

The Vine



For Internal Circulation Only



THE BOILING POT
by John Lee



THE THREE VERSES
by June Lim



WE REAP WHAT WE SOW
by Rev Anthony Loh



JCC Pre-AGM Jul 2020



The Vine This Month
Editor:
Alicia Wong

Writers this issue:
John Lee
June Lim

Photos:
ZOOM Sources

Cover Photo:
JCC Pre-AGM 2020
On 12 Jul



HOM Editorial

With the current General Elections 2020 in feverish pitch, we find some

Christians in the political arena. We have Christian politicians on both sides, in the ruling party and in the opposition parties. Do we expect them to be politicians or Christians?

Political language... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. - *George Orwell*

There is no act of treachery or meanness of which a political party is not capable; for in politics there is no honour. - *Benjamin Disraeli*


Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...." Matthew 20:25-26

I am apolitical and don't like to play politics but for those Christians who do, good on you lest others with hidden agendas may change our way of life. The story of **Esther** is an example of God placing a person in the right place. *"And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"* Esther 4:14b

Others in the Bible who God put in place of authority include **Joseph**, *"You shall be in charge of my (Pharaoh) palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."* Genesis 41:40 and **Daniel**, *"Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king (Darius) planned to set him over the whole kingdom."* Daniel 6:3

Sometimes we think that we vote for our Government, but what can 1 vote do in a sea of 2.6 million votes? We must pray that God will select the right people for a time such as this – COVID-19. *"For there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God."* Romans 13:1

Martin Cheah



Parable of The Boiling Pot

Eze 24:1-14 (NASB)


The title “Parable of the Boiling Pot” comes from the passage heading in the NASB. The heading in the NIV Bible is “Jerusalem as a Cooking Pot”. Thus, we can clearly identify the Boiling Pot as referring to Jerusalem in Ezekiel’s prophecy (Eze 24:1-5):

*And the word of the LORD came to me in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth of the month, saying, “Son of man, write the name of the day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. **Speak a parable to the rebellious house** and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,*

*“Put on the pot, put it on and also pour water in it;
Put in it the pieces,
Every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder;
Fill it with choice bones. Take the choicest of the flock,
And also pile wood under the pot.
Make it boil vigorously. Also seethe its bones in it.”*

Before the parable, the prostitution imagery of Judah in the Book of Ezekiel tells a lot about the prevalent gross level of the kingdom’s moral depravity in pagan worship and political submission to foreign dominance under leaders “*who devise iniquity and give evil advice in this city.*” (Eze 11:2)

The pot and flesh as metaphors in Ezekiel's prophecy on the judgment to come upon the evil rulers were in fact first used complacently by these morally corrupt leaders themselves in Eze 11:3b – **“This city is the pot, and we are the flesh in it.”** (The metaphors were not invented by the prophet.)

With self-conceit, the evil rulers pictured the Jerusalemites as flesh insulated and well-protected in the pot (city), whereby no harm would come to them from outside. **Woe betided them when the supposedly inviolable Jerusalemites would become “Every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder ... choice bones ... the choicest of the flock” to be boiled vigorously with wood piled under the pot!** (Eze 24:1-5) 

Remarkably, God instructed Ezekiel to write down the exact day that “The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem.” (Eze 24:2) If a prophecy is about something going to happen at an unspecified date in the future, such as saying that the world is going to end soon, the intensity of one's feeling would be very different than if it were spoken as happening on a precise date. Whatever emotions the Jerusalemites had on hearing the prophecy, the date was to be a very dark day to be remembered by the bloodstains on the rock. (Eze 24:8)

The prophecy came to pass with Babylon's siege of Jerusalem leading to the destruction of Solomon's Temple. Flesh boiling and bones burning in the pot signified the ferocity of the murderous Babylonian attack and the resultant great suffering of the inhabitants in the city. Adding to the imagery of agony, it was not a clay cooking pot but a pot made with bronze (Eze 24:11) that would be heated up quickly with the contents (Jerusalemites) closed in (allowing no escape) and seethed with fire well-fuelled by a pile of wood.

Jerusalem was judged and censured for her extravagant apostasy. However, before God's wrath descended upon her, she had

opportunities to avoid punishment. The following are two headings of Eze 16 taken from two Bible translations:

- **Jerusalem as an Adulterous Wife** (NIV)

(One of her most detestable pagan worship practices – the sacrifice of children – Eze 16:20-21; 20:25-26)

- **God's Grace to Unfaithful Jerusalem** (NASB)

(God's turnaround from condemnation to mercy begins at Eze 16:60.)

Despite the shocking smugness of the rebellious house immersed in spiritual adultery, the scope of despicability being humiliatingly portrayed by bizarre prostitution imagery, the grace of God was still available.

We can see that God's gracious forbearance in dealing with Unfaithful Jerusalem provided her with many chances to repent:

At first, God called Ezekiel to speak His words to the house of Israel. (Eze 3:4) But the people would not be willing to listen, not because they could not understand but because they were obstinate. (Eze 3:6-7) Then, God withheld Ezekiel's tongue from rebuking them. (Eze 3:26). In Eze 16:1-14, God again instructed the prophet to make known to Jerusalem her abominations.

The prophet made another attempt (Eze 23) *“to break through the hard resistance to his preaching of repentance by confronting the rebellious house with an allegorical satire as shocking to their self-righteous sensibilities as the one recorded in Eze 16.”* – *Notes in The Lutheran Study Bible*

It was because the Hebrew people failed to turn from their paganism and idolatry after being given many chances that the Lord announced the time to act:

“Jerusalem, you are really impure. I tried to clean you up. But you would not let me make you pure. So you will not be clean again until I am no longer so angry with you.

*“I have spoken. **The time has come for me to act.** I will not hold back. I will not feel sorry for you. I will do what I said I would do. You will be judged for your conduct and actions. I am the Lord,” announces the Lord and King.” – Eze 24:13-14 (NIRV)*

What is Ezekiel’s message for us today?

Our promiscuity draws out God’s punishment

Ezekiel’s ministry extended over troubled times in Israel. [Today we are also in a type of troubled times.](#)

Jerusalem was held captive by Babylon. However, before that, she was already held captive by her own serious moral and spiritual waywardness; and it was this captivity of her souls that drew God’s wrath and punishment upon her. The captivity under Babylon by God’s decree (Eze 21:19-23) was the outcome when she placed her soul captive to spiritual adultery through foolish pursuits and allegiances.

The message of Ezekiel is visibly about God’s wrath against spiritual adultery. It is about people being captive to the profane ways of life and worship with God side-lined.” [How is this about the world today?](#)

According to the notes in The Lutheran Study Bible, *“Modern lewdness in films, songs, and on the Internet similarly mislead people today by alienating them from God, who forbids such things.”*

Humans are adept at vaunting and worshipping economic ascendancy, technological prowess, power influence, etc. The average person is easily pushed along to go after elusive temporal goals to cope with the demands laid out by the worldly forces at play. In the ever-intensifying process, sinful transgressions against God’s rule become subtle and normal. [Our promiscuity towards the ephemeral delights of this world draws out God’s punishment.](#)

Hope of restoration for God’s covenant people

There are 48 chapters in the Book of Ezekiel, and the Parable of the Boiling Pot is in the middle (Chap 24). Let us look at the “before” and “after” of it.

The first 23 chapters of Ezekiel contain a lot of prophetic visions about fire, swords and disasters. Many were foretelling the judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (e.g. Eze 4:1–24:27; 8:1–11:25; 12:1–19:14). The people simply ignored the warnings.

Before the Boiling Pot experience, the House of Israel rejected God’s prophetic messages because they cared only for their sinful carefree lifestyle. They would realise too late to taste the reality of God’s judgment when it came to pass. (Eze 33:33)

The reality of the judgment on Jerusalem was not the end of all hope. It was just a part of God’s solution to reign in the rebellion of His covenant people and to uphold His honour. [Nobody should entertain any doubt about the sovereignty of God with these authoritative words “**know that I am the LORD**” appearing in the Book of Ezekiel \(NIV\) 64 times.](#)

After the Boiling Pot experience, Israel received the promise of restoration (Eze 33:1–46:24) with the reality of redemption in prospect. (Eze 47:1–48:35)

God's people in the world today are God's covenant people under the new covenant with Jesus as the mediator. (Lk 22:20; Heb 12:24)

As God's covenant people, we live under His sovereign will; but that does not absolve us from the consequences of God's punishment when we disregard His warnings in Scripture or through His messengers.

Today's world would taste God's wrath just as Israel in Ezekiel's time, whatever forms the reckoning take.

However, God does not hold back restoration and redemption from people who would revert from their rebellion to respecting God's honour and sovereignty.

Definition of *new covenant*

: a promise of redemption by God to people as individuals rather than as a nation and on the basis of God's grace rather than a person's adherence to the law.

Christ is ... the mediator of a *new covenant*— *Interpreter's Bible*

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/new%20covenant>

Nations or groups may rise or fall by wise decisions or human hubris, not distanced from the warnings that are already there.

Under the new covenant, every person bears individual responsibility for his destiny by accepting or rejecting Christ, the mediator.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Rom 8:28)

John Lee



WE REAP WHAT WE SOW

Summary of Sermon delivered on 21st June 2020

Rev. Anthony Loh

Today is Father's Day. It is also the 3rd Sunday of the Pentecost season. As we hug our daddies to show deep appreciation to them, we also take this time to give attention to our Heavenly Father who is always with us as we worship Him. We are reminded that the Holy Spirit has come and is living inside us. God has sent the Spirit to bring about our adoption as His children, whereby we call out, "Abba, Father." (Rom 8:15) The Spirit is here to transform our life to be Christ-like, freeing us from bondage to sin, empower us to be witnesses for Him (Acts 1:8) and help us to be effective in our ministries in the church.



At the after-service E-Greetings session last Sunday, we encouraged one another "DON'T GIVE UP and STAY ON COURSE." Our perseverance is not by our own strength but by the power of the Spirit!

We are all familiar with the Parable of the Sower in Mt 13, which is my reference for the sermon theme today: We Reap What We Sow.



This is in line with the Discipleship theme which we have adopted for this year, represented by the logo on the left. It is our desire to see every JCCian growing as a disciple to brothers and sisters. The big tree does not grow overnight, but over the years with right fertilizers and right conditions (sufficient sun, water and air). Similarly, our spiritual growth needs the right factors. Some questions to ponder as we go

through the Parable of the Sower:

- What have we been sowing into our lives?

- What have we been sowing into our ministries – Cell Groups, Sunday School, Young Adult Ministry, Dialect Ministry, etc. – that God has called us into?

Regarding a Life of Sowing, I would like to highlight 3 important points we can learn from Mt 13:

- 1) The seed's sower
- 2) The seed's killers
- 3) The secret to growth

In one sense, God Himself is the sower of the seed; i.e., His Word. As a case in point, Mt 13 tells us about large crowds gathering around Jesus, listening to many things that He told them in parables.

The process of sowing begins with God and the seed (God's Word) falls on four different types of soil: along the path, on rocky places, among thorns and on good soil.

The Parable of the Sower provides us two perspectives; firstly, as a sower of God's Word; secondly, as a hearer of God's Word, with the condition of the heart in focus.

As a sower

So, what can we do to invest ourselves in a life of sowing to be fruitful for God's Kingdom? As a sower, Jesus spent all of His 3½ years of public ministry introducing the Kingdom of God through preaching, teaching and healing the sick. Besides, He spent time listening to the Father's voice. Clearly, a life of sowing is God's idea. While Jesus instructed His disciples on many things, He Himself set the example – in listening to the Father's voice (Mk 1:35), in washing His disciples' feet, etc. In particular, when He allowed Himself to be baptized by John and resolutely proceeded with His public ministry of preaching and teaching, He was modelling Himself on the Great Commission for us to do the same as witnesses of the Gospel.

Recently, I heard this quotation by Rev Dr Chern, “Your life does not get better by CHANCE; it gets better by CHANGE.”

It is so true that we often resist change whereby things do not get better. We are so used to our spiritual life that we so easily remain as spiritual babes. What kind of disciples are we in the Cell Groups and in the ministries?

To change for the better at the ministry level, we need to pray and listen to God’s voice. To hear God’s instruction for us, we need to give Him time as we immerse ourselves in His Word. If we are not familiar with God’s Word, it is likely that we cannot hear or recognize His voice when He speaks to us.

Similarly, if we want to grow the Cell Groups, we need to press on with training and in building up one another, connecting via ZOOM to share our lives and pray. To reach out effectively, we need to make the first move in investing time to serve others and build relationships.

We need to be sowers of God’s Word, sowing wisely with our time and talents, sowing into lives for healthy spiritual growth.

As a hearer

The types of soil that are the seed’s killers represent the levels of fruitfulness in hearts. The soil either hinders or encourages the growth of God Word in us and our growth in Him.

a) *Hardened Heart.*

Mt 19:19 says, “When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.”

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.

*“Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.” – Mt 13:14-15
(Isaiah 6:9-10)*

These may be people who have lost their moral compass, engaging in serious sins such as idolatry and immorality.

b) Shallow Heart:

“The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.” – Mt 13:20-21

Today, are we in a situation that we allow the testing and trials in our life to overshadow God’s promises to us? Are we on the verge of giving up because our heart is shallow?

c) Crowded Heart:

“The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.” – Mt 13:22

Basically, this describes a person who worries all the time and worries about everything. The situation we are facing now is literally a limit test to reveal whether our heart is crowded out by worries – worries growing to the point that we cannot sleep at night, worried for our loved ones that we feel restless, worried for our jobs because the economy is seeming to be collapsing, or worried for our future because God is totally out of sight.

Secondly, this can also describe people who are busy focusing on riches and the pleasures of the world whereby they lose interest in spiritual things.

Of the three types of hearts above, does any one belong to us? Hopefully, ours is the 4th type below.

d) Receptive Heart:

“But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” – Mt 13:23

Do you understand what God is saying to you today, and is your heart receptive of what He is telling you about facing the current situation?

It is very important for us to pray for wisdom and open our ears to hear God’s voice to understand what He is trying to tell us. Basically, our life cannot depart from His Word and His presence. Ps 1:3 tells us about a blessed person *“like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.”*

As we plant our roots firmly in God’s Word, His living water nourishes us spiritually and we become fruitful – whatever we do prospers.

The receptive heart holds the secret to our personal spiritual growth and the growth of the church. Whatever we do, as we invest in the lives of people, we keep watch over our heart so that it does not become hardened, shallow or crowded.

Let us pray that the seed that God sows into our heart falls on good soil. Pray that we in turn become fully invested in a discipleship life of good sowing so that we reap a breakthrough harvest this season.

Ω

The three verses which gave me strength

- A sharing by Lian Khai, written by June Lim

Hi brothers and sisters, I am Lian Khai. Some of you might have heard my testimony when I shared it in JCC on Easter Day last year. I committed an offence in 2018 and was convicted in the courts of law in 2019. I have officially completed my sentence in April 2020.

I would like to thank everyone who has kept me in prayers, encouraged me as well as wrote cards and letters to me. This journey stands as a testimony of God's mercy and grace towards me.

Time feels like it is crawling when you are confined within four walls. Reading the Bible daily became a great source of peace and strength for me. Here are 3 verses which have left an impact on me and I hope that you can be encouraged too. If you are going through a rough patch, I also hope that these verses will bring you consolation, just like it did for me.



Matthew 6:34

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

This verse has encouraged me to set aside my worries and to live each day, one day at a time. Imagination can run wild when you are disconnected from the outside world but I seek solace that God will always be here for me and I can always trust in His plans for me.

Matthew 17:20

He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

This verse serves as a constant reminder of the strength from our Lord. Even if you have the largest doubts, but the smallest hint of faith, Jesus will be there to reward you. If your little belief can move mountains, imagine if you grew your faith even stronger!

Psalm 51

*Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

This verse talks about the story of King David, where he fell from grace but eventually repented. King David recognised how horrendous his sin was against God, blamed no one but himself, and begged for divine forgiveness. Similarly, I had given in to temptation and broke the law.

Most importantly, it was a lesson learnt - if we violate God's law, we lose our joy. It can only be rekindled by repenting and staying close to God, seeking his direction and protection. If we are truly faithful, and follow His commandments, we have no need to fear as God will always be with us.



1967 -2020

Let us hear what some of our faithful servants of God say:

Thomas Tan:

We have not made it this far by ourselves. Many before us have paved the way for us to be where we are in this year 2020.

Paul says in Ephesians 2: *“Now you are no longer strangers to God and foreigners to heaven, but you are members of God’s very own family, citizens of God’s country, and you belong in God’s household with every other Christian.”*



Having rebuilt JCC for more than two years, now is the time for every member to rebuild their lives and their faith. I sincerely hope that JCC will be the gateway for many more people to come to know God as their personal saviour.

Happy Anniversary, JCC!

Tony Koh & Family:

It is indeed a joy to be able to celebrate JCC 53rd Anniversary as a family unit.



We continue to CARE, SHARE, LOVE and SERVE.

Happy birthday to you, JCC!

Beng Lay:



We are thankful to God for the faithful leaders and also the pastors who have served us over the years, including Rev. Anthony who is the longest serving pastor in JCC so far.

Wong Mui:

We wish that God will raise up many JCCians, young and old, to be actively involved in making disciples.

Blessed 53rd Anniversary to JCC!

Joseph Hiow:



Happy 53rd Anniversary to one and all. It is all by the grace and mercy of God that we are here today to celebrate God's goodness and His faithfulness in our church.

I am Joseph Hiow, the parish worker who serves you all here. It is my prayer that we all will love God more dearly, and walk with Him more closely, by relying on His wisdom and His strength so that we can be His good and faithful servants to share His gospel faithfully.

All glory be to God. Amen!

Rev Fredric Lee:



Let us celebrate our anniversary with rejoicing in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us abundantly with the love of God our Father through the Holy Spirit.

Let us give thanks to the Lord for the JCC family and let us love one another as Christ has loved us so that the world will know that we are His disciples.

Rev. Anthony Loh:



Blessed 53rd Anniversary, JCC!

It is long journey of 53 years for all of us and a precious adventure of knowing and growing in Christ.

On this special day as we celebrate His goodness and faithfulness, I would like to claim Isaiah 53 for all of us, especially verse 5: "... by His stripes we are healed."

Because of Christ's death on the cross, we are all set free from the bondages, and we are all healed from physical and spiritual wounds so that we can be healthy and strong to be useful vessels for the Lord for the coming harvest.

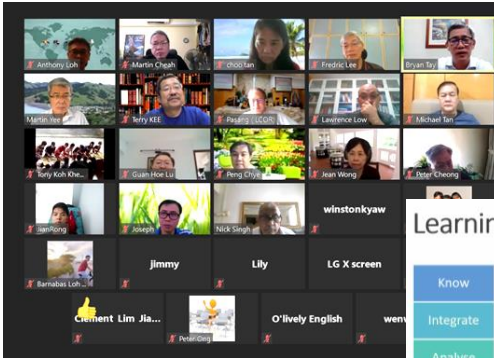
Ω



Webinar - by Bryan Tay

- the software was launched in 2013 but only became profitable in 2019 and is now the software of choice for everything

from Prayer Meetings, CG Meetings, AGM, Training and even Sunday School. Did God raise it up for a time as this?



Learning Trends from 2020...

Know	Know that future learners will be DIGITAL NATIVES
Integrate	Integrate learning into daily activities e.g. JIT, Learning-on-Demand
Analyse	Analyse learner metrics to improve effectiveness of courses and programs
Boost	Provide gamification to boost engagement and motivation
Enhance	Provide a mentor/counsellor to enhance learning
Network	Create network learning opportunities e.g. MOOCs for social/collaborative learning
Personalize	Digitalize & personalize learning

The battle ground has shifted location...
Are we there?
Fighting with the right tools & methodology?



MC



1. Pray for yourself as a mentor
2. Pray for a list of people, use FACTS as a guide
3. Share list with Overseer/Pastor for them to guide you
4. Make the Call:
 - i. Invitation
 - need a core to help strengthen the [Group/Ministry]
 - assist the leader
 - grow as spiritual friends / mentoring together
 - ii. Share your VISION with CONFIDENCE
 - iii. Commitment
 - in terms of time
 - duration



JCC Pre-AGM - on 12 Jul 2020

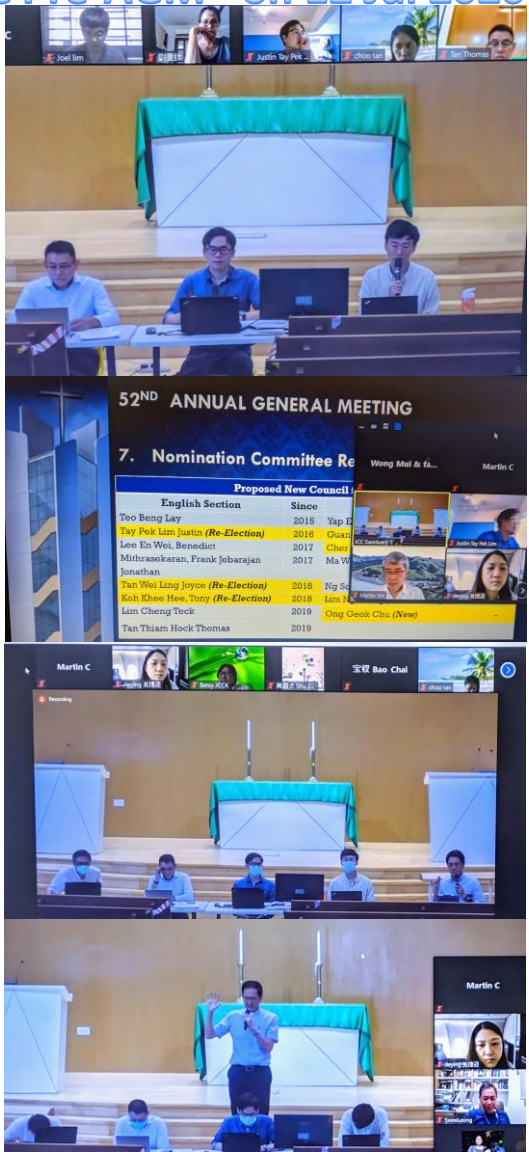
Were there any hiccups? Sure there were - moments of freeze and when the person speaking got cut off or interrupted. Did the pre-AGM run smoothly? Maybe for a perfectionist it did not but for a first attempt at ZOOM, I would say it was acceptable.

The team that did the live streaming did a commendable job. They must have worked at it from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.

At least JCC members could attend the long pre-AGM in the comfort of their own homes.



Proposed English Council for 2020



Above the nominated English Council for 2020, in case you missed their introduction nearing the end of the pre-AGM.

MC