

Jurong Christian Church

The Vine



For Internal Circulation Only



A CHRIST-CENTRED CHRISTMAS

by John Lee



DIALECT MINISTRY'S ACTIVITIES

by John Lee

NIAS

THE NIAS EXPERIENCE

by Daniel and Danny



The Vine This Month

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Baptisms in December



HOM Editorial

I read an email about **Faith versus Reason**, the author expounded on 1 Corin-

thians 1:18-31 and suggested that the first battle between faith and human reason took place in the garden of Eden. Eve looked at her situation from a purely logical perspective and decided she was being cheated by God out of something good. Her faith faltered as "reasonable" thoughts of self-interest filled her mind.

The author proposed that God's instructions and actions don't always appear reasonable from a human perspective. Although Isaiah 55:8-9 describes God's thoughts and ways as higher than man's, many people judge divine ideas to be lower than human intelligence.

The author added that Paul emphasizes that God's choices are illogical by the world's standards. His message of salvation seems foolish, and His messengers appear weak and unimpressive.

This reminded me of an incident recently when I tried to share about Christianity with my colleagues. One of them asked, "What if Christ was lying to you?" He was questioning if it really was so simple. At that point in time I could not find a response. However later that night, the answer came to me. If Christ was lying, He paid a terrible price for it because He was tortured and crucified to death for it. Jesus was not killed for committing a crime. *"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. (Matthew 27:23)*

So my dear friends, we have a glorious message that boggles the mind, God became man to save us from our sins. The simple message that you have to share with the world.

I remember when I was a young boy and the people used to bang gongs and make loud noises when there was a lunar eclipse. Now they are too sophisticated and can even predict that on Dec 26, there will be a solar eclipse called the ring of fire. Are they truly wise?

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Martin Cheah



Happily arriving at Batam Ferry Central Point
(Time for lunch)



After lunch, on a 15-min journey to the venue
by hotel-provided shuttle service

DIALECT LEADERSHIP TEAM ANNUAL SUMMIT 2019

29 – 30 Nov 2019 in Batam

The Dialect Ministry held its Leadership Summit 2019 at Hotel Best Westin Premier Panbil in Batam from 29 Nov (Fri) to 30 Nov (Sat).

The hotel, which is located away from busy shopping areas, provided a good, tranquil environment for the Dialect Leadership Team (DLT) to quickly settle down for the working summit with R & R.

While waiting for the room keys, the DLT gathered at the roof-top terrace cum business lounge. They had a devotion and singspiration time before commencing their meeting with what seemed to me like a heavy agenda of thoughtful matters concerning the dialect ministry. As it turned out, the meeting

lasted over two hours. Drinks and tidbits were catered by the



hotel – generously, complimentary and unexpectedly.

It was kind of the DLT to welcome Esther Yam and me to the Summit as spouses of DLT members and as long-term

supporters of the dialect ministry. We had the opportunity to witness how seriously the DLT members as servants of God devoted themselves to ministry. Rubbing shoulders with these faithful followers of Christ was spiritually inspirational in intuitive ways. On further reflection, I was amazed at how God had blessed the Dialect ministry for over 2 decades, seeing the ministry grow in strength over the period. It is also recognized that the DLT displays exemplary testimony of team and family unity with couples strongly supportive of each other in committed spiritual service.

The DLT members have been blessed with admirable energy and health to stay their course in sowing love and care, sowing gospel seeds and reaping the fruits. Blessed to be a blessing indeed! Each of them easily averaged 20 years of faithful service, including the 2 DLT members (Alice and Julie) who were unable to take time off for this trip to Batam.

Give thanks to God for His munificent spiritual uplifting upon the DLT and all co-workers in the dialect ministry!

After the DLT concluded their 2-hour-plus meeting, the room keys were distributed. It was close to evening. After refreshing ourselves, we had a great fellowship time concurrent with our BBQ buffet under the stars. It had been a wet afternoon. We appreciated that God showed us His covenant rainbow and stopped the rain just in time for our open-air BBQ dinner beside the beautiful infinity pool with cool air and a great vista of the green and open spaces around the hotel.



Beyond a hearty dinner, we continued our fellowship time in one of the rooms, with conversations conducted only in Hokkien. Those who made slip-ups of switching to English faced the penalty of “fines”. There was a good dose of friendly ribbing coupled with the excitement when the “fines” were piling up for some.

Late into the night, the game ended with no real penalties enforced. I noted with gladness the endeavour by the DLT to

include in the retreat by way of such an entertaining activity a sense of purpose to gently nudge the DLT members to improve their fluency with the dialect.

The rooms were well-appointed for a good night rest. The next morning, after a satisfying local-themed buffet breakfast, we gathered again for another moment of praise and worship.



**Training topic by Rev. Oh (via video):
“Trials and Death 灾难与死亡”**

We sang our hearts out with joy and danced to the Summit theme song "Praise and Dance Unto The Lord (主真好/爱的舞步)". Then we had a training session with Rev. Oh Beng Kee (via video) on the topic "Trials and Death". It was a conversational hot topic dealing with the unavoidable facts and realities of life, with many a question asked by sceptics

about our God of love as proclaimed in the Bible. The training, with illumination from the Bible, is very helpful for dialect evangelism.

Soon, it was time to check out of the hotel. We then had a last-minute shopping trip to Batam City Square to buy the famous Ambon & Plum Lapis cake of Indonesia before setting off for ferry departure. We reached Singapore after sunset.



The retreat was a short one, but it undoubtedly enhanced the bonding of the DLT members and encouraged them to continue in their faithful service to the Lord.

Soli Deo Gloria!

John Lee





A CHRIST-CENTRED CHRISTMAS

Rejoice: A Saviour
Has Been Born To Us!

The annual Christmas season is here again. Although Christians celebrate Christmas with joy for the reasons they know – with the advent of the Messiah (Isa 6:3, Lk 2:13, Rev 5:11) guaranteeing the eternal destiny of universal harmony in heaven for those who believe – it is never easy to communicate the true meaning of Christmas to a world that is drowned by the holiday revelry around rampant commercialised versions that are anything but a celebration of Christ's birth.

Who is Jesus Christ anyway? Is he just another person in history? What has he got to do with me?

Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. He is the *logos* in the beginning, eternal and the Creator of all things (Jn 1:1-5); and Creation reveals the Creator. (Ps 19:1-6, Rom 1:19-20)

Jesus is not just another person in history Christians talk about on Christmas. Nature's beauties and the wonders in life are often taken for granted instead of driving our inspiration to meditate on their origins.

The following quotations (attributed to James Irwin, the pilot for Apollo 15, the 4th lunar landing in 1971)¹, should give us pause:

- *“The Earth reminded us of a Christmas tree ornament hanging in the blackness of space. As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally, it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine. That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate, that if you touched it with a finger it would crumble and fall apart. Seeing this has to change a man, has to make a man appreciate the creation of God and the love of God.”*
- *“Being on the moon had a profound spiritual impact upon my life. Before I entered space with the Apollo 15 mission in July of 1971, I was a lukewarm Christian, to say the least! I was even a silent Christian, but I feel the Lord sent me to the moon so I could return to the earth and share his Son, Jesus Christ.*

“The entire space achievement is put in proper perspective when one realizes that God walking on the earth is more important than man walking on the moon. I believe that God walked on the earth 2,000 years ago in the person of Jesus Christ. I have totally yielded my life to the Lord’s service to tell people everywhere about the life-changing message of Christ.”

- *“I felt the power of God as I’d never felt it before.”*

Do we all have to plan a holiday trip to the moon to feel the power of God and share the life-changing message of Christ?

¹ https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/James_Irwin

IMMANUEL GOD WITH US

Christmas is the fulfilment of a prophecy, *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Isa 7:14)*

“Immanuel” means “God with us.” Indeed, God is with us. While no

one has ever seen God, the one and only Son (Jesus), who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. (Jn 1:18)

Lk 4:18-19 –

- ✚ Jesus has come, to preach the gospel to the poor.
- ✚ Jesus has come, to heal the broken-hearted.
- ✚ Jesus has come, to bring deliverance to the captives
- ✚ Jesus has come, to give sight to the blind.
- ✚ Jesus has come, to set the oppressed free.
- ✚ Jesus has come, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.

Christmas is good news, worthy of great joy because a saviour has been born to us and peace will be to those on whom his favour rests. (Lk 2:10-14) Are we among them?

Do people need Christmas? Do they need love? God’s love is for everyone.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16)

John Lee

PONDERING ABOUT THE NEWS



Doubts over Singaporean boy ‘forgotten’ at Malaysian gas station

Parents are expressing shock and disbelief over a Singaporean family’s claim they drove two hours without noticing their young son was not in the car.

This story reminds me of the Bible record in Luke 2:43-44, *the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they (Mary and Joseph) were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.*

Taking it to a spiritual level, Jesus is in your life but you left Him in the back seat of your car and may have forgotten Him. You might even have left Him along the road of life at some stop, maybe during a financial crisis or health issue. It is time to wake up and realize that He is missing and return to search for Him. He is waiting for you.

In the fairy tale, Hansel and Gretel, the father brought the children into the forest to leave them there but the children left a pebble trail to follow back home. In the Home Alone movies, the little boy is always left behind as the family packs off for the Christmas holidays. One situation is premeditated and the other is accidental carelessness on the part of the parents.

Let us give the couple the benefit of the doubt for we ourselves have left our loved ones behind. This Christmas come back to the One who loves you – **Jesus.**



The Vine Team wishes one and all a Blessed Christmas.

Martin Cheah

DIALECT MINISTRY



Christmas Celebration 2019

What a great family gathering!

This is Christmas season. It is also holiday season – a popular time to travel abroad or celebrate Christmas somewhere else other than in the church.

The Dialect Ministry organised the Christmas Celebration 2019 on 18th December. By the commencement time of 3.00 p.m., MPH 1 was bustling with joyful sounds from the young and the seniors, dialect-speaking brothers and sisters-in-Christ as well as pre-believers who also preferred to feel the warmth within the JCC Dialect family rather than partying elsewhere.



Do you see in the picture two senior aunties getting over-excited and engaging in fisticuffs?

Oh, no worries. They were just enthusiastically engaging in one of the ice-breaker games. 😊



It was encouraging to see the participants readily joining in the singing and games. Even the senior citizens did not shy away.

As the joy of Christmas descended on the 80-plus dialect members and friends of JCC, it was a good time in the midst of the celebratory mood to ponder the question, “What is there

to celebrate Christmas?”



Certainly, the reason for celebration lies in THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTMAS, and about spreading God’s love, that Deacon Peter shared in his clear and simple message. His audience obviously lapped up the message,

as attested by their eagerness to be first to answer questions in the follow-up quiz based on the message.

It is my Christmas wish that pre-believers who were invited to the party will one day have this testimony to share:

“In Dec 2019, I accepted an invitation from a Christian friend to attend a Dialect Christmas Celebration. In my first contact with the Christmas celebration in a church, I realised that Christmas is

not about Santa Claus, but has a lot to do with Christ as revealed in the Bible.

“Over time, I came to know more and more about the miraculous birth of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit without a human father. The increase in my understanding of God’s grace led me to the best decision in my life to accept the salvation offered by Christ – as the “inexplicability” in my past thoughts about the virgin birth has been transformed into a feeling of indescribable wonder at the step-by-step way of the Holy Spirit’s leading me.”



Singing, games, message (spiritual food) ... what else?

Thank God for His provision of a nice buffet dinner and a meaningful Christmas souvenir for everyone to take home.

May God bless all the participants who joined the Dialect Christmas Celebration 2019.



We also give praise to God for the dedication of the Dialect Ministry Team in rendering hospitality and sowing the Gospel seed.

John Lee

The NIAS Experience Part 1

Reflections on Nias Experiential Trip: 29 Nov – 3 Dec 2019

Daniel & Angie family with 3 boys (Elson, Eason & Enson)



For us, this mission trip was a chance for self-reflection and to ask an important question. Have we been blessed and privileged? Have our views changed and mindfulness improved after this trip?

Our mission trip was full of insightful and learning experiences. Almost every day, we had many sessions to engage with the children in doing daily chores, eating, singing, and interaction either through games or craftworks. We had soccer games in the

evening almost every day, origami on the 2nd day, sewing of bean bags, indoor games and celebration parties. At night, we had dinner, devotion and some nights we have parties with a lot of sharing.

We had abundant opportunities to hear many different voices and perspectives during our mission trip, experience the local culture and of course, some fantastic food tasting, thanks to Yung Kwang's cooking. Some sharing session brought everyone to tears, not of any bitter experience but just the feeling of missing each other as we were departing for Singapore.

We were also required to engage in 'serious self-reflection' regarding these experiences; reflecting on our adventures through different perspectives was an intellectually demanding task, though one who encouraged us to look back on ourselves in positive ways. We left Nias, Indonesia convinced that all of us had changed.

So far, how have we changed with what we've gained during our stay in Nias?

One important thing we have gained is the benefit of different perspectives from these experiences. Another is a sense of balance between things. We used to believe in right or wrong before, but now, we can accept a mixture of them. It is ok to walk barefooted, it is ok to be simple, it is ok just to be ourselves, and even basic necessities are considered luxuries as long as we are contented. We might not be able to enjoy the same level of self-reflection this mission trip gave to us if we followed a normal tour for leisure or sightseeing holiday.

We now yearn to respect different perspectives and appreciate living in Singapore. We must not forget, we are very blessed, and we should continue to contribute and share our experiences with more people.

We are amazed at the works done in Nias by Pastor Michael, Ibu Sintha and the social workers. We believe this is not possible without the Almighty God that we faithfully believe in. Loving Father, You are the source of every blessing in our lives. In our pride, we often imagine otherwise, but we know better. We do now. Thank You for all Your gifts.

Now we look to the future, how we can future-proof these for we need to ensure sustainability with the ability to continue to serve our Father through the children. We hope Pastor Michael and Ibu Sintha will get all the support required on human resources for them to keep reaching out to help more disadvantaged children. Believe us, Pastor Michael, Ibu Sintha and the social workers have done a work that we cannot achieve, they have raised not one to ten children but a school of them to be independent and prepared with essential life-skills. But they can only do so much unless they have more hands to help.

Danny & Mong family with 2 kids (Lucas & Celeste)

It was an amazing and unforgettable trip for our family. It was eye opening for us as it was our very first mission trip. And I dare say that it won't be our last. For our family, we don't speak and understand Bahasa Indonesia. But language has never been a barrier for us on this trip. I still remember on the very first day we arrived, the moment we disembarked from the vans, the children gave us a very warm welcome. Even though no conversations were made, we already felt the strong joy and excitement among the children through their smiles and small talks. Through the games and activities, we had with the children in the next few days; a bond was formed among us. From Pastor Michael and Ibu Sintha, we learned and understood the story behind some of the children. Even though underprivileged, these children showed no sign of that. Instead they are very independent and disciplined. The

youngest boy was only 4 years old. Even at this young age, he can take care of himself without much issue. He can bathe and clothed himself. He even washed his own plates after every meal. How many of our children wash their dishes after eating?

Another thing that really struck an impression on us is the children, though not sibling by blood, they take really good care of each other. And for our children, they would squabble over the smallest matter, sometimes even for hours. Such reflection is not to demean our children, but rather for them to know how privilege and blessed they are and hence all the more they shouldn't take things for granted.

Of course deep down inside, we all know that how the children in the home carry themselves are the fruits of the lifetime of work by Pastor Michael and Ibu Sintha. Pastor Michael and Ibu Sintha displayed the perfect example of obedience to God. Because of their obedience, they left for Nias and started on their missionary work for the children of Nias. Over the past 20 years, more than 700 children were raised



and taught by them. Many have grown up and are now professionals and even started their own families. I strongly believe that because of the love and care they got from Pastor Michael and Ibu Sintha while they were in the home, these children who had settled down, will nurture their marriage and family with the same love and values they received. Not only have Pastor Michael and Ibu Sintha helped

this generation, they are making a difference to the lives of the next generation too. Thank you, Pastor Michael, and Ibu Sintha for your selfless sacrifice over the years for the children of Nias. Glory be to God!

- We went with a heart to give, but in the end, we received much more.
- We went with a heart to bless, but in the end, we were blessed instead.
- We went with a heart to teach, but in the end, we were taught valuable lessons.

Our takeaway from this trip is the importance of discipline with love, and for the children to develop self-care and independence. Because when they are able to have self-discipline and self-care, they are able to better serve God and bless others. When we returned, we started to see a difference in our children. They started to wash their dishes after meals and also volunteered with the household chores. In fact for my little girl, she was happy to wash her own dish in Nias, as we didn't expose her to that before our trip. Throughout the trip and after the trip, our children started to understand the joy of serving.

We are truly grateful for this experience and would encourage families to embark on mission trips for it can be a life and mindset changing experience.

Editor's Note:

Part 2 of the NIAS Experience will appear in the January 2020 issue of The Vine. In this part, you will read Patrick, Samantha and Caleb's testimony of their Nias Trip.

In 2020, we hope to bring you more great stories and photos as The Multi-Media Ministry adds on 4 more members to its ranks.



BAPTISMS IN DEC

Photographers:

Dec 1 Henry & YiWen

Dec 15 Henry & Edwin



From left to right:

Jayden Tan, Xavier See, Cindy Yow, Tan Kwee Choo, Yow Hue Kee and Lai Shi Yan

There were many people baptised, confirmed and transferred on 1st and 15th December 2019. We rejoice that a whole family was baptised on the 15th, similar to Bible stories of whole families being saved.



Vanessa Tan



Cindy Yow

Lucas Yow
Hoi Kit



From left to right:
Lawrence Low, Joseph Hiow, Kemuel, Immanuel, Ephartam, Kezia, Christine,
Bryan Tay and Lim Gek Luang



Cheong YuQi Ailsa



Jayden Tan Zhong Kai



Doris Tan and
Andrea Chai



Yow Hue Kee



Grace Tay



Low Queen Ian Ianna



Elkan Lim En Yao

Dialect Ministry Baptism - Transfer 15.12.19



**Baptisms, Confirmations
and Transfers in Dec 2019**

English 1.12.19

Baptism:

Cheong YuQi Ailsa
Low Queen Ian Ianna
Elkan Lim En Yao
Tay Lay Peng Grace
Tan Shi Yun Vanessa

Transfer of Membership:

Hiow Nyit Long Joseph
Tirtawati Wijaya Christine
Hiow Jing En Ephraim
Hiow Sheng En Immanuel
Hiow Jie En Kezia
Hiow Chun En Kemuel
Low Chee Yeen Lawrence
Tay Hai Huat Bryan
Lim Gek Luang



Transfer:
Koh Hong Choon



English 15.12.19

Baptism:

Jayden Tan Zhong Kai
Yow Hue Kee
Tan Kwee Choo
Cindy Yow Mun Yee
Xavier See Han Yang
Lai Shi Yan

Confirmation:

Lucas Yow Hoi Kit

Transfer of Membership:

Andrea Chai Jit Kean
Doris Tan Ghim Lay

Dialect 15.12.19

Baptism:

Tan Gek Seng
Lim Au Siew
Lim Peng Ong
Sio Poh Suan

Telling the Good News

Christmas Carolling by Dialect Ministry

The night Jesus was born, the shepherds guarding the sheep in the wilderness suddenly heard a voice in the sky heralding the Good News about the birth of our Messiah (saviour).

Hark, the Herald Angels sing, “Glory to the King of kings; Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”

In a letter to the Corinthians, Apostle Paul shared about the reason for telling the Good News. He said thus:

*“Telling the Good News is my duty—something I must do. And how bad it will be for me if I do not tell the Good News. If I preach because it is my own choice, I should get a reward. But **I have no choice. I must tell the Good News. I am only doing the duty that was given to me.**” – 1 Cor 9:16-17 (ICB)*

On the peaceful night of 21st Dec, the Dialect ministry calmly embarked on the great Christmas tradition of **telling the Good News through carols**. The carollers visited the homes of Lian Khup & Judy (Taman Jurong), Mdm Chua L. T. (a Pioneer Generation dialect member living at Toh Yi Estate) and Martin Cheah’s mother (Joo Chiat).

It was encouraging that the hosts were welcoming of the carollers. Carolling is really a gentle way of preaching the Good News. Positively, believers who listened to the carols would be reinforced in their faith. We were also hopeful that even pre-believers in the neighbourhood would prick up their ears to enjoy the ringing of the carols in the air.

Deacon Peter aptly extended the telling of the Good News of Christmas with a short-and-sweet exhortation to the host families after a relevant Bible passage was read. With thanksgiving for this joyful time of celebrating our Saviour and His love for us, Deacon Peter also prayed for God's blessings over the homes.

The carollers were glad to bring Christmas cheer to the families and appreciated their hospitality. May the carols continue to ring, and the powerful message therein continue to reverberate and bear fruit!

John Lee



Dialect Carollers dashing from house to house

