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Dialect Retreat 2018
@ JCC MPH1



HOM Editorial

News Report:

Strange waves rippled around the world, and nobody knows why.

Instruments picked up the seismic waves more than 10,000 miles away—but bizarrely, nobody felt them. On the morning of November 11, just before 9:30 UT, a mysterious rumble rolled around the world. - *National Geographic website.*

Luke 21:25 (NIV)

*“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and **perplexity** at the roaring and tossing of the sea.”*

Matthew 24:6-7

“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”

Romans 12:17

“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

This is the time of year when we think of peace and goodwill to man. However the world around us does not seem to be at peace. There were about 40 earthquakes of above 6.0 magnitude (World Earthquakes Live) and many hurricanes, cyclones or typhoons in the news in 2018, which should deter overseas travel, but it doesn't. People seem to head towards danger for an exciting holiday.

Sometimes we think we are fairer than God when we say that it is unfair for people who have not heard to go to Hell. Romans 3:23 says: *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* and Romans 6:23 says: *“the wages of sin is death”*. So it is not hearing about Jesus that sends a person to Hell, but sin. It is hearing about Jesus that saves a person if he repents and believes.

Despite all the bad news around us, this is still indeed the time of year when we rejoice because Jesus came into this world over 2000 years ago to save us. This is the Good News which we celebrate and share to the world around us, family, friends, colleagues and neighbours.

Luke 2:10-11

*“The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you **good news** that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David **a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.**”*

May the gift of Christmas be shared with everyone.

Martin Cheah

CHRISTMAS: THE FIRST ADVENT



The Christmas season is here again. Each year that we celebrate Christmas (the First Advent), we are one year nearer to the day of the Second Advent. The First Advent and the Second Advent relate to each other according to God's purpose. As we ponder both, the eschatological realities must come into focus:

*“Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; **and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.**” – Heb. 9:27-28*

Whenever people do any work of the present, they have the future achievement in their hope. Similarly, as we celebrate the Christmas of the present, about a Saviour born to the world, there is the “near future” to think about that gives us cause to celebrate – the ensuing momentous event of the Messiah being

offered on the Cross, for our sin to be taken away by our faith in Him. Then, there is the “farther future” of His second coming to deliver His faithfuls into eternal security.

This Christmas, as we gather in the church in worship with a celebratory mood, do we think beyond the present joy to embrace the hope of future achievement (the eternal security) for which we are dedicating our work of Christian service?

Celebrating the Truth

The world turns Christmas into a carnival of merriness sans Christ. It is not a puzzle why people who deny Christ also welcome Christmas. The unbelievers have their holiday reasons, temporal expectations or commercial motives to celebrate. Yet, the greatest puzzle is that there are also Christians who embrace a celebration without adequate regard to uphold the biblical Christmas message. (*Mt 1:18-25*)

It is people’s free will to celebrate what they wish with a great merry theme around the same time. They may want to celebrate ancient pre-Christian winter-solstice moments; some dated pagan religious occasions; any other prevailing religious or secular, public or social commemorative events; etc. However, whatever it be, it would be apposite for the celebrants to do so with clarity about what they are in fact celebrating. If they claim to be celebrating Christmas joy but then light up their homes with Santa-themed lanterns and adorn their patios with all sorts of cartoon characters so overwhelmingly dissolving the nativity of Jesus Christ into oblivion, their celebration can at best be recognized as a fashionable one other than a Christmas celebration in its true spirit. It becomes befuddling to observers of

the celebration that Christmas is what the trendy secular theme purports to be.

Sometimes, stories and modes of celebrations simply become an abuse for money-making (“a great time for a gift-buying shopping spree”) objectives, with the true message of Christmas distorted or evaded. It is not too bad if kids are properly instructed that the story of Santa Claus is a legend and that an entertaining exposure to this legend sparks conversations about the true story of Christmas with Christ (not Santa Claus) as the reason for the season. Nevertheless, Christians are not wishing for more and more new artful fabrications to link children’s minds with Batman-theme, Spiderman-theme, Superman-theme ... any popular-character-theme other than the one that really is what Christmas is all about – i.e., Jesus Christ!

Celebrating with Eternity in our Heart

*“I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good **while they live**. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.” – Ecc. 3:12-13*

*“This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun **during the few days of life God has given them**—for this is their lot.” – Ecc. 5:18*

Having some joyful feast as part of the celebration is not wrong, if the feasting is indeed just a part of the celebration with true

understanding of the festive joy and not an indulgence that goes into sinful excesses.

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” – Ecc. 3:1



We can think of Christmas as one of the seasons that God has made beautiful in its time. Importantly, in addition to the beauty of Christmas, “... God has also set eternity in the human heart...” (Ecc. 3:11)

This is telling people to contemplate the spiritual implications. We ought to enjoy the festivity (for to us a child of hope is born) without forgetting our hope for eternity.

Are we like Apostle Paul, pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus? (Philippians 3:14)

Note the brevity of time — “**while they live**” and “**the few days of life God has given them**” (Ecc. 3:12; 5:18) — in which people can be happy and do good. In fact, life is short. Life goes by like a cloud, like a dream ... This is ever more significant a reason for us to:

ENJOY THE FESTIVITY OF CHRISTMAS WITHOUT FORGETTING OUR LONGING FOR ETERNITY AS WE EXPECT THE SECOND ADVENT.

Now is the season to celebrate Christmas. However, this season is not the be-all and end-all. There are other seasons to follow, and the finale with ultimate rejoicing for all who keep their faith in the Messiah.

Clarity on the 2 versions of celebration



Christians celebrate Christmas with Christ as the reason.

Regarding the alternative version, I would rather call a spade a spade – i.e., any celebration that does not assert the nativity of Jesus described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke is at most merely an entertaining carnival of a holiday time. Even if it coincides with the Christmas season, it is biblically baseless to call it a Christmas celebration.

The church is the body of Christ. Within the church, we experience the fullness of God’s presence. Christians dwell in the House of God. When Christians gather to celebrate Christmas or for worship, enjoying fellowship in a life of faith, they cannot detach themselves from the whole biblical truth. If the church were to leave the biblical truth, the foundation of faith would gradually disintegrate, and the meaning of faith in Christ would need to be reassessed.

The life of the church in the strict sense is a sincere worship of the Messiah in spirit and truth. From the Messiah’s own mouth:

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit

and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” – Jn 4:24

Christians profess that the Messiah has come. If **CHRIST** is left out, the event of mas becomes spiritually meaningless.

Biblically-inspired Attitudes



Without following rampant misconceived methods by which the world celebrates a mas without **CHRIST**, people can turn to the Bible for inspiration on the attitudes they should possess:

- Luke 2:15 – When the shepherds first heard about the Messiah’s birth, they were earnest in seeking to find out the truth. Anyone who hears the message about the Saviour’s birth should be as earnest as the shepherds to seek the truth instead of following along the wrong path.
- Luke 2:17 – After finding out the truth, follow the shepherds’ example of spreading the word around.
- Luke 2:20 – Glorify and praise God for the Advent of the Saviour.
- Mt 2:11 – Be humble in worship and generous in offerings.
- Mt 2:12 – Be willing to put up with hardship in serving Christ.

The above is just an outline of some inspiration from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. While these Gospels carry the Christmas story about our Saviour's birth, we should be more spiritually inspired if we seek the truth by going back farther into history, into the prophecy about the promised Messiah in Isa 9:6-7 and Mic 5:2.

If we are as earnest and faithful as the shepherds in the Gospel accounts, and are devoted to affirming the strong biblical foundation on which we base our celebration of Christmas, we will gain much in our spiritual formation as we enjoy the present festivity, looking forward to the second Advent, with eternity in our heart.



John Lee

Dialect Ministry Flag Dancers



We are flag-dancing beginners.

What is a flag dance? Movements of flags in praise and worship to our living God and to equip the body of Christ in the technique of worship. We can encounter God through the flag dance.

When Deborah Kang first brought the flags to our dialect team some time in late September, some of us showed interest in the way of swinging the flag to the left and right in a lively and joyful spirit.

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Psalm 150 says:

“Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

*Praise him **with** the sounding of the trumpet, praise him **with** the harp and lyre,*

*praise him **with** timbrel and dancing, praise him **with** the strings and pipe,*

*praise him **with** the clash of cymbals, praise him **with** resounding cymbals.*

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.”

There are many ways in which the Psalm suggests that we can use to praise God, each of the suggested ways reflecting energy, sound and music.

The suggested ways are by no means exhaustive. There are also many verses in the OT about dancing as a means of worship and praise.



I and fellow flag-dance beginners in the DLT had the chance to do a bit of practice at the Dialect Retreat on 21st November. Deborah Kang called her friend, an instructor, who is also very passionate about worshipping God through meaningful dance. She taught us a few simple steps – just enough for us to do a short performance in front of the dialect elders.

Hopefully, even if we didn't perform well, we didn't do too badly and that the audience enjoyed a reflective moment about praising God for His blessings!

Peggy Tan



BATAM ESCAPE!

FRIENDSHIPS IN CHRIST

Do you remember the song by Keith and Kristyn Getty, “In Christ Alone”? When I reminisced about the retreat, I was reminded of the significance of Christ in our lives where fellowship amongst Christians should be a natural part of our walk with Jesus if we loved Him. He changes our lives no matter which stage we are in.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)”

The sun has not risen when our day started with all of us gathering at the Harbour-front Ferry Terminal for our 2-day retreat. Uncle Roy and Juria, our Tour Directors, prepared and coordinated for the trip on 24 & 25 November 2018. Excitement was in the air as the Abundance Cell Group (ABCG) squeezed through the crowds from Singapore to Batam under the hot weather before we arrived at the new Harris Resort.



The fellowships over the weekend had heart-to-heart sharing and prayers. There were worship by Patrick and the sharing of the Word led by Soon Eong on a separate occasion.

Teck Chai conducted the morning exercise for the ABCG. Ouch, their backs! Phew, I was the photographer!



Samantha reminded us that we need to pray and get to know each other better despite our differences. There were rounds of ice-breaker games that tapped on teamwork and created rapport for ABCG. Praise be to God!

Of course, there were free and easy networking moments and fun in the sun activities around the resort.

In Christ alone, my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song. This cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease! My comforter, my all in all, here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe! This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save.

"Til on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied. For ev'ry sin on Him was laid, here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain. Then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave He rose again!

And as He stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me. For I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the pow'r of Christ in me.

From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.

No pow'r of hell, no schemes of man, can ever pluck me from His hand. "Til He returns or calls me home, here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.



A sumptuous seafood dinner needs no description. There were crabs, prawns, fish, vegetables, crackers, clams and fresh coconut juice. Wow! Give thanks to God for the food.



We celebrated birthdays and most importantly, Christ's presence with us. Hallelujah! Amen.

Tony and Susan made sure that everyone was included during the trip. No pressure and always pray as Tony would say it. 😊

The Batam trip would not be complete without our adventure into the city where shopping, massage and food packed the remaining hours on Sunday after our worship.

*“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”
(1 John 1:7)*

Do you know that the most heart-warming and touching moments were the care and concern shown by the ABCG during the trip for those who had cough and were not well. The spirit of wanting to come together in Christ and the camaraderie love for Ewe Ewe, Doreen, Amy (for me too as I had a slight fever during that time) just topped the charts for the retreat. The Word and Love of God shone through fellow brothers & sisters-in-Christ were beyond comprehension.

For in Christ alone, we will always have hope in uncertainties and mercy from God in our destinies with Christ. Let’s spur one another to build friendships in Christ!



Joyce Tan

Dialect Retreat

21 Nov 2018 (Wednesday)

Wow, even our dialect senior folk had a retreat to call their own!

It was our very first dialect retreat and it was held on a weekday – here in Singapore, here in JCC. No passports needed. it was very convenient for all the participants (close to 40 of them, besides the DLT and helpers). The planning team for the retreat was eager to make it an enjoyable experience. As it turned out, the elderly folk were not disappointed.



Never underestimate our dialect seniors for the energy and readiness they showed in having their morning sing-

ing and physical workout exercises together to kickstart the retreat which had more interesting activities ahead to occupy them well into the late afternoon.

We don't expend our energy without going for replenishment, do we? Well, and thankfully, we had not forgotten to cater an appealing high-tea nourishment for all. Meanwhile, our Deacon

Peter was getting himself ready to deliver his Gospel teaching from the Book of Genesis after the high-tea session.

Sharing in Hokkien about “Noah and the Ark” and “the Rainbow Promise of God after the Flood”, Deacon highlighted the Chinese character for boat, 船 (舟 + 八 + 口) with its symbolic image of the ark (舟) carrying 8 lives (八口) (i.e., Noah & his wife together with their 3 sons and their wives), serving to remind us of God’s everlasting love and salvation plan for His people. His divine purpose is to multiply and fill the earth again with all His beautiful created living things – 2 by 2, male and female of each kind. This clearly underlines the error of the LGBT’s opinion which is contrary to God’s commandment. The “Rainbow Promise” declares to us God’s goodness, His covenant of grace and His blessings.

After the spiritual food intake for the soul, it was positive that our church office staff was able to join us in fellowship at the lunch table with physical food for the body. Although the food



was not five-star delights, it was very sufficient to satisfy the tastes and hunger of our beloved elders.



With advancing age, health and fitness issues rear their head and attention is appropriate to handle these confidently for us to live our life to the fullest. Most at the retreat were either senior

citizens or pioneer citizens. In this regard, our invited resource person, Ms Li Wen (former NUH staff) delivered a very relevant talk to equip the audience with the requisite familiarity with the dangers around them (e.g., obstacles and the risk of falling at home) and the means by which they can cope with the challenges of age.

The informative talk was good for the elderly folk, and it was encouraging to see them attentive (not fidgety). However, allow me to guess (or jest) that the organizer was kiasu a bit or had a deficit of trust that the audience retained what they listened to. So, it was “obligatory” to have a short quiz session with prizes for our elders to prove themselves. 😊

A refreshing afternoon tea break with red bean soup followed, and then it was time to sit back for a movie entitled “Long Long Time Ago”, a heartwarming story that resonates with many of our



elderly participants. It traces our old kampong days and life in early 60s, Singapore’s progress after its independence, and the important contributions of racial harmony and kampong spirit to the progress and economic development of our nation.



Thereafter, our dialect elders were entertained with a group flag dance performance and a harp presentation by Deborah Kang: “*As the dear pants for the*

water, so my soul longs after Thee.”



Blessed talents among God's servants put in the great effort to convert ordinary trans-parent bottles and jars into colourful artwork using simple threads and strings.



Before the end of the day, each participant was given a goody bag. Included within was the nice bottle



art that could be put to good use as deco items and conversational pieces in the home. Certainly, the hard work behind the artwork is much appreciated.



retreat!

All glory to the Lord for a great



Peggy Tan





Opening of MPH1 as as a Badminton Court

The MPH1 is not called a Multi-Purpose Hall for no reason. God blessed us with a very functional hall, not for it to be a white elephant. ~~🐘~~ So, on **5th December**, our outreach team held a grand ceremony at MPH1 to add one more purpose to its multi-purposes, opening it as a badminton court to enable the church to facilitate her community engagement effort through badminton.

Talking about badminton, the outreach team has an inspiring story to tell.



The promotion of our badminton interest-group started humbly during our JCC open house on 4 March 2017. Without high expectation, our

community engagement through badminton thus began with the registration of a few non-JCCians for our 1st game at Taman Jurong Community Club on 1 Jun 2017, which was followed by weekly sessions at different community clubs. Starting with about 6 persons, our team rapidly grew to 20 players.

It takes less than 2 years for the encouraging growth, which can only be attributed to God's leading. With the growth comes the need for a fresh look at how we can better accommodate the progress of this badminton club in JCC. Hence, with Council's budget approval, we had the grand badminton-court opening ceremony at MPH1.

After an opening speech of welcome by Council Chairman Se Ping, the cutting of ribbon commenced – with the Chairman using big scissors while the rest of the players simultaneously using small scissors. More than just a typical symbolic act, the cutting of the ribbon at the same moment joined with the popping of balloons and the racket of gleeful shouts all contributed a moment for reflection about the camaraderie between friends and the church's effort to promote amity with her neighbours.

The players in this warm badminton club are mostly those whom we have come to know while playing together at the community clubs.



We all know that Singaporeans love foods, and foods are a very practical means for ice-breaking and “getting to know you”. However, in the

picture, what had the ping-pong table got to do with the opening of the badminton court?

Ha ha ... the outreach team is an enthusiastic bunch. Since there is space outside the MPH, why not also entertain some of our friends who like playing table-tennis?



The outreach didn't stop at the space immediately outside the doors of the MPH1. Led by Rev. Anthony, some of our badminton friends were also brought around the premises of the church – all the way up to the 5th storey.

Actively engaging with the community is part and parcel of the church's onus in showing care and love.

We will continue to have our badminton game every Wednesday in JCC.

Pray for God's continuing guidance for us to welcome, and be welcome by, our friends – our neighbours.

Who are our neighbours? If you are a JCCian, have you also heard of the Project Kampong Spirit? We encourage more JCCians to join the outreach team to get to know our neighbours and be a blessing.

Peggy Tan

Long Story Short

a collection of stories

Sometimes I just try to fill up the spaces with a truncated story, i.e. a long

story cut short to fit the available space. However due to the way we create links to each article in The Vine, these space fillers end up as a separate link each, which is quite meaningless. Instead, I have decided to compile all these fillers into one combined article called "Long Story Short".

24th Nov – Alan and family went for a kelong holiday in Tanjung Pinang and he invited us to join them. Unfortunately, I accepted without checking my calendar as I had to work that Saturday. So they went ahead without me and I went to office that morning and I caught this beautiful rainbow on my iPhone camera using panoramic mode.

Eventually, I managed to catch the last ferry and reached the kelong around 9:00 pm. Beautiful as it was, if it were just Joo See and I, we would not have



chosen to be

there because it is too quiet and indeed seems like a lonely planet we are on. However with friends around, it was a good time of fellowship.



13th Dec – The youths went for a LCS Youth Camp and their hearts were renewed for Christ, desiring to serve and grow in Christlikeness.



20th – 22nd June 2019 Church Retreat @ Batu Pahat (Katerina Hotel) check it out. You can stay at home and pine or sign up now, and be ready to shine.

15th Dec – The Dialect Leadership Team (DLT) and their spouses closed another year of ministry for the Lord with a 3+1 (Free) buffet lunch at Harbour Front's Beng Hiang Restaurant. Oddly enough, the big eaters came early and formed a table and went through the restaurant's menu 3 times while the small eaters came in late, forming another table and only managed to eat maybe



less than half of the restaurant's menu once. Can you guess who are the big eaters, they don't look it.

21st – 22nd Dec - The Dialect Carolling Team will be travelling around Singapore from east to west, as far as Pasir Ris, to bring the Good News in songs.

24th – 25th Dec – JCC will be having Christmas outreach and celebrations. Not every church in Singapore celebrates Christmas so let us make the best of it by inviting our friends, neighbours, colleagues and family to church to listen to the Good News and to celebrate Christmas with us.

Pray for these upcoming events that God will give us the Holy Spirit to empower us to do His Will in our lives and that of JCC.

