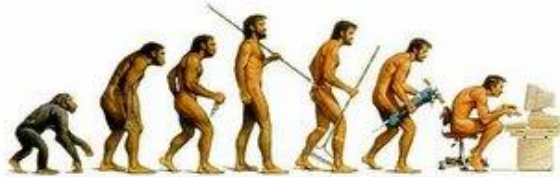
Every Saturday, Joseph will have some activities and church service on Sunday for the adults. As the villagers do not have much entertainment available, this must be their highlight for the week. Before the clinic started, the gospel was preached to the villagers who had gathered there at the centre. They were taught some dental hygiene. Many of them consulted the doctors and were grateful for the old clothes given to them. Even as we clothed some naked toddlers, I was reminded about how when we feed the

poor and clothed them we are doing all unto Jesus. It was an experience that I will not forget - the privilege to clothe another fellow human being in need. We were blessed to be a blessing to others. Indeed it was a privilege to be part of the mission trippers' team.

Although they had little, they were contented with whatever they had. It was a powerful lesson for me: how God has blessed us so richly and yet our gratitude does not measure up to the blessings we have.

As I leave Cambodia, one question remained unanswered in my mind and continues to haunt me. Why God allowed them to suffer so much and why God blessed us richly???

Ewe Ewe



Introducing the Youth Council for 2008

Mindy Yeo, Samuel Tay, Benedict Lee, Angeline You, Jonathan Tan, Jason Tan and Mervyn Lee

Befrienders Getting-to-know-you Session



19 Jan 2008 A number of JCC guests joined us for a time of fun and food and fellowship. Our hope is that in the future, they will also be part of our family.



*Welcome to all
our new friends*

