

The Vine



For Internal Circulation



**LENT: Beginning
with Ash Wednesday**

by John Lee



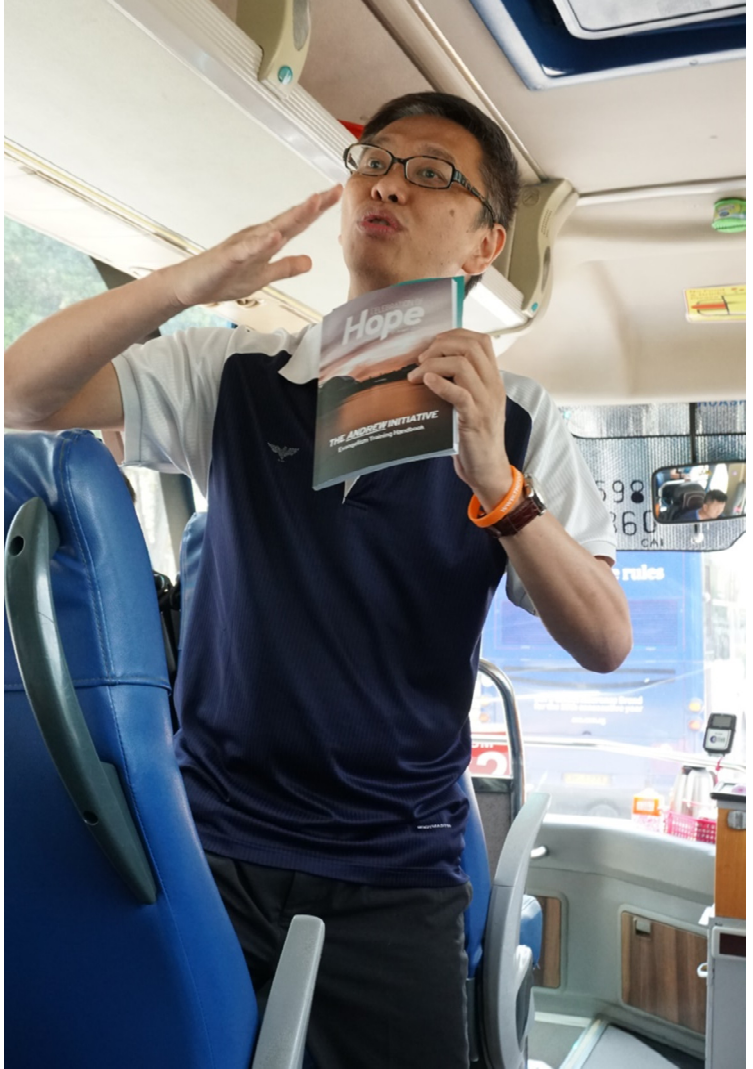
LAND BEYOND TIME

by Joyce Tan



**TESTIMONY OF LILY
LEE**

by Alicia Wong



The Vine This Month
Editor:
Alicia Wong

Writers this issue:
John Lee
Joyce Tan
Alicia Wong
Henry Lim

Photos:
Martin Cheah
Teck Chye

Cover Photo:
On the bus to COH
training



HOM Editorial

In the last issue of The Vine, I published an article sent to me by Yew Neng about the reasons for coming to church earlier. It was not written by him but was extracted from some Christian resource, so don't blame him if the article seems a little critical of late comers. Some of the editors on The Vine team felt that there are valid reasons for coming late, eg having to get the small child/baby ready, MRT delays, car problems, etc. However, one lady I know actually mentioned that after reading that article, she has decided to come to church early.

You will never know the impact of the written word until it changes your life. For instance, 95 Theses were pinned on the church door at Wittenberg which changed Christianity for good. Nowadays, most people think that words are not enough; they need videos to get their message across. Children at a very young age are not taught to read but rather to watch cartoons on the iPads. I hope what we have in this issue of The Vine are good reads that will encourage your faith.

Today, 30th March 2019, the water filter which I had just changed about 1 month ago started to beep. That's strange because it is supposed to last from 6 months to a year after changing the filter. I had no choice but to take it apart and try to reinstall the filter again and see if it works, similar to rebooting a computer. When I started to move all the cups and cutlery that was around the water filter, lo and behold, there were 3 tiny cockroaches amongst the cutlery, which I quickly flushed down the drain.

After reinstalling the filter, the equipment works fine again. Was this a situation in which the Lord was leading me to get rid of the pests before it was full grown and scarier? At first I was quite frustrated to have to reinstall the filter again as it was tedious but now I realize that it was for a good purpose.

I received this email:
Your Daily Prayer - March 27

A Prayer for Triumph

By Mary Southerland

And we know 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, NIV

There are no accidents with God, nor is He surprised by anything or anyone in the life of His child. God uses even the most horrendous circumstances for our good.

Every circumstance comes to us for a purpose, bound by God's love and plan and faithfully delivered with His permission. While we cannot go back and change our past, we can change the way we respond to our past and determine how much power it has in our lives today.

Only God can take the broken pieces of your life and make something beautiful out of each one. He is waiting for you to let go of your pain and trust Him.

And you really can trust Him.

No one loves you like He does.

You may not always understand or even like His process, but you can always trust His heart of love for you.

Let's Pray

Father, I choose to believe You are faithful and will do what You promise to do in Your Word. I believe when I lay the pain and hurt of my past at Your feet, You not only can but also will transform it all into something beautiful. I choose to believe You will turn the broken places of my life into living illustrations of Your sufficiency and healing power. I trust You, Lord.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

On 1st April 2019, no joking, I am starting work in a new department. This is my last year before I turn 67 and I am given a new role. Not doubting the capability of the management, I guess this must be a temporary role which is required for only 1 year and thereafter, not required anymore, otherwise they would not assign it to someone who have only 1 more year to work.

From my human point of view this may seem like a redundant role but perhaps from God's point of view, this is the year of COH and maybe I am moved to where the field is ripe for the harvest.

I have sowed for about 16 years and reaped nothing so maybe that is why I am given a last chance to start afresh to sow seeds in a new field. Pray with me that I will be empowered to serve the Lord in this new department.

Martin Cheah

LENT:

Beginning on Ash Wednesday



6 March 2019 is Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent in the Christian calendar. From Ash Wednesday to the day before Easter, excluding the Sundays, it is a period of 40 days. The number 40 carries some biblical significance:

- Moses fasted for 40 days when he was with God on Mt Sinai. (Ex 34:28)
- Elijah fasted for 40 days when he fled to the mountain. (1 Ki 19:8)
- According to the Gospels, Jesus fasted for 40 days in the Judean Desert, and rejected Satan's temptations 3 times after His baptism and before he commenced His public preaching.
- God gave a 40-day warning to Nineveh that their city would be overthrown. (Jonah 3:4)

"The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth." – Jonah 3:5

Traditional churches have observed the Lent season as a 40-day period for meditation on the suffering of Jesus and on our transgressions – with fasting (excepting Sundays), self-denial, repentance of sins and doing good. It is strictly speaking not a season of celebration, but a season for a solemn assembly with a humble spirit to seek God for His mercy and grace. Our

mindfulness of our abject state being in sin brings out by sheer contrast the holiness and glory of God. May our broken and contrite hearts then have the disposition to receive His Word being preached and explained, with our endeavour to be doers of the Word. (James 1:22)

Use of Ashes



The use of ashes on Ash Wednesday is an adaptation of its use in biblical time:

- Ashes symbolize mourning. *“When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.” – Esther 4:1*
- Ashes symbolize repentance. *“So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.” – Daniel 9:3 (Also, Job 42:6; Neh 9:1)*
- Jesus Himself made reference to ashes. *“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.” – Lk 10:13*

Apart from mourning and repentance, the symbolic sprinkling of ashes also represents the fragility and brevity of human life. (Job 30:19)

Gen 3:19 tells us, *“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”*

Use of Oil



Our mourning and repentance is a statement of our desire to turn from sin, and turn our life, to Jesus Christ. Only through Jesus Christ can we have hope of being cleansed from sin to live an eternal life in heaven.

Ashes aside, Christians are anointed with oil as a sign of God's favour. Hebrews 1:9 says, *"You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."*

Testing Time

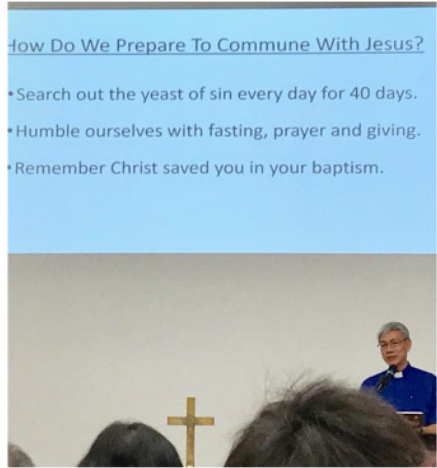


The solemn season of Lent connects our thoughts with the testing of Jesus in the desert. Though tempted, Jesus was not taken in by Satan's wiles. As we go through 40 days of Lent, some of us may be experiencing a spiritual desert condition with a dryness in our soul. Here is an advice:

"Droughts and difficulties are a reality for all of us. When the dry of your drought is fierce, God is inviting you to serve and trust Him in the arid, arduous trenches of it. You. Are. Not. Alone." – Gwen Smith

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mt 26:41)

At the end of 40 days, Jesus came out of the desert and began His early Galilean Ministry, proclaiming the good news of God. (Mk 1:14 – 3:6)



Decision time (to repent and believe),

Preparation time (to commune with Jesus)

& Reminder (repentance in entire life)



At the end of the period of 40 days is the time of decision for those who are still undecided:

*“The time has come,” Jesus said. “The kingdom of God has come near. **Repent and believe the good news!**” – Mk 1:15*

The decision to repent and believe in the good news would lead up to the Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday) when Jesus would have the Passover Meal with His disciples and establish the Holy Communion.

There is preparation time for the disciples to commune with Jesus in eating the Passover. (Lk 22:7)

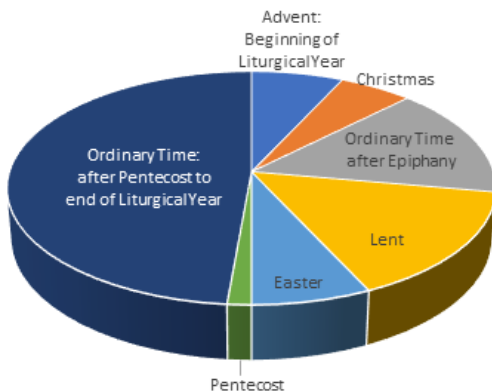
We recognize our observance of Lent as:

- time to repent and believe in the good news,
- preparation time for communion with the risen Christ in and through His revealed Word, and
- a reminder of our ongoing need to repent for every sin that enters our life from time to time, and a reminder that mercy and grace is found in Jesus.

Repentance is not a one-off “ritual”. It is in the daily posture of a Christian in humble submission to God. The first thesis of Martin Luther reads:

“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said ‘Repent,’ he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.”

Contemplating our spiritual formation through seasons



Lent is not the only season in the Christian calendar. Each season in the Christian year gives us an opportunity to contemplate our spiritual formation as we reflect on the significance of the relevant events.

Ever since the Fall (Genesis 3), the travails man faced due to sin led him to long for the promised Messiah. The promise was fulfilled by the Nativity of Jesus. Thereafter, from the Lord's

public ministry, the call to repent and believe in the good news was proclaimed loud and clear as imperative events coursed through the Holy Week (covering Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter eve). Finally, man rejoiced with eternal hope upon the resurrection of our Lord on Easter Day.

Our commemorations of the seasons in the church calendar also make us perceptive of our shifting experience as we inevitably transit across mountains and valleys.

From the Passion of Christ to His glorious resurrection; from the sad spells in our life to the delightful moments – as I ponder the seasons in the church calendar, I am also contemplative of the seasons in one’s life that will have a culmination point. For those who repent and believe in the good news, the climax will be the glorious fulfilment of their destiny.

- *“God is not man, one given to lies, and not a son of man changing his mind. Does he speak and not do what he says? Does he promise and not come through?” (Num 23:19 MSG)*
- *“Put it in writing, because it is not yet time for it to come true. But the time is coming quickly, and what I show you will come true. It may seem slow in coming, but wait for it; it will certainly take place, and it will not be delayed.” (Hab 2:3 GNB)*

Trusting God for your plans



“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” – Prov 16:3

John Lee

OUR GOD & THE “CRAZY” LEES

IN A LAND BEYOND TIME

“THROUGH HIM ALL THINGS WERE MADE; WITHOUT HIM NOTHING WAS MADE THAT HAS BEEN MADE.” (JOHN 1:3)

Since the beginning, God has created the heavens and earth. Our interest in nature, adventure, historical landmarks and archaeology, have been high on the list for our travels. Well, shopping too, if it is part of the trip. 😊

For this trip, Teck Chai and I headed to Lapland where we marvelled at the beauty and were in awe at the feet of God’s creation in Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Yes, this trip is also on our bucket list. We give thanks to God to be able to travel together as husband and wife (something that I learnt not to take for granted over the years after all that we have been through) and the blessings during the trips. 😊



“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. (Ps 19:1-2)

We transited in Frankfurt before Oslo and the photograph was taken in the departure lounge. I was looking through the glass panels, admiring the drops of snowflakes, falling onto the tarmac; munching on the sandwiches and an apple for a pack & go lunch.

Our first stop at Oslo, Norway, got us prepared for the wintry cold that was to come over the next 10 days. The roads were slippery from the ice formed through the heavy snowfall. I am always excited when I see

snow. This trip had snow falling on my head and it was all around us. The scenery looked like it is a bed of fluffy white cotton, waiting for us to step on it. Wow!

In Oslo, the temperature was below 10 degree Celsius and it was still manageable for us. The sun set early at about 4 p.m. during this period in that part of the world. How beautiful it was when the skyline turned red, lining the perimeters of the sea with its glory. It was also not surprising to see the moon in the afternoon.



“Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.” (Ps 96:11-13)



“How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number - living things both large and small.” (Ps 104:24-25)

It was a beautiful sight at every stop we made. The depth of snow increased at the pit stops and the weather turned colder dipping into below zero temperatures.

As we made our way for an overnight Hurtigruten cruise, it was the first moment for us to catch the Northern Lights. I learnt that once there is a cloudy night with snowfall, the chances of seeing Northern Lights were very slim. I enjoyed the cruise as I always



have. Yes, battling the cold with warmth in our hearts; giving thanks to God! ☺



There were visits to the parks and the city areas to understand the culture of Norway. Finally, the “Crazy Lees” had the opportunity to catch glimpses of the Northern Lights when we were in Tromsø. It was a beautiful sight and you stand amazed at how wonderful is our God when you see such a phenomenon. The spectacle of the green colours was so natural that we knew we can tick off this

item on our bucket list.

“The heavens are yours, and yours the earth; you founded the world and all that is in it” (Ps 89:11)



The journey continued with visits and sights of the Lutheran and Protestants Churches in Norway and Finland. The one that we particularly adored was the ‘Rock Church” in Helsinki, Finland. It is known for its striking copper dome and it was built out of rocks. Could you see the Cross at the top?



As we gazed into the nature despite the cold temperature of -20 degree Celsius, our dream of doing a husky ride across the horizon came through. Do you recall moments when we complain about the hot weather in Singapore?! In that moment, I am reminded and thankful for the blessings despite turmoil and challenges in our lives too. There is a purpose for everything!



Lapland Sun

"It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshalled their starry hosts" (Is 45:12)



All the pictures were taken from the hand-phones. We cannot believe how wonderful the photographs turned out; capturing the heavy snowfall with the huskies to the rising, setting of the sun and the appearance of the moon.

As a finale of the article, let us introduce to you the famous Ice Hotel and the visit to Santa Claus in Finland. Fancy having juice in a cup made of ice and really, they can drink hot coffee and tea from the ice cups too. These are great memories as souvenirs!



"Give them a message for their masters and say, 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: tell this to your masters: With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please" (Jer 27:4-5)

Also, the final stop was the reindeer farm and the rides on the snow fields through the forest of frozen trees in Helsinki at -32 degree Celsius. We



thought the snow mobile ride on the night through the snow-capped mountains were the coldest ever on our trip! Well, we were educated by the locals that it could have been -45 degree Celsius when the weather plunged! Arggh!



works in our lives, let us continue to believe in Him when things are tough and sometimes even when we do not understand. We stand in awe of Him who is the Creator before and beyond time; knowing that he is our God!

Joyce Tan (aka Mrs Lee)



Testimony of Lily Lee

Interviewed by Alicia Wong

1st contact

I do not know who Lily was until I received a request from Rev Anthony who asked me to conduct a face to face interview with her as she wanted to share her testimony but find it difficult to express herself through the written word. Turns out both of us are living in the same neighborhood! Since our 1st meeting, we have bumped into each other even as we subsequently travel off to different destinations. Happy to know another sister in Christ!



Lily's background

Most of us in the English service do not know who she is but she is certainly known to people in the Dialect Ministry as she is active there. She 1st attended our Hokkien service on the 9th September 2018. Previously she was in Hearts Alive with her son, one of those churches in our building. One day, Lily was approached by her son to share Christ with the grandmother of

one of the church members using the dialect Hokkien. While she was able to converse in the language, she found herself lacking in the tools of spreading the gospel. After some discussion with her son, they decided to look for a church that has Hokkien service. To their surprise, they did not have to look any further than Jurong Christian Church!

After attending the Hokkien service in our church for a while, she visited our English service (she still remembers the date- 25th November 2018!) with her daughter, who was looking for a church while her son continues staying in his current church. Since then, she has been attending both services. Somehow God gave her the zeal to power through the long day every single week and recently, Deacon Peter and Sister Seline encouraged her to give her testimony during the 11th year anniversary of the Hokkien service.

Her testimony

My first encounter with God happened in 2003. My daughter was 12 years old and my son was 7 years old. I had a heart attack during that year while I was watching television. I was immediately rushed to the hospital and when I was in the ambulance, I said, “God, save me. My kids are still small. How? If I go now?” At the hospital after a series of examination, the doctor told me that I had an extra nerve in the heart and



Lily's children – Pamela and Benjamin Lim

recommended that I should go for the surgery to remove it because the extra nerve would endanger my life. However, the success rate was only 50%. The extra nerve would cause my heart to palpitate at a faster rate as it did not have its own runway since it was sharing a runway with the other nerves. The palpitation would cause me to feel breathless and experience chest tightness which would be uncomfortable and likely to affect my daily life. In fact, the prognosis of my life expectancy is not good without the surgery.

After much consideration, I decided not to go for the surgery due to the low success rate. During that period, my cousin invited me to her church to pray and share the Gospel with me.



Lily's children - present day

Through her, I came to know the Lord and believed that God heals his children. It was then that I decided to live by faith and trust God that my life is in His hands. From the year 2003 till now, I am still alive and live to see my kids grow up to become young adults.

I want to thank God for His grace and mercy.

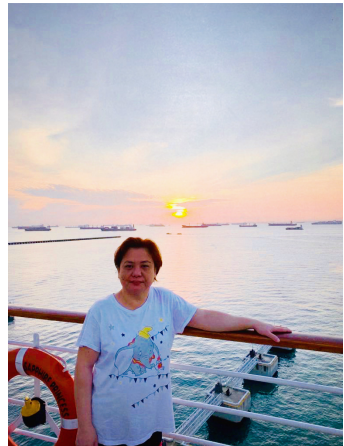
Before I know God, I spent most of my time indoors, doing housework. Often, I looked at the four walls and at times, even hoped that they would talk to me. I would pester my kids asking them what time they will be back and what they are doing. Now my life is very different because I have church brothers and sisters and church events that bring meaning to my life. Now it is

my kids' turn to ask me when I am coming back and even joked about me being a very busy woman!

When I first attended Hokkien service in September 9, 2018, I told Deacon Peter that I would come here to take a look and learn some Hokkien songs. But I never expect that I will be so blessed by the Word of God. And I learnt a lot from the elderly. After every Hokkien service, I would share with my kids over dinner about the sermon, the teachings and what we did there. Two months later, my daughter came to JCC to worship in the English service, which is another blessing given to me by God.

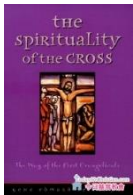
I want to thank God and praise God for His mercy and thank God for my mentor Beng Lay for her kindness and patience doing Bible Study and spending time with me. I also want to thank Deacon Peter, sister Seline and also brothers and sisters in English and Hokkien service.

I would end my sharing with Luke 21:34 (NIV) *"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap."* I like this verse because everyday life is very challenging. I want to be reminded not to be weighed down by the things of the world and be watchful.



SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS 十字架的神髓

(Welcome to the seminar at LCOR on 6th April)



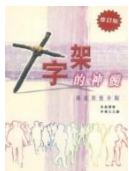
The message of the Cross is central in the series of events during the Holy Week – a message that is “foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor 1:18)

The message of the Cross is one of suffering both in respect of the high price that Jesus had to bear for our salvation and in respect of the suffering anyone who wishes to follow Him must be prepared for – as Jesus said to His disciples:

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” – Mt 16:24-26

Martin Luther coined the term “Theology of the Cross” to state the theological principle that our knowledge of God stems from the study of Christ in His humiliation and the sufferings He underwent on the cross.

Gene Edward Veith, Jr. writes the book “Spirituality of the Cross” giving a lay perspective of one who struggled in search of an answer in his spiritual quest. **In the end, he found his answer from Luther’s theology of the Cross that is often overlooked by many Christians.** This book has gained many positive reviews which you can google to read. Among the reviews is one that states:



“Veith explores and presents a true understanding of justification by faith, the means of grace, vocation, theology of the cross, the two kingdoms, worship, and the church.”

The book “Spirituality of the Cross” is so well-received by readers that it is translated into Chinese by 李广生 (Peter Li) and 蔡锦图. It is a good book to read concomitant with our reflections in Holy Week on the message of the Cross – about righteousness, grace, work and life – in Luther’s theology as Veith explores it.

Dr Peter Li (李广生博士) of Lutheran Theological College Hong Kong will be in Singapore this April to speak on the book.

The books (both language) will be on sale at highly subsidized price of \$8.



“The Spirituality of the Cross”
Education Seminar

6 Apr 2019 (Sat)
@ LCOR from 2 –
4 p.m. (English
session)

Come early for
lunch and
fellowship before
the seminar.

John Lee