

# The Vine



For Internal Circulation Only



## THE PRICE OF LOVE

by Alicia Wong



## DIALECT CHRISTMAS WAITS

by John Lee



## JCC OUTREACH 2019

by Peggy Tan



**The Vine This Month**  
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Cover Photo:  
Pastor Andrew moves  
on to QLC



## HOM Editorial

Rev Fredric moves back to JCC. May they both enjoy God's favour in the churches where God has moved them to. We bid a fond farewell to Pastor Andrew and family and warmly welcome Rev Fredric and Dorothy back into our fold.

### 6 Jan 2019 – Dedication Sunday.

A bunch of us, HOMs and CG Leaders were called up to be empowered for our ministries for this New Year. Sometimes I wonder how a HOM or CG Leader can succeed

without his or her team members' support. Indeed I have to thank God for the good support I get from my team members. I am not a Lone Ranger, I have a Tonto (**Team Of Naturally Talented Oldies**).

With Pastor Andrew leaving, a new team had to be formed and God infused the Multi-Media Ministry with some new blood to go another mile. We have two new members who signed up to do the website and four additional photographers who are joining the ministry.



The good news is that most of these probies (*Probie is the new member of the team – TV serial NCIS terminology*) are young people. So apparently, the ministry may be making inroads into the territory of the Youths where we have been lacking all these past years. It is my hope that The Vine will see a new season, equal to the one that Alicia and Joyce brought to it in 2016.

January is a moving month as Pastor Andrew moves to QLC and



*Martin Cheah*



# The price of love

“The risk of love is loss and the price of loss is grief. But the pain of grief is only a shadow when compared with the pain of never risking love”

— Hilary Stanton Zunin

## I am fortunate.

Fortunate in a sense that I am not old enough to experience the death of close ones. That could be the reason why I found topics of grieving over loss somewhat remote. Recently though, I am going through a phase similar to this – the very poor diagnosis of malignant growth around my

**BFF-best furry(dog) friend's heart.** Imagine my shock upon hearing the news. A lively healthy dog suddenly developed deadly respiratory problems due to the heart tumor.

I am very much aware that at some point of my life, I will experience her demise so I was prepared to have her coming into problems into her senior years. What I did not expect was she could be gone earlier than that. I was devastated. I, who ordinarily wouldn't cry, found myself tearing for the initial few days due to the shock.

As news of her ill-health spread, some well-meaning but inappropriate words were uttered by the people around us. While their words may seem insensitive, I understand that their own fears, needs and desires may have led them to certain expressions. This period of time also led me to do some reflections and research in this topic of grief while at the same time gaining another perspective. I am also very much appreciative of the time I have with my loved ones, specially my father, who is getting on in years.

Anyway, with the intervention of medication help in easing my pet's labored breathing, some normalcy of life returned, which help buy me some time in the processing of my grief. At the time of writing, my dog Molly, is still very much alive. My husband reminded me that the time allocated to her is the time to celebrate life. Indeed, each day with her is now a gift from God. She has always been a gift from God, a birthday gift given to me by God 7 years ago. For someone who isn't very fond of celebrating birthdays, I expressed my desire to the owner for me to pick her up a day after my birthday. However, the owner insisted on having the adoption go through on my birthday so I was forced to pick her up that day. Molly turned out to be a great addition to the family, bringing us unimaginable joy and pride. For the past 7 years, I have been thanking God for bringing her into my life, especially on my birth date.

Will I avoid having another dog in my life again, knowing that I will probably go through the similar experience since it is inevitable that human beings will often outlive the lives of most animals? Still a resounding yes. Each experience in life, interaction with people and the environment, has the potential for me to grow. Ultimately, God is with me every step of the way, sharing my joys as well as my sorrows.

*<sup>17</sup> Though the fig tree does not bud  
and there are no grapes on the vines,  
though the olive crop fails  
and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen  
and no cattle in the stalls,  
<sup>18</sup> yet I will rejoice in the LORD,  
I will be joyful in God my Saviour.*

### **Habakkuk 3:17-18**

Alicia Wong



# Dialect Ministry's Christmas Waits

In old English, “waites” referred to choirs and musicians who would go around the town during the winter season to entertain people with their voices and musical instruments.

In later time, when the English Church organised groups to go door to door to sing Christmas carols to usher in the Christmas season, the choirs of carollers with their accompanying musicians became known as Christmas Waits (*modern spelling*). After a two-year hiatus from carolling due to heavy programmes during the JCC's rebuilding period, the Dialect Ministry's Christmas Waits finally bounced back in force on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2018.

**I consciously use the term “Christmas Waits” to describe our Dialect Ministry's carollers, for a reminder of the oldness of the old old story of the extraordinary event – the Advent of Baby Jesus – that Christians have been celebrating for a long long time.**

The story of Jesus' birth may be old (in the sense that it originated more than 2000 years ago); yet, the Good News that the carollers bring through the music and hymns is still freshly relevant to everyone in today's chaotic world – the Good News that God sent His Son, and we have true hope in the Messiah.

# 21<sup>st</sup> December (morning)

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." – Mt 19:14*



Although the Dialect Ministry is dedicated to the dialect-speaking folks who are mainly the elderlies,

the Christmas Waits stayed obedient to Jesus' instruction to engage the little ones, rather than dismiss them, when they were ready to receive the team with their little ears pricked up to hear the Good News.



God bless the Lakeside Family Service at Jurong West Street 52 for inviting the Christmas Waits team to share the Christmas story and bring good tidings to 65 students (ages from Pr 2 to Pr 6 levels).

The Christmas Waits team members might be “old”, but they were young at heart and filled with Spirit-driven zest to engage the little ones. Take a look at our animated senior-citizen deacon with the attentive children. Mt 18:1-14 reminds us that the

Christmas story is not just for adults, the proud among whom might consider themselves to be worth more than children. If Jesus had time for all the children, the Dialect Christmas Waits could not have felt more joy to be the vessels to spread God's blessings to these little ones.

Small token gifts were distributed to the students and staff, but the Greatest Gift of All for the Christmas and New Year is: Peace on Earth, glad tidings to men!

## 21<sup>st</sup> December (evening)



The first stop was Block 157 Yung Loh Road, at 6.45 p.m. As the Dialect Ministry's Christmas Waits spread themselves around the public space amidst several HDB blocks, they effectively engaged the neighbours with their hymns and music. HDB residents could be seen listening at their windows and balconies, and passers-by at the void deck area stood by to watch. Balloons were handed out to some kiddies.

After about an hour of carols at the public area, the carollers proceeded to the home of sister Deborah Kang.



It looked like the Christmas Waits team was getting much bigger as all those around joined in the singing, creating a very joyous mood. Three sisters-in-Christ from Deborah's office also lent their voices to sing a few hymns in Tagalog.

We thank God for sister Deborah's service of warm hospitality with a sumptuous dinner. We also thank God for the fitting Good News message delivered by Deacon Peter.



As dinner was being enjoyed, the touching moment came when the food caterer, sister Poh Choo, spontaneously requested for time to share a testimony. She shared about how she had never experienced a carolling like this. She felt very touched by the carols and music. Prior to that, she was facing spiritual weakness and some misery even though she



had been attending church every Sunday with her husband. As the Christmas carols rang out, she was much touched by our love and the joyous spirit around. After a time of prayers for her and her husband, Peggy welcomed them to join the weekly badminton game in our church.

## 22nd December (evening)

The first stop was at the home of Martin Cheah's brother and



mother at Duku Place (off Joo Chiat Road). There, unexpectedly, Deacon Peter and Jessie met their distant relative who is also Martin's relative. What a small place the world is!

The world is indeed just a small place for Christians to reach out to with the Christmas Good News. We thank God for being welcome again with warm hospitality as in the first day of carolling outreach. The warmth of hospitality is indicative of a welcome degree of receptivity to the beautiful feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation through Jesus, our Messiah! (Isa 52:7) Without doubt, the Dialect Ministry's Christmas Waits could not have been happier to have this opportunity to proclaim to Martin's pioneer-citizen mother and her folk the Good News of Christmas:

The carols and music, the Christmas message by Deacon Peter delivered in short and clear style, the opportunity presented by the free-and-easy "refreshment break" interaction time to get to

know one another, the affability of Martin's mother despite her age, the prayers for her that she willingly accepted ... .. with all this and more in petitions and prayers to God, we cherish our Christmas hope rooted in the certainty of His Word.

After Christmas blessings to the family of Martin's mother and



brothers and sister, the carollers proceeded to the next stop – a private gathering of Esther Ang's ex-colleagues at a condominium in Pasir Ris. When we reached the function hall, a big group was already

waiting for our carollers.

Blessed to be a blessing; the Dialect Ministry's Christmas Waits indeed showed themselves to be blessed with the singing talent for their mission to share the Good News of Christmas as they sang in English and dialects, and even performed like professional singers taking up the audience's song request. All the carols with sprightly music impressed my heart; and I believe, the hearts of all the people there. Particularly remarkable was the Hokkien song "*U Chu Jia U Hi Bang*" (有主才有希望/*There is hope only in Jesus*) sung energetically to the music of a popular secular Hokkien oldie 爱拼才会赢 ("*Ai Piah Jia Eh Yia*" /*To win you have to give your all*") with enthusiastic participation by the audience.

The Christmas joy that we brought to the audience was unmistakable, with cheerfulness on all the faces, and we pray that the Good News message of Christmas that Deacon Peter shared would find its way into the hearts too.

# *“U Chu Jia U Hi Bang”*

## **(meaning: There is hope only in Jesus)**

I like this Hokkien song with its adept advice, with interesting analogies, for those who are in dire straits and dwelling in fear:

*Why lose your hope, blaming the gods and everyone, and sinking yourself to become like a lifeless scarecrow? The song tells the listeners that life is like the morning mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (James 4:14) When our life is dictated by the affairs of the world, then our worries and contentment just come and go; and we succumb to feelings of emptiness in the end. When life is aimless and going nowhere, there is hope only in Jesus, the saviour of the world.*

Do you agree with the message of the Hokkien song?

*“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” – Ps 42:5*

We rejoice that Jesus came to give us something better than the chaos, conflicts and troubled hearts that the world offers.

Give up the one upmanship game. "You think that was bad, let me tell you what happen to me.." Abolish this game forever from your life.

- Jacki Whitford

The Christian way is not the way of the world in which people play the game of one-upmanship in self-centred pursuits instead of following Jesus-centred instructions.

As we went out carolling to bring the Good News to our neighbours, the songs and music did not fail to bounce around where we were and awaken ourselves to the true message of Christmas, the message of hope in Jesus.

Is Christmas already over? The story of Christmas may be an old old story, but it is not a story that is buried in the past. It is a story that should be kept alive for pointing us to our future. It is a story of God's love and our salvation hope, a story that many in the world are still in need of hearing.

New Year Blessings to the Christmas Waits team and all!

*John Lee*



# Dialect Ministry Farewell to 2018, Looking forward to 2019

In last month's issue of The Vine, you have read the report of the **Dialect Ministry first-ever retreat in December**. In this month's issue, you can also read about the **Dialect Ministry Christian Waits (carollers)** enthusiastic in their spreading of the Christmas good will and glad tidings. Apart from these, the Dialect Ministry also held a **Christmas celebration cum annual outreach event with tea fellowship and dinner** on 19<sup>th</sup> December. More than 50 attended the celebration that Wednesday afternoon. It was our great pleasure to welcome all of them, including one of Esther Ang's elder brothers and Martina's mum who were among the many new faces who turned up.



What is Christmas? The question was answered by Deacon Peter in his message about how Jesus was born in a manger, not a 5-star hotel.

There were lively carolling and games. There were also delicious Christmas log cakes included in the tea and dinner menus.

### MY PRIVILEGE TO BE PART OF THE MINISTRY IN A POSITIVE YEAR

While December might be a particularly active month due to the Christmas season, we do not overlook the fact that the whole of 2018 was a positive year for the Dialect Ministry. I was glad to be privileged to be a part of the ministry, engaging with the amiable elderly folk and enjoying serving the Lord together with fellow faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. While we encourage the elderly folk, we have also been much encouraged by so many of them who are regular in attendance in our Dialect Sunday Service and, despite their age, maintain active interest and participation in the activities organised for them throughout the year.

### MY NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

Is making new year resolutions out of fashion? Welcoming the new year 2019, and bidding farewell to ...

If the old year had been a wasted year, it would have been easy to bid it goodbye. However, the year 2018 had been a blessed year for the Dialect Ministry. Therefore, to make it less “sad” to say goodbye, I shall let the blessings in the old year be the positive energy that leads me to this new year resolution of continuing in faithful service in the Dialect Ministry. In this way, as I do the ministry work in the new year, I am always remembering the blessings of the old year that keeps me going. I trust that the flow of God’s goodness to the Dialect folk will continue.



I welcome your prayers and support for the Dialect Ministry.

*Peggy Tan*

# JCC OUTREACH 2019: Welcoming New Friends

When the year 2019 is still new, it is our delight to make new friends.



After the opening of MPH1 as a badminton court on 5 Dec 2018, the Outreach Ministry welcomed Wen Yan and Kai Shi, our two new friends, to join us in the first game of the new year 2019 on 2<sup>nd</sup> January.



We played badminton, we played table tennis ...  
... and then there was a “blackout” while the game was in progress. Someone brought in little candles to bring light into the



darkness, and cheers brightened up the faces as the Happy Birthday song rang out.

Whose birthday was it? Ha ha ... it was my birthday!

I felt blessed to be surrounded by friends. They have been a blessing to me as I always felt joy to be with them and the joy of the Lord has been my strength for the ongoing outreach activities.

As I enjoy my ministry work, I count my blessings and realise that God has always blessed me abundantly.

In this new year 2019, it is my prayers that God continues to bless the outreach work of JCC as hands of friendship are joined through badminton and table tennis.



*Peggy Tan*

# λόγος

logos/word

## (1) Introduction

John 1:1-5 was the passage discussed in my JWCG's Bible Study this month. Through the discussion, below are some of the thoughts that emanated in my mind about the meaning of the "**Word (λόγος)**".

If you are flummoxed by parts (2) & (3) below, which represent just a brief (not comprehensive) attempt at trying to understand the "**Word (λόγος)**", do not pull your hair out in despair. It is something not straightforward to understand, for even Bible scholars have varied views. You can just skip these 2 parts and jump to part (4). ☺

This encounter of grappling with an interesting yet perplexing part of Scripture is a lesson to me on why despite not understanding 100% some things about God, we can still live by faith while giving ourselves room to explore further knowledge through a whole-of-Scripture approach.

## (2) Trying to understand the "**Word (λόγος)**"

In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. (Jn 1:1)

What is meant by "**Word**", translated into English from the Greek **λόγος** (logos)?

The same word **λόγος** is used in Rev. 19:13, “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the **Word [λόγος]** of God.”

A concordance search of **λόγος** (Strong’s Greek #3056) and its variants suggests that there is a wide range of contexts for its usage. Unsurprisingly, there are many propositions among scholars about its plausible meaning as used by John.

I note that in the Chinese Bible, Jn 1:1 reads as “太初，**道**已经存在，**道**与上帝同在，**道**就是上帝。” - in which the translation **道** (*dào*) for the “**Word**” (**λόγος**) clearly does not have the meaning of an element of human speech in the ordinary dictionary definition. Translated back from Chinese to English, **道** (**λόγος**) can mean principle, truth, morality, reason, wisdom, etc.

### (3) Trying to understand the “**Word (λόγος)**” in relation to God

Jn 1:1 tells us that the **Word (λόγος)** was with God – meaning that the **Word (λόγος)** was distinct from God Himself.

Then the next part of the verse tells us that the **Word (λόγος)** was God – meaning that the **Word (λόγος)** was God Himself.

Besides, the opening of John’s Gospel mentions the **Word (λόγος)** existing “in the beginning”, and then refers to creation in Jn 1:3-4.

Comparably, the opening of Genesis mentions “in the beginning” relating to God’s creation when there was nothing else existing BUT the Spirit of God (Gen 1:1-2). Further, Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11 ... relate what “*God said*” with the creations that came into the picture.

We read further:

- In the OT, “By the **word** of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. – Ps 33:6
- In Jewish writings after the OT, “Thine Almighty **word** leaped down from heaven out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction” – Wisdom of Solomon 18:15, Apocrypha)

(4) Accepting my un-omniscient mind

Whatever the depths or subtleties of meanings embedded in John's choice of the term **λόγος**, or whatever meaning best represents John's message, I surmise that the **Word (λόγος)** does refer to some divine aspect of God that we find great difficulty to express full clarity in the limited human languages. It is just like how we find great difficulty to enunciate the full divine sense of the Trinity with three Persons within the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; being three Persons, yet One God.

I see a certain gap in my ability to comprehend God by my un-omniscient mind, and what falls in this gap shall be to me a mystery that I can live with just as in my accepting of the mystery of the Trinity. There are mysteries, there is knowledge; the knowledge as God grants is ample for us to ground our faith to pivot on His grace.

We live by God's grace through our faith, not through an impeccable understanding of everything relating to God. Despite there being room for us to seek wisdom more, it is sufficient for us to embrace the crux of the message in John 1:1-18 ("*The Word Became Flesh*") that the **Word (λόγος)**, in a certain perspective embodying the breath of God's power, became manifest (and distinct) in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Messiah who:

- was with God in the beginning and through Him all things were made (Jn 1:1-3)
- came into the world as the true light to give light to everyone (Jn 1:9)
- is Himself God and in closest relationship with the Father (Jn 1:18)
- gives us who believe in Him the right to become children of God (Jn 1:12)

Thanks be to God for His gift of His Son!

*John Lee*