

**The Vine Committee**

Editors:

Martin Cheah

[mart5003@yahoo.com](mailto:mart5003@yahoo.com)

John Lee

[jpbislee@gmail.com](mailto:jpbislee@gmail.com)

Printer:

Nick Wong

[digi\\_ics@yahoo.com](mailto:digi_ics@yahoo.com)

Writers this issue:

John Lee

Karen Soh

Tony Koh

Nick Wong

Lissa Low

Andryl Leong

Photos:

Nick Wong

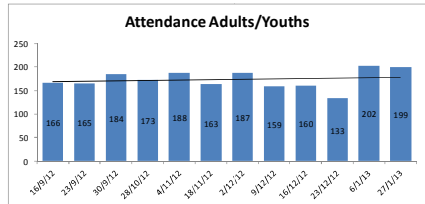


At the end of last year, I was in a quandary on how to appropriately answer a question regarding what makes up a true church. The question was posed in such a way that a true church is one that is growing in numbers and

experiencing all kinds of blessings, including health and wealth.

Right at the start of 2013, many events occurred which seem to place JCC on the wrong side of the definition of a true church, deaths of members' dear ones, serious illness befalling members or

their loved ones. However, one statistic which did not fall, based on a sample of 12 weeks from Sep 2012 to Jan 2013 was the attendance. It remained static.



So how do I answer the question? This is where you apply your Bible studies to the questions that come your way. In the book of Philippians, you read of Paul being in prison (Phil 1:12), not your idea of blessings and wealth. You read of Epaphroditus, who nearly died and Paul had to send him back (Phil 2:27), clearly not evidence of healing by even such a great apostle as Paul. You find conflict in the church (Phil 4:2); anxiety (Phil 4:6); lack of peace (Phil 4:9).

The church will face troubles but listen to how Paul taught them to overcome.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And*

*the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)*

*Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. (Phil 4:8)*

*I am looking for what may be credited to your account. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:17-19)*

Finally, the answer came from Pastor Andrew, who shared during the DE class about his father-in-law, who passed away recently at the age of 74 years old. His father-in-law was a healthy man but not a Christian before his illness. Most of his children were Christians. When he was sent to the hospital and diagnosed to be with cancer, all his children called for prayers and one of them asked his Hokkien speaking pastor to visit their father. Pastor Andrew's father-in-law accepted and was saved before he passed away.

From one perspective, it would seem like an unfortunate event. However from a Christian's perspective, this is the grace of God which saved his father-in-law from eternal death.

If we view things from God's perspective then we have to agree that *in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

So in conclusion, let us be reminded there are many great cults growing at a faster rate than many true churches.

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1John 4:7-10)*

*Martin Cheah*

## Is it **CHINESE NEW YEAR** or **LUNAR NEW YEAR** or ...?

Last year this time, a debate took place in the forum pages of The Straits Times on whether the New Year celebrated by the Chinese should be called Chinese New Year (CNY) or Lunar New Year (LNY). We are now again approaching such a time of celebration. A brother in JCC shared with me his firm view that “CNY” should be the name; I responded that “LNY” is more apt because it is celebrated not just by the Chinese. It was just an amiable exchange of views, not one that would end up in fisticuffs. Will the jury, for the sake of peacekeeping, rule in favour of “either CNY or LNY is acceptable” or simply reject both so that there is neither winner nor loser in the debate and both sides are equally satisfied/unsatisfied? Maybe the jury will also pronounce an obiter dictum that a term acceptable to both camps (“Spring Festival” or something else) should be adopted. Before the jury decides, allow me to share further thoughts on the subject.

The word “Chinese” is a double entendre – it refers to an ethnic group as well as to a nationality. So when we say Chinese New Year, we can mean either of the following:

1. A New Year celebrated by the people of Chinese ethnicity (whose nationality may be non-Chinese).
2. A New Year that was originally celebrated by the people of China.

If an ethnic Indian like Ps Andrew observes the New Year in Singapore and talks about it as “CNY”, ignorant strangers who hear it may be taken aback because they have the tendency to connect the Chinese (as a race in cosmopolitan Singapore) with the New Year. This surprise would be less likely in China because over there it is a general celebration for the Chinese as a nation so that any individual celebrating it who does not look like an ethnic Chinese may logically still be regarded without question as one among the Chinese people welcoming an inclusive festivity.

If Ps Andrew tells people he celebrates the Lunar New Year, he literally means that he celebrates the New Year according to the Lunar Calendar, the occasion bearing no obvious link to ethnicity or nationality. Strictly speaking, he simply gives people the impression that it is his choice by personal cultural custom. People who insist on drawing an ethnic or nationality inference from the term “Lunar New Year” has weaker

justification relative to “Chinese New Year”. Nevertheless, he may still attract the query, “What Lunar New Year”?

“Lunar New Year” means a New Year based on the lunar calendar. The lunar calendar is a calendar that is based on the phases of the moon. There are also an Islamic lunar calendar<sup>1</sup> based on the moon cycles, and other cultures in the world that use a lunar calendar. Hence, “LNY” itself is not a unique description of the New Year that the Chinese (by ethnicity or nationality) celebrate. When an ethnic Chinese declares, “I celebrate the LNY”, hearers certainly understand. However, if a non-ethnic-Chinese says he celebrates the LNY, it is not immediately clear-cut what cultural custom he subscribes to.

The term “CNY” has imperfections, likewise does “LNY”. Of course, each has its quality that the other does not possess: “CNY” possesses an ethnic and/or nationality identity while “LNY” possesses a calendar reference for our choice of a day to be the beginning of a year. Perhaps the two can be married to become “CLNY” (Chinese Lunar New Year).

Interestingly, while the New Year that is called CNY or LNY is commonly ascribed to China for its origin whereby reference to the country is invariably made in the debate over the correct term to use, neither of the terms is commonly used in China. There was China celebrating the New Year long before Singapore came into existence. If we consider China as the authoritative reference to make the right choice of name, then both “CNY” and “LNY” should be jettisoned.

In China, the New Year is commonly called 春节 (Spring Festival) or 农历新年 (Agricultural Calendar New Year). Are you surprised that it is seldom/never dubbed 华人新年 (Chinese New Year), 汉族新年 (Han-Chinese New Year), 月历新年 (Lunar Calendar New Year) or 月日新年 (Lunisolar New Year)<sup>2</sup>?

We can say that celebrating 春节 (Spring Festival) and 农历新年 (ACNY: Agricultural Calendar New Year) is doing a double celebration, with

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic\\_calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_calendar)

<sup>2</sup> An argument also goes that the calendar that the Chinese use is not purely lunar, but lunisolar (combining both lunar phases and the Earth’s orbital period around the Sun); why not then call the New Year a Lunisolar New Year?

double festivity (双喜临门). The supposed<sup>3</sup> arrival of Spring coincides with a fresh seasonal division of the calendar's 24 seasonal divisions that serve to guide farmers in their husbandry. Discernibly, both 春节 (Spring Festival) and 农历新年 (ACNY) are the more accurate and meaningful descriptions compared to "CNY" or "LNY".

As a tropical country, the celebration of Spring is meaningless. Singapore is also not an agricultural country, so "ACNY" would sound very odd. The most reasonable alternatives (even if not perfect) would be "Chinese New Year" (to indicate a connection with Chinese history and culture), "Lunar New Year" (to indicate the lunar-calendar basis) or "Lunisolar New Year" (for a greater precision in description).

Once the jury has decided one way or another, it is fine for me to go with the jury's decision. However, is this all that is important to us?

Most Vine readers are familiar with two New Years within months of each other; one New Year starts on 1<sup>st</sup> of January and the other being the CNY/LNY. There may be a small number in our midst who do not celebrate CNY/LNY because they come from some other cultures or nations. Does it ever occur to us as Christians that there is another New Year that is relevant for our attention?

Note what the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt in Exodus 12, especially the words I have underlined:

- "**This month** is to be for you the first month, **the first month of your year** ...
- "Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb ...
- "Take care of them [the lamb] until the fourteenth day of the month ...
- "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn ...

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<sup>3</sup> I don't understand why, but the arrival of Spring is actually in late December, based on the Agricultural Calendar, earlier than the start of the New Year. Maybe the traditional celebration time for Spring is a deferred one.

- “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance.”

This year (in Exodus) in which the Passover marks the 14th day of its first month is not just for the Jews to remember; it is also imperative for Christians to have a good grasp of its connection with the Last Supper of Jesus, at which time the Lord said unequivocally to His disciples, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 22:14-15) The Holy Communion (eating the body of Christ broken for us and drinking his blood shed for us) that we partake regularly was instituted by Jesus who ate the Passover lamb and became for us our Passover Lamb sacrificed on the Cross. The time that we observe Easter is quite clearly connected with the first month of the year in God’s calendar in relation to the Passover at first and then in relation to the Last Supper of Jesus.

The Passover observance **in the first month of a New Year** recalls the liberation of Jews from slavery – reborn into a new life of freedom.

The Easter observance **in the first month of a New Year** evokes the liberation of Christians from bondage to sin – reborn by baptism into Christ, our Passover Lamb.

So whenever you celebrate a new year, be it this New Year or that New Year, be it a secular New Year or a Holy New Year, be it a Lutheran liturgical New Year or a different ecclesiastical New Year, whatever you observe as a New Year, the naming and the device of it may be important to some people in some ways; but to Christians, it is additionally worthwhile to meditate on the symbolism value of a New Year, telling ourselves that we can see it as an opportunity for a fresh start, liberated from slaving under past sorrow, pain and sin – reborn into a New Year of hope and blessings, if we put our faith right in Christ.

*JOHN LEE*

# NAOMI & HER GIRLS' BRIGADE

Some time in mid-2011, Naomi told us that when she reached P2, she would be able to join CCA in school and The Girls' Brigade (GB) would be her choice because she saw that the girls there did a lot of interesting activities together.

When she started P2 last year, she again came home excitedly telling us that she wanted to join GB. Her hope was met with disappointment when I disagreed as the GB timing clashed with her elder brother's Math & Chinese tuition.

She cried badly and even wrote a little plea note pleading for us to give her a chance to be involved with GB. Her dad was moved by the Holy Spirit, saying, "Here is a little girl earnestly seeking to be equipped but we are creating obstacles for her." Finally, he agreed to let this little girl have her wish of joining GB, and we worked out a schedule for the sending/ fetching of our two older kids.



Every Saturday when there is a GB meeting, Naomi is most excited. She enjoys her GB activities and volunteers to help in every way she can.

Praise and glory be unto God. God rewarded her in His own special way. Junior as she was, she was chosen among so many GB girls to present flowers to the First Lady, Mrs Mary Tan, who was the VIP guest during Friendship Day when a lot of volunteers pitched in to help feed 5000 people (like how Jesus used the 5 loaves and 2 fish).

On that rainy day, everyone kept a special lookout for Naomi. Several new badges were given to her (and were hers to keep), her uniform was adjusted countless times by the different persons in charge of the occasion, and she was told to remain seated so as not to get her shoes muddied while the rest of the girls comfortably dressed in PE shirts could go move around without much fuss.

During the rehearsal, Naomi was told that her duty was to pass a bouquet of flowers to the First Lady. GB Officer Se Ping prepared her to be ready for any questions that Mrs Tan might ask her (such as





which company/ school she was from). However, when the actual time came, she not only had to present the flowers, she also had to present a basket that was packed with 5 loaves and 2 fish to signify the event's purpose.

Thanks be to God for giving Naomi wisdom and calmness. She was able to answer Mrs Tan correctly when asked if she knew the biblical significance of the food basket. (Off stage, she shared that when she stepped on stage, she nearly fell and felt many butterflies in her tummy. She was super nervous!)

We are grateful to God for rewarding Naomi's thirst to be actively involved in GB with this one in a million chance to shake hands and be in such close proximity with the First Lady. Her pictures with Mrs Tan were also flashed repeatedly in her school. She is greatly motivated and equally thankful to God for this special experience.



PS:

*I had lost the thumb drive that kept all these pictures and many other special candid moments of my family for about 2 months. I prayed to God one night recently saying, "God, if only I can find the thumb drive again, I would like to write this special testimony."*

*God's answer came the next morning.*

*Alan saw it and asked, "Is this the thumb drive you were searching for?"*

*God hears us! He works in His special time and way. Praise the Lord!*

**Karen Soh**



# HAPPY ARE WE WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD

Are you happy? Psalm 144:15 tells us, “Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”

According to a recent Gallup poll, Singaporeans are not a happy lot. Whether you agree or disagree, what really is the benchmark of happiness?

It is hard for me to say “I am truly happy” when surrounded by the hectic daily chores (struggling with family-work-life balancing), escalating costs to put the daily bread on the table and endless bills to pay for healthcare, utilities, etc. Sandwiched between caring for the generation above me and feeding the strawberry generation, I cannot help feeling being stressed in from both sides. How easy can it be for me to say “I am truly happy” with the pain of having to constantly exercise cautiousness to balance incomes and expenses? How necessary it is of us to go to the Lord daily to plead, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Yet, I can’t say “I am truly unhappy” as I take a leap of redeemed faith into hope. I had a recent brush with a thyroid disorder. It made me realize the fragility of life, which is in the hands of our Creator. It is not for us to call the shot. Better be contented with the small family I have when all are well and on the go despite the bumpiness of life’s journey. Happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Think of the blessings to celebrate. What more really can I ask?

Contentment breeds happiness. I remember I once shared Prov. 30:8b-9 with the juniors in Sunday School:

“Give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the Name of my God. “

Many life situations point to the fact that happiness needs not come from material abundance. Simplicity often brings out much of life’s happiness. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

So reflect and pray that we learn to ride the rough edges of life. Overcome unhappiness and press on the upward way for our good Lord; have rest and be happy in the LORD who has “redeemed us from that self-defeating, cursed life by absorbing it completely into himself.” (Gal 3:13 MSG) While there are struggles to face, we have the blessed assurance that our GOD is the same yesterday, today and forever. He will carry us through. Happy are we whose God is the Lord!



*Tony Koh*

# A DAY IN THE SERVE PROGRAM

Beyond the glass doors, stepping in is a different world. A tepid, rectangular green in the middle; naught on it, except the unapparent ecosystem invisible from afar.

This is one thankful respite from burning tarmac, the perpetual roaring of engines and swift motion of wheeled machines, a good number of yards from St Andrew's Village. It seems grass is a good material to absorb sound waves.

One thing needful – fellowship; without which, the place would be just a well architected, colonially designed, impersonal edifice without soul, much like a ghost town crippled from all's total abandonment of that scorned space. Certainly, it is the believers' collective presence that spells utility of this structure.

A group of sulky faces, dispirited hearts and office workers suffocating from the grind of work, would also constitute a collective presence; but, in the diocese building, this description of the occupants is untrue.

Youthful vigour is affirmatively the general milieu. A half hour of praise and worship is volume even outside the room, followed by scripture readings which precede a lecture ninety minutes long. Here, a variety of topics are preached and expounded – from Christian honour and respect, beatitudes, spiritual disciplines such as prayer and fasting, to hearing God's voice. Group discussions are the special moments fomenting relational bonds and establishing friendships.

Upon the conclusion of the 90 minute lecture in the morning, conversations spill from the confines of the lecture room to the yard, corridor and toilets. The chatter gives sound to the mid-morning. Many, perhaps mentally worn from indoor tedium, now have their relief from the artificially conditioned temperature and relatively stale enclosed air.

At this juncture our sun is congenial. All are well sheltered from the ferocity of development, yet appreciative of the warmth it gives way to. A zest follows an inhaling of fresher warm air, disregarding the noxious dust particles from the Pan Island Expressway.

Break is over. The streaming of believers into the lecture hall leads the way to the second lecture of the day.

Abovementioned is a typical day gone by. Beyond daily routine, this program is much about the communion of saints, a part of the Apostle's Creed that we confess, and a continuation of a historic practice known since the epoch of the infantile church – the days of Apostles Paul and Peter and their coequals. There is much joy gathering in Jesus' name.

**Andryl Leong**

The SERVE program is an annual 3-month program conducted by the Anglican Church for the training of Christian youths

# JCC Photo Club Outing

on  
05<sup>th</sup>  
January  
2013



We had a wonderful fellowship at Jurong Bird Park to learn more about Digital Photography. The weather on that day was superb.

We encountered some difficulties in taking good pictures of the birds:

1. Different lens range and functions in the various cameras have an impact on the photographs taken.
2. Using a Tripod or Monopod helps to keep the camera steady thus enhancing sharpness of the photo.
3. Outdoor lighting environment is crucial. Usually, cloudy days do not produce good pictures.
4. Composition of subject in picture against background.
5. Different camera speeds (Capturing subject movement), and camera apertures (Selecting Subject sharpness).
6. Patience in waiting for the subject to give a desired action, and to capture the moment.

Above are just 6 common problems that you may not be aware of during the outing. JCC members who are interested in digital or film photography are encouraged to join our fellowship which falls on every first Saturday of every month. (Unless that day falls on a public holiday, then the session will be postponed to the following Saturday). Regardless of whether you own a camera, you are welcome to join us.

My contact is Mobile: 98512652, Email: [nickwong012@gmail.com](mailto:nickwong012@gmail.com)

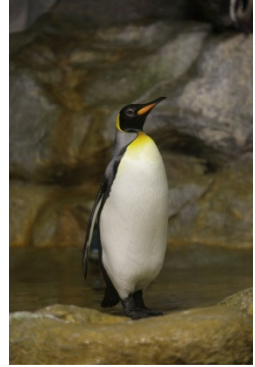
There are some pictures taken on 05/01/2013 outing on the next page.



400mm @ F6.3



400mm @ F6.3



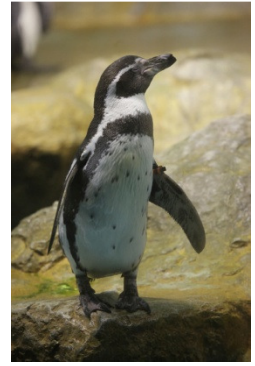
300mm @ F5.6



100mm @ F6.3



400mm @ 5.6



350mm @ F5.6



100mm @ F6.3



350mm @ F5.6

*Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not **much more valuable** than they?*  
(Matthew 6:26)

*Nick Wong*

# Epiphany of our Lord – 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013

For many years, Tom pursued wealth and fun. He turned his back to God. He did amass a lot of money. He owned a luxurious house and a Ferrari sports car, and always found himself praised for his financial acumen. Unfortunately, he did not have true friends. Outwardly, he was a busy man; but in his heart, he was always lonely with nobody he could trust. One day, he was suddenly taken ill with a serious illness. He was dispossessed of much of his wealth because of expensive medical treatments. When he was in hospital, reduced to a poor shadow of his former self, nobody, except his aged parents, visited him. Where were his friends whom he frequently partied with and showered with generosity? All of a sudden, the true meaning of happiness dawned on him with his precipitous realization of the larger meaning of life, of love from God and from people who are truly close and who truly care. He had an epiphany - a sudden insight on truth:

*Money buys neither friendship nor happiness! Like someone once said, "God makes, and apparel shapes: but it's money that finishes the man."*

An epiphany is a sudden revelation or manifestation of reality. Jesus' Parable of the prodigal son is a story about an epiphany for both the elder son and the younger one. The meaning of a father's love (as God our Father loves us regardless of our contemptible past) that is not for us to earn by our deeds was brought home to the elder son. The younger son too comprehended true unquestionable love as manifested by the warm welcome he received from his father, no matter how lost he (the prodigal) had been before finally finding courage to turn back towards home. The elder brother realised that all his years of staying by his father (rather than mere diligence in the field) was primary to gaining the father's blessing. ("Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours." Luke 15:31) The prodigal son earlier chose to run away from the father. His sin did have its consequences – he suffered. Is any of us still living in self-delusion about the need to invest our all in prodigious hard work to gain human accolades, waiting for an epiphany (a sudden realization or spiritual revelation of truth) to treasure staying by our Father in all our busyness?

The word "epiphany" comes from the Greek *επιφάνεια*, which is in the following portion of Scripture referring to the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ:

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of

our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,” (2 Tim 1:8-10)

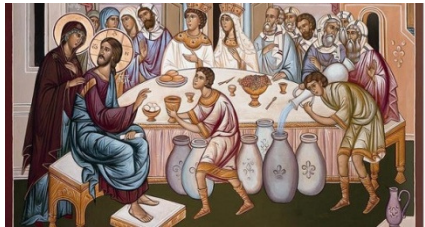
The word is also variously used in Scripture to mean “to reveal” or “to shine upon”. Hence, the Epiphany of the Lord is also a season or period (not just a day – 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013 in the Church calendar) for us to recall the manifestations (epiphanies) of Jesus’ identity as our Messiah and Savior through several significant happenings that shine upon the truth of His divinity, such as:

- The first appearance of Jesus to the Gentiles (as denoted by the Magi’s visit to the Holy Infant).
- The appearance of Jesus to begin his adult ministry by His baptism by John in Jordan River.
- Jesus’ first miracle in Cana.

The appearance of the infant Jesus to the Magi, with the Christmas Star shining upon the truth that the infant was indeed the promised Messiah, born to be Savior of the world, was a stupendous moment of revelation – an epiphany for the world to behold as the angelic choir proclaimed the Good News.

The baptism of Jesus by John with the voice from heaven and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove (Mk 1:9-11) was an epiphany to squelch any doubt about Jesus being God’s true Son.

Jesus’ first miracle at the wedding in Cana was an epiphany of who Jesus is. As the servants had their mouths agape in awe of discovering the water in six jars having been turned into wine, a greater epiphany comes to us when we also behold other miraculous events involving Jesus and water. It is not just a miracle that amazes us, but the deeper epiphany of the mysteries of faith as we



contemplate, since Jesus is able to turn water into wine: How is it unfathomable (sans human ratiocination) for bread to become the body of Christ and for wine to become His blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion? What is the symbolic significance of the image of “blood and water” in the Scriptural mentions that Jesus Christ is the one who came by water and blood (1 John 5:6 NIV) and that blood and water flowed from his side in His last hour? (John 19:34)

When we celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord, no matter which epiphany among the trilogy (Visit by the Magi, Christ's baptism, Miracle in Cana) we meditate on, the same epiphany of grace and Gospel is conveyed to us. This is by God's initiative to reveal Himself more than it being the result of our conscious action to discern the truth. Tom (in the illustration story above) did not consciously initiate the epiphany of true love and happiness; it was his aged parents who initiated it by their unconditional love, and God the Father was in command of circumstances that brought Tom out of his spiritual stupor. Similarly, in the epiphany for the Prodigal Son and his elder brother, it was the father who initiated the unquestioning love that revealed his grace and mercifulness.

The Epiphany of our Lord is revealed to us by the Father. He seeks us more than we seek Him. Isn't it a good feeling that we are being sought by our Father? Does this great love of our Father not spur us to reciprocate the love?

10<sup>th</sup> February 2013 is the fifth Sunday (last Sunday) after the Epiphany of the Lord (6<sup>th</sup> January 2013). It is also the Sunday that the Lutheran Church commemorates the Transfiguration of our Lord before the first day of Lent starts on Ash Wednesday (13<sup>th</sup> February 2013). From the epiphany of infant Jesus, through the many manifestations of His divinity as our Lord and Savior, to the Transfiguration as a high-point among all epiphanies of the Lord – Peter, James and John who directly witnessed the glorious moment to be awestruck were left in no doubt about who Jesus is, as the Father again testified by a voice from heaven (Luke 9:35),



*A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."*

*as He did at the Lord's baptism (Mark 1:11),*

*And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

May the Epiphany of Jesus remind us who He truly is – the Lord and Savior of all nations!

**JOHN LEE**

This article was written by a fellow traveler of Margaret Lee about their visit to Israel in Dec 2012. I have reduced the article significantly and if you want the full details, you may request Margaret to send it to you.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF LOVE ISRAEL 2012 (11-21 Dec 2012)

### Introduction

A team of over 300 participants, with representatives from 12 nations in the Asia-Pacific region, went to Israel from 11-21 December (Love Israel 2012), despite many “prophets of doom” and voices of concern for our safety. The team was led by Rev Dr George Annadorai, with a large contingent from Papua New Guinea (117) and from Singapore (123). We thank God for His protection and provisions. We experienced many wonderful answers to prayer.

The trip was of special significance for us personally, as both Ivy and I were 70 years old when we landed in Israel for the 7<sup>th</sup> time, as well as on 12-12-12. The year 2012 is also my personal Jubilee, as I gave my heart fully to our Lord Jesus 50 years ago.

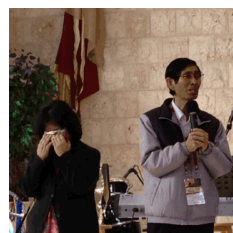
**Some memories of the trip to Israel are summarized below:**

### 1. Lighting up the nation of Israel at the Festival of Dedication (8-15 December 2012)

During the Festival of Dedication (Hanukkah), Jesus made clear his claim to be the Son of God (John 10:22-23). As the nations of the East (Asia-Pacific) come to Jerusalem at this Festival (also known as the Festival of Lights), we pray that Jews will come to know Jesus as the Messiah. We were thrilled to hear that at Mount Carmel (where fire fell from heaven during Elijah’s ministry), just a week prior to our coming, about 60 out of 120 pre-believing Jews received Jesus as their Messiah at a dinner evangelistic meeting.

### 2. Japan

Pastor John Masahiro Kina and his wife were on their knees as forgiveness was released. As they rose to their feet, we prayed that Japan will rise in the fullness of God’s purposes. We also prayed that Japan and the Asia-Pacific Nations will experience a glorious end-time revival.



That same evening, Japan was honoured in a special way during a **banquet for some 400 Holocaust survivors**, who were the founding fathers of the nation of Israel. A





Japanese man, Chiune Sugihara, had saved 6000 Jews during the holocaust by issuing to them visas to Japanese territory, against the orders from his superiors in Japan. Rev George Annadorai pointed out his compassion, courage and convictions (which had resulted from his faith in Jesus). Sugihara had been honoured by Israel in 1985 with the title “Righteous among the Nations” and a tree was planted in the grounds of Yad Vashem (Holocaust museum) in his honour.



The descendants of the 6000 Jews saved by Sugihara now number about 120,000, many of them living in the town of Netanya. At the banquet, a granddaughter and a grand-daughter-in-law of the late Sugihara were present to receive the honours. The banquet was like a celebration for the home-coming of the prodigal son, Japan.

The events of this evening were televised on the national television in Israel. The news reached the mayor of Netanya through a prominent lady who was herself one of the descendants of the Jews saved by Sugihara. As the result, the mayor invited the two descendants of Sugihara, the Japanese pastor and his wife, George Annadorai and his wife, to lunch. The mayor told them that he will name a park or a street in Netanya after Sugihara. This is another event of significance: Japan and hence Asia, will have a permanent place in Israel.

### 3. Conference on Mount Carmel (13-14 December)

Peter Tsukahira told us about a Japanese man, Juji Nakada, a disciple of DL Moody, who formed a holiness group in the 1920s and became convinced that Japan cannot be saved until the Jews returned to Israel.

He raised the question “Why does Israel exist as a modern nation?” There is no parallel in world history for a nation which had experienced a golden age, then was destroyed and the people scattered in the world for 2000 years and then returned to their land to form a thriving modern nation. Peter pointed out that the word “prophecy” is often used too loosely today. **Prophecy with a big “P” is something God says in Scripture, and has been fulfilled by God’s action in history.** An excellent example is the Incarnation of Jesus. The formation of the modern nation of Israel is in the same category. Ezekiel 36 is one of the 50-60 scriptures



about the restoration of Israel - this is proof that God keeps His promises. The current existence of the nation of Israel and the modern re-emergence of Messianic Jews underscore the fact that God has acted uniquely in our own generation to fulfil His prophetic words. **The Bible is clear about God's final intention to redeem all of Israel (Romans 11:25-27).**

Biblical restoration means returning to God's original plan and purpose. Transformation is the word we use to describe the process of God's redeeming work. Restoration is God's goal. We must be careful not to replace the goal (restoration) with the process (transformation). The great challenge for the followers of Jesus today is to view the Kingdom of God less as religion and more as a total human culture.



#### 4. Conference in Jerusalem (17-18 December)

In Jerusalem **Lance Lambert**, an elderly Messianic Jew in his 80s but still burning with the fire of the Holy Spirit, spoke on the Glory of Israel using Simeon's declaration in Luke 2:30-32 (*For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel*). In these prophetic words of Simeon, God had the Gentiles in mind, and one day Jesus will become the Glory of Israel. He raised an intriguing question: "Why does Satan hate Israel if God has no destiny for Israel?" **There IS a Divine Destiny for Israel.**



**Caleb Meyers**, a brilliant young Jewish lawyer, pointed out that **Psalm 105:7-11** has more words in one sentence to confirm a principle than any others, that the land of Canaan is given to Israel forever: words like "*remembers*", "*commanded*", "*for a thousand generations*", "*covenant*", "*oath*", "*confirmed as a decree*", "*everlasting*". Following Ezekiel's vision of dry bones, Israel is now standing on her feet like a great army, but there is no breath yet. Ezekiel was asked to prophecy a second time "*Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live*" (Ezekiel 37:9). The four winds refer to the nations that bring the breath of God to Israel. The nations have something to give to Israel!

## 5. Tour of the Land of Israel

In Israel we had the opportunity to visit Haifa, Mount Carmel, Capernaum, the Mount of Beatitudes, Tabgha, the chapel dedicated to the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, St Peter's Primacy, Ein Gev where we ate St Peter's fish from the Sea of Galilee and had a boat ride on the sea. Some members of the team were baptized at Yardenit, the traditional Baptismal Site on the Jordan River. A Christmas service was held in Bethlehem, and Christmas dinner at the Grand Court Hotel on 20 December. This was another miracle, as the Rabbi in the hotel has never given permission for Christmas to be celebrated in the hotel. Most of the members of the team left Israel for home on the following day, 21 December.



*John SH Tay*

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### So Is the Year of the Snake Good or Bad?

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. (Gen 3:1)*

*Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. (Num 21:8)*

*Hezekiah removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (2Kings 18:4)*

*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)*

*He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. (Rev 20:2)*



## **To be Christ-like – Mission Impossible or Possible?**

What does being Christ-like mean? We are told Sunday after Sunday to be Christ-like. A Holy perfect God – how can I ever be like Him? It seems to be mission impossible. Thank God it is possible because we have the Holy Spirit living in us.

We are justified not by works but by the grace of God through faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrew 11:6). This faith is a gift from God (Ephesian 2:8) that comes to us from the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:22). It seems then I do not need to do anything. No, it is knowing that God loves me so much that I want to show my love back by serving Him. Having the knowledge, the “how to” and the “have to”, we need to ask ourselves: Do I want to, and am I willing to, exercise this faith?

This is only possible when we let Christ be the King on the throne to lead us. Oftentimes, the minute I walk out of the church door I leave Him behind. I have to consciously remind myself to let Him sit on the throne to direct me throughout the day and every day. “Pray continually.” (I Thessalonians 5:17). This verse to me is not just about talking to God at a certain time; it evokes a word of praise, thanks and worship in my heart throughout the day in the midst of my activities.

In the office, I surround myself with pictures of His creation to make me conscious of His presence so that I let Him sit on the throne and be in control especially in difficult situations. For a few months, I had some misunderstanding with a Christian colleague but, Thank God, we are on good terms now. During that period of time, I put a flower on my desk in front of me to remind me to let Christ be King. This visual aid helped by reminding me to be kind to her and I felt the peace of God flow through my heart.

Can you imagine a Holy perfect God living in us? How awesome! I feel so unworthy and sinful, but my exercise of faith is made possible by the blood of Christ, His grace and mercy upon me. On Sundays, I wish that I can enter into the sanctuary with the awesome stillness and quietness around and the sense of His peaceful loving presence. How I long to kneel down and worship Him, my Creator and Lord!

I hope the church rebuilding plan can include a quiet prayer room where we can have a quiet peaceful place to be in His presence.

Lissa Low