



What is the Grace of God?
by Joyce Tan



Understanding Ash Wednesday
by John Lee



Youth Cell Groups
by Alicia Wong



JCC Open House
4th March 2017

The Vine Committee

Editor:

Alicia Wong

Writers this issue:

John Lee

Alicia Wong

Alvin Wong

Joyce Tan

Photos:

Martin Cheah

Nick Wong

Cecilia Wang

Cover Photo:

Mr Tharman planting a tree at the front gate



Brother Martin Writes

From 19th to 24th March, we were in Taipei on a family holiday. While there we went up one of the tallest buildings in the world. However at 1,600 feet above ground does not guarantee you a clear view of the surrounding landscape, especially when it

is a foggy day. I wondered if the Tower of Babel was that tall (someone estimated that it could be over 8,000 feet tall). I felt like I was there because everyone was speaking a language I could not understand.



I did not get a data card, so I depended on the free WiFi all around Taipei. Intermittently, I received Whatsapp messages when I entered a building with free WiFi. This was a CONNECTION problem - I could not connect to the people back home, as and when I liked. I had the EQUIPMENT but without the data plan, it was limited. So connection and equipment need a data plan to work effectively.

On the flight back, the pilot announced, "We are flying into some turbulence, please be seated and fasten your seat belts!" Some passengers wanted to go to the toilet but were requested to remain seated. It struck me, when we are facing trials, do we want to find our own solutions or remain fastened to our Saviour and let Him bring us through.



Three lessons we can learn from this holiday. We cannot really see clearly, we need a data plan to be connected and we need to trust God in times of trial.

Of course another thing about this holiday was the quest to complete the "been there, done that" trip as we hunted around for all the favourite foods and locations of Taipei. The food did not really suit my taste and at one place the weather was so chilly, we did not stay long to enjoy the view. It is good to be home again.



If I were on a mission study trip, I would recommend that this field is open for the Dialect Ministry. Most of the people here understand Hokkien and we would have no problem reaching out to them. I saw some caucasians in white shirt and tie amongst the crowds. When I looked at the map of the area, I notice there was a Church of the Latter Day Saints nearby. If they can do it, how much easier it would be for the Dialect Teams?



When we all get our maroon T-shirts, we could be like them walking around Taman Jurong with a bag filled with tracts, I presume. Then they will know we are JCCians out to connect with the neighbourhood. There are two events coming up in June where we can use the T-shirts, one is the Church Retreat from 15 to 17 and the other is the Li Nanxing evangelistic outreach on 24. The T-shirts only costs you \$4.

李南星
真实剧本
◆生命见证◆

从黑暗低谷到
光明道路
新加坡影视一哥
李南星的神奇人生

“耶和華啊！你是我的明灯，你使我的黑暗变为光明。”
微信关注下22:29

日期：24/06/2017 星期六
时间：7:15 PM
地点：禧街基督教会 (二楼礼堂)
地址：JURONG CHRISTIAN CHURCH (MAIN SANCTUARY)
NO.2 TAH CHING ROAD, SINGAPORE 618744
询问报名电话 (10AM - 2PM): 83385130
入场免费, 座满为止

Cornerstone Pictures

恩典
Streams of Grace

My sister met a man on the streets who came up to her and asked her for \$4 because he claimed he lost his wallet. Out of a soft heart, she gave him the \$4. Later she found out that he had gone all over the place with the same story. Like my sister, if you cannot afford to buy the T-shirt, come and see me. I will follow Jesus advice in Luke 12:33-34, “...give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Martin Cheah

Only By Grace

What is the Grace of God?

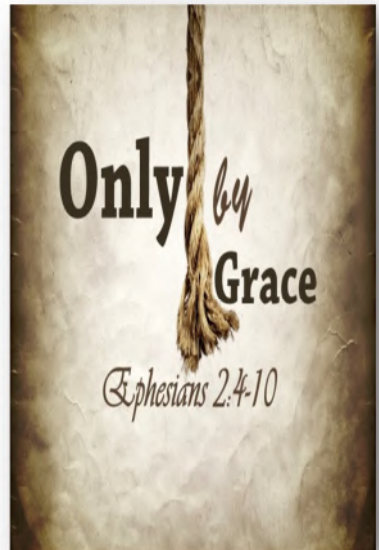
As I walked into the Sanctuary for worship on one of the Sundays, the song, "Only by Grace" was ringing melodiously as the worship leader led the congregation into a state of joyous singing to the Lord. My mind threw a boomerang back into a state of realization that I was just playing this song before Teck Chai and I left home for Service. My heart was beating fast as thoughts of reconciling the coincidence of such a situation was beyond comprehension. I was just thinking too much. Was I? Really what was the message for me?

Let us meditate as we go through the lyrics and take reference to a few verses. Let us appreciate the worship songs that we sing every Sunday. It is beyond the music as it focuses on God as we sing unto the Lord.

Only by grace can we enter
Only by grace can we stand
Not by our human endeavour
But by the blood of the Lamb

Into Your presence You call us
You call us to come
Into Your presence You draw us
And now by Your grace we come
Now by Your grace we come

Lord, if You marked our transgressions
Who would stand
Thanks to Your grace we are
cleansed
by the blood of the Lamb
Lord, if You marked our transgressions
Who would stand
Thanks to Your grace we are



cleansed
by the blood of the Lamb

What is the Grace of God that can only be made possible by the blood of the Lamb? Is it related to the death of Jesus on the Cross and His resurrection? Yes, it is and it has to be through Jesus Christ as He is the lamb.

This is a gift from God that we should not take for granted. It is a gift that we should treasure and not forget how great is our God and what He has done for us.

"... But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:4-10)

The Grace of God is a divine favour that God gives us even though we do not deserve it. In the New Testament, it is derived from the Greek word called, "CHARIS". Jesus Christ died for our sins even though we did not ask for it to happen, neither do we deserve to have Him die for our sins. Our salvation is made possible because of this love of God.

"...This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:22-24)



"...God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

How blessed are we! As we grow to be more like Him and get to know Him better, we need to take the cour-

age to share this Love of God with many others around us.

It can be a reminder to those who already knew Jesus Christ. For those who have heard about Him, but have no clue on the importance of Jesus Christ in their lives, this is a message for them too.

It is also this message for those who had known Jesus, left and gone away failing to understand how this grace is of value to us. The depth and meaning of His love for us, was never known fully as it is by grace that we have been saved.

I remembered the several occasions when I dodged events of sharing the gospel with strangers because I was not only shy, but also conscious about how the people would react if I talked to them about Jesus. The thoughts of sharing the Gospel succumbed to the fear of rejection and embarrassment and worst, if people witnessed that fear in me.

In sharing with others, I realised that I was not alone. It was perfectly normal to have felt this way. It took me several years to garner the courage to share about Jesus Christ and even talk about me being a Christian. Don't stop praying for courage and ask God to keep fear in the back seat. It will creep up again and again.

Through social media, I am trying to share invitations of NJCC events with friends who are Christians and to others who are not. I surprised myself when I invited a massage therapist to the NJCC. The second time when I met her, she has been visiting our Mandarin congregation with her son. Praying that she and her son will be able to find a place of worship soon! Do pray for them. JCC has been reaching out to the community through events and let us continue to pray for many more to come to know Christ Jesus. Let us also remember to pray for ourselves, leaning on His strength and wisdom to reach out to people.

Indeed, it is not by our strength and human endeavour to do God's work. God calls us to come to Him and in our appreciation of His grace, we come to Him. It is the cleansing of our sins through the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross that made it possible!

As we can enter into His Presence, it is by grace that we can stand tall to do His works. Only by Grace that all these are possible.

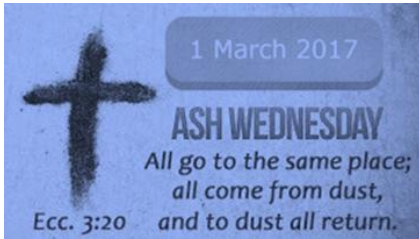
Joyce Tan

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." (Ephesians 1:7)



Understanding Ash Wednesday & Lent

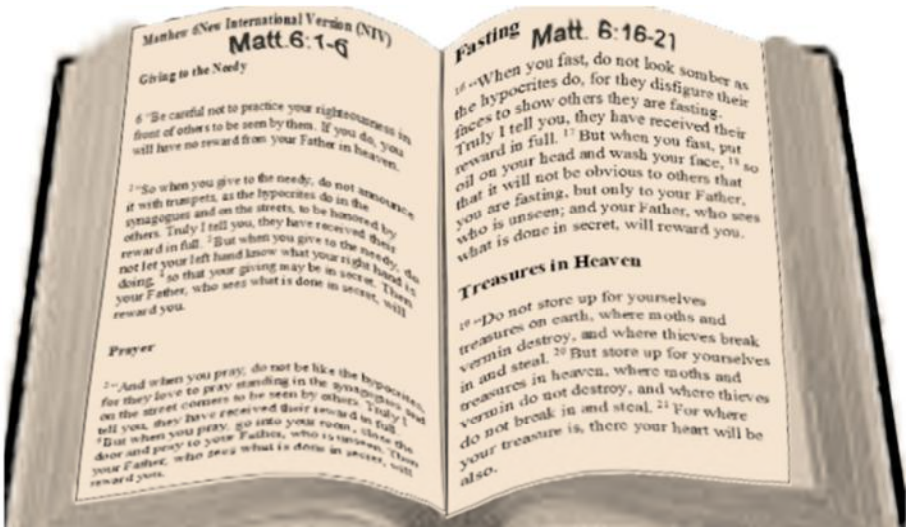
1st March 2017 is Ash Wednesday



(excluding the six Sundays). Since we all know the significance of Easter, we should not neglect the significance of the 40 days that Christians are called to reflect on their sins with assiduous effort towards repentance and charity as they prepare to celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

The lectionary readings

For an understanding of the right attitude in giving to the poor, praying and fasting, our Lutheran lectionary readings for Ash Wednesday have these passages for meditation – Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21.



(The lectionary readings of the Lutheran Church which you can find in every Sunday bulletin are meaningful for every Lutheran to make use of commen-

surate with the liturgical season. Even if we don't study them diligently week after week, just a study of them purposefully from time to time would afford immense insight beneficial to our spiritual well-being.

The lectionary readings and the liturgy are dovetailed to help us focus on God and His Word. As we are thus focused, we become drawn away from the human propensity for mundane distractions.)

Lunar New Year reminder of Lent and spring cleaning



"Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful." - William Morris

As a useful reminder, when we do spring cleaning to welcome a new year, we ought to do a spring cleaning of the soul as well to tidy up our spiritual closets and rid them of the filth of sin that has built up over the passing year.

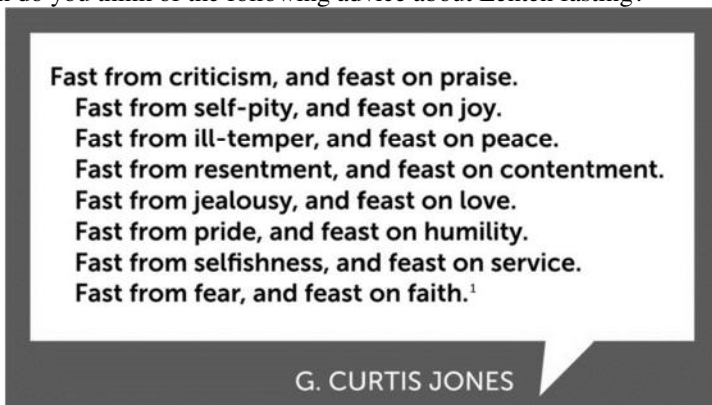
Fasting and Feasting

Fasting is not simply about denying ourselves of what we normally crave after to feed the body, but also about being spiritually focused to feed on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Lenten fasting is not about abstinence from food TO BE FOLLOWED BY unrestrained Easter indulgence of feasting to compensate for the Lenten period of "deprivation".

Fasting is not a period of deprivation of life's essentials, but a practice of taking an appropriate time off from our pursuits of the flesh to go into a deeper communion time with God. Some people may practise abstinence from food "as a matter of requirement or routine" with a deliberate show to others that they are fasting (*see Matt. 6:16-18*) but nevertheless continue their lives in worldliness with nary a focus to avert the flesh and to glorify God. This is not right.

What then do you think of the following advice about Lenten fasting?¹



Moving past Ash Wednesday

Our lectionary readings for First Sunday in Lent		
1 st Lesson	Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7	The creation and fall
2 nd Lesson	Romans 5:12-19	Death through Adam, life through Christ
Gospel Lesson	Matthew 4:1-11	The temptation of Jesus

In the Lutheran lectionary readings, we always begin with a look at the OT and then move into the NT. The passages systematically trace our journey from the past (original wholesomeness) through the present (fallen into sinful unwholesomeness) into the future (of hope in Christ).



¹ Arthur Lichtenberger, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, USA, *The Day Is at Hand*, “Lenten Rule,” (New York: The Seabury Press, 1964)

The creation and the fall

It is incomplete if our Lenten reflection is only looking forward to Easter. We must know why and how we have become what we are in today's forlorn state. Only then will we appreciate in fullness the justification for the exultation of Easter and offer our worship to God wholeheartedly (not simply by dint of what our pastors tell us to) because deep in our reflection we personally feel the exceeding riches of His grace and mercy.

A story like this is not uncommon:

A child was born into a good and well-to-do family. All his needs were well taken care of and he scored superlatively academically and had a promising future, being given a prestigious scholarship to study overseas with an assured great career on hold for him.

Alas! A great pedigree didn't work out good enough for him. All provisions for him without worries were not good enough. All love showered on him were not good enough. The freedom given to him was abused. Tempted by evil, he wandered off from the straight path and ended up a disgrace to all (family, scholarship sponsor, friends and even the country).

Despite the ugly fact, his parents still waited for him. He still had hope to look forward to, to turn around and ameliorate for his past errors. Would he do so?

Our lectionary texts tell us that Adam began his life in a good home (Eden) where he had all provisions without having to worry about anything. He was given freedom, but of course freedom came with certain rules. That kind of freedom was not good enough for him. The love from his Father was not good enough. Under temptations by the evil one, he wandered off into sin and became a blot on mankind ... (*You catch the drift*). Man's fall – what a spectacular fall, from a promising beginning to an appalling condition of having to be on his own.

As we compare the story above of the child born into a well-to-do family who became wayward and the biblical narration of Adam's rebellious act of taking matters into his own hands, how does it lead our meditation in the season of Lent?

A reflection on the sad practical life situations of people can usefully clue us to the reality of man's broken relationship with his heavenly Father all because of pride over personal knowledge (or wisdom) followed by a thoughtless act to challenge limits that are placed there for man's own good despite the idyllic provisions in a verdant garden. Thankfully, we are not without hope.

Death through Adam, life through Christ

If our sombre reflection on the Genesis narrative of our past directs us to repentance, the 2nd lesson of the Lenten lection (Romans 5:12-19) gives us hope that reconciliation with our Father is possible.

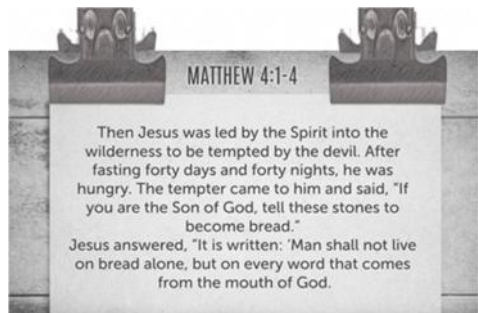
Unlike the trespass of one man (Adam) that brought death to many, the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, works the opposite (positively) to overflow to the many! The judgment followed one sin (of Adam) and brought condemnation, but the gift (of Christ) followed many trespasses and brought justification.

The serious question is: After the solemn Lenten reflection on the cause of man's sin predicament, are we ready to look ahead and receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness that reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ?

The temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11)

We do not celebrate Lent. Lent is not a season of festivity.

WE OBSERVE THE SEASON OF LENT with a solemn spiritual posture of reflection with penitence as the expected outcome. The 40 days commemorate the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting in the desert and yet did not succumb to the flesh even though he was tempted.



Nobody can avoid being tempted. This is not the same as saying that nobody can resist temptation. (*read 1 Cor. 10:13*)

Conclusion

The Lutheran lectionary readings are a rich resource for me to wander purposefully through the seasons of the Christian year and wonder at the revelations from God's Word.

May you also profit from the lectionary readings in this season of Lent.

John Lee



BEAUTY



Mom was going through her old photos and remarked how beautiful she was when she was younger. I told her that she is still pretty now but it got me thinking what really makes a person beautiful.

In our youth, most of us look wonderful, despite all the flaws. As we age, our skin becomes one of our biggest enemy. Our character is pretty rough in our youth too. We make friends, hurt our friends directly or indirectly and we start to grow in character. As we experience life and share our life with others, our circle of friends grow bigger or smaller and these circle of friends will change as we live through different stages in our lives. Nonetheless the constant change is our heart as it grows for the better (if we make the conscious effort to do so) and there lies the true definition of beauty in my opinion. This effort to grow well however has proved to be extremely challenging.

“Beauty is not in the face; Beauty is a light in the heart”

– Khalil Gibran

“The only lasting beauty is the beauty of the heart”

- Rumi

“Beauty is not about having the fairest skin or prettiest face. It’s about having the purest heart”

– Deejay Nesmo

What does the bible says?

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and wearing of gold jewellery or fine cloths. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”

1 Peter 3:3-4



“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

2 Corinthians 4:16



“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

Psalm 139:14

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.”

Proverbs 31:30

True beauty lies in the heart. To make this happen in the best way possible is through our God. Only HE can shape us in the most beautiful way possible. It is not ‘that’ difficult too. God does not demand us to change overnight but to take small tiny steps at a time. Read HIS Word, pray constantly and love HIM. From there, Jesus will teach us to love.

Empower us to love.

“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who are baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Galatians 3:26-27

Have faith in HIM. We often forget HIS love and lose our way during this journey in Christ. Discipline yourself and set aside time for him daily, an advice given by many and is probably the best way. It is in no way the only way as the Bible teaches us to meditate on HIS word every waking hour.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”

Philippians 4:8

Remember that this is not the only gift Jesus has given us but one of many. Count his many blessings and promises. May we all grow into beautiful men and women that God wants us to be.

Back to the question, is my mother beautiful? She **SURE** is!

Alvin Wong



Do you know all the Youth cell groups?

By Alicia Wong

Christal

Christal is a bright and precious gem that you should attend if you've just SHINE-d (graduated from kids church) or if you're aged 13/14! We're freshly mined and full of life! Grow with us and shine bright like a diamond!

Timing: 845am

Venue: MPH3

Cell leader: Daniel Chong



WILL (Walking In the Lord's Light)

We are a family of very old teenagers and very young adults ranging from 21-23. Our aim is to grow deeper in Christ and to encourage one another especially when we are starting to enter the working world and make very important decisions in our lives.

If you are starting to see a number 2 in front of your age, this is the place for you, don't need to look elsewhere hehe

< Shining together since 2009 and WILL continue to shine until we see God >

Family Eldest: Chih Chiang


Home gatherings: 03-02 Sunday Mornings 0845Hrs



Everlasting Light In Darkness (E-LIDs)

Interested in having loads of **fun**, going for **awesome adventures** and doing stupid things together? If so, E-LIDs is the cell for **YOU!** We are a bunch of *fun-loving, warm hearted and very friendly* (sometimes crazy) bunch of 17 and 18 Year Olds who enjoy chillin' and laughing together. Led by 2 older cell leaders – who do not act their age, we welcome anyone who wishes to **wear the same kind of socks** to come with us, **pose with our signature cell moves**, and **learn** about our very great God together!! We will be waiting for you every Sunday at 845 am at Room 3-6!



 *P/S. We will not be held responsible for you losing your sanity. However, we promise you **BRIGHT** times ahead. Join at your own risk!*



JAM: Jesus And Me



We are a group of 15-16 year old youths, with 3 older cell leaders. We have various activities to cater to our members' needs who are mainly students. We have topical bible study session to grow spiritually, fun activities (board games, sports etc.) for bonding and study sessions to manage with school work. We aim to be in a relationship with Christ and hold true to our cell verse: *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* - John 15:5

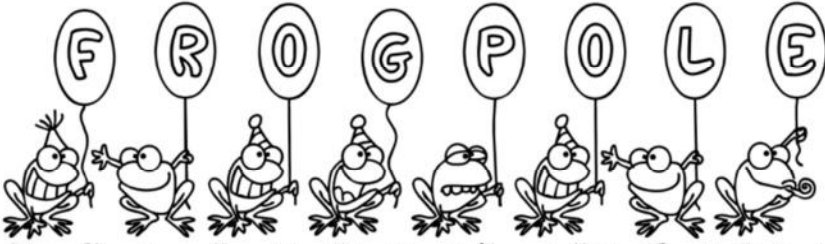
Cell leaders:

Amos, Jonathan, Hannah

Keen to join us?

See you every Sunday, 8.45am, at MPH level 3!





Aka. Finding-Really-Obedient-Good-Pets-That-Only-Love-Everyone

Fresh Frogpoles as pets! Fished from the lake up on the dangerous CLIFF by the best fisherman in town,

JOSH, and kept in a magical SACK to ensure freshness.



IZzit good for food? Do they taste best

ZHEN-ed (Steamed)? NO! They are meant to be placed in a BERY NICE clear bowl for your viewing pleasure and they HARTLEY make a sound.

WIN STONES, pebbles, CLEMes (Clams) and shells from our gift shop for your Frog-pole bowl!

Our Frogpoles are even really linguistically trained, they can relay never ending messages to your friends!

Try them now or call 1800-Room0305-SundayMornings for a free 30-day trial. (*guaranteed any 19/20-year-old's dream come true)

JCC Open House

4th March 2017 - One week after the Thanksgiving Service, the church was again filled with people, for the Open House. This time it was the neighbours who came to check out the church, which popped up in their neighbourhood.



Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam attended the occasion and even planted a tree, right next to the front entrance. He took a tour of the building and also took some photos on his handphone. We met him a few weeks later at the air-con coffeeshop and he mentioned that he took a photo of the old wooden cross which Mr George made.



Some of our guests also took videos of our 3 live bands, the Chinese, English and Dialect singing teams. I wonder if they posted these videos on social media?



By the way things ran like clockwork, we might be tempted to think there was not much effort put in. To be sure, the committee under chairman, William Tan, had planned for this event since the beginning of this year and all the people (tour guides, singers, gate keepers, teachers, first aiders, stall holders, etc) helped to make this a successful event.



Open House – Photos by Cecilia, Nick and Martin



Girls' Brigade Enrolment 2017

The first GB Enrolment service in the new JCC was held on 5th March. The GB company from Shuqun Primary School turned up in full colors to receive their badges, prizes and enrolment cards.



The girls also performed a cheerful song on the altar steps

