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THE WINEPRESS

O TASTE AND SEE THAT GOD IS GOOD



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STEWARDS - BE WISE IN ETERNAL INVESTMENT

BY REV ANTHONY LOH

Two more months to go before 2022 ends. At this point of the year, we already have quite a full plate of events that leaves no doubt that we are living in a dangerous world. We have no control over many of the awful events, and it looks like there will be more daunting challenges ahead.

There is a song with this line: "We don't know what tomorrow holds, but we know who holds tomorrow."

Knowing what we know and what we don't, amidst our distressing afflictions, is it high time for us to take stock of our Kingdom mindset – a way of thinking about God and our spiritual journey with Christ?

One thing we are sure of is that the Lord is coming again. There are possibly more than 100 bible verses about the second coming of Jesus. All the happenings in the world will just set the stage for all that are being said in Daniel, Matthew 24 and the book of Revelations.

As we wait in expectation of the Lord's glorious return, are we ready for it? How can we be wise in living our lives in these last days, so that we can look forward to hearing the Lord's praise, "Well done, good and faithful servant!?" (Mt 25:21)

As we embark on the stewardship month 2022, let us re-chart our lives for God's eternal purpose with the eternal rewards to hope for.

What is Christian Stewardship? It is the responsibility to manage all the resources of life for the glory of God, acknowledging God as provider.

Psalm 50:10 – For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills.

Psalms 24:1 – The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.

Haggai 2:8 – 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts.

Continued on next page

In the general sense of stewardship as the management of property by a servant on behalf of his owner, we Christians see ourselves as simply stewards or managers of what God has placed in our trust.

A person may be a good steward or a bad steward, faithful or unfaithful. He becomes a steward at birth and remains one until his death.

Stewardship began right in the garden of Eden; it was the full intention of God that man would have far-reaching responsibilities and privileges. Adam and Eve were entrusted with certain tools at creation to enable them to administer their dominion of the earth. Stewardship is a call of God for His people to assist in managing the affairs of the earth with Him.

As Christian stewards, we should pay attention to the time, talents and treasures that dominate a major part of our lives. These can be seen as properties owned by God entrusted to us to effectively manage for productive gains. Alternatively, they are the tools given to us by God to apply to the harvesting of souls for His Kingdom.

The following are important points to note:

1) BE RESPONSIBLE

Good stewards do not abuse or waste what is given to them. We have to make choices when exercising responsibility. There are habits we must change. God will assess how well we have appropriated the resources (or tools) He has placed in our hands and then He will determine our reward. In short, we have to answer to God for our stewardship.

2) GIVE OF YOUR BEST

The story of Joseph is a good example. He was not an Egyptian. He was serving a prison sentence in a foreign land, yet God promoted him to the second highest position in the land. He excelled in the land of Egypt.

He had a strategy from God and a vision to rescue nations because he was a good manager and a good steward. He knew that all the wealth that came into Egypt did not belong to Pharaoh, but to God. Joseph knew that and he worked hard and smart, because he honoured and respected God and was a good steward of all the wealth that God entrusted to him. Although he acted on behalf of Pharaoh, he performed his duties with excellence because he knew he was accountable to God.

Today, we are also foreigners here on earth. Our citizenship is not here on earth; ours is a heavenly citizenship. But, like Joseph, we should be good stewards of the things that belong to God.

3) JESUS, THE GOOD STEWARD

When Jesus came to earth, He did His best for everyone, taking upon Himself the very nature of a servant, and humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even on a cross. (Philippians 2:6-8) He valued people by healing them and setting them free because He knew they belonged to God. He was a good steward during His lifetime on earth.

Being a good steward is finding out God's plan for your life and fulfilling your destiny. Jesus discovered who He was and fulfilled the will of His Father.

Are you ready to be a good steward in 2023? Pray and understand what God's will for you is.



PRAYER FOCUS FOR NOVEMBER

A) STEWARDSHIP OF THE RESOURCES GOD HAS GIVEN US

Pray that JCCians will be wise stewards, investing our gifts and talents in God's kingdom where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

B) SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

May the Holy Spirit revive the hearts of all believers, especially those whose faith has turned lukewarm or cold, and keep them strong in Christ to combat the challenges in life and ministry.

C) Outreach

Pray that God will open doors for outreach and bless us with the resources and boldness of faith to sow the gospel seeds generously in the community so that we will also reap generously. (2 Cor 9:6)

D) SUNDAY SERVICES

It is always God's desire that His people gather to worship Him. As we gather for our Christ-centred service every Sunday, we pray that the Lord help us to worship Him with undistracted hearts and that the Spirit will lift us to His presence and lead us to love Jesus more and more.

E) LEADERSHIP IN JCC

Pray that God will continue to raise up God-fearing leaders who will be effective for His Kingdom. Pray for leadership guidance for every leader. May God strengthen them, help them and uphold them with His righteous right hand as they exercise their faith. (Isa 41:10)

BADMINTON CHAMP **- ANSON KHOO**

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." - 1 Corinthians 9:24.

The under 14 Champion, at the recent Badminton "Shuttle Fest" tournament held in the Taman Jurong Community Centre on 2nd October, is one of the regulars who enjoys playing on court in JCC with our badminton kakis. His coach, Lee Ah Ngo, is an ex-Singapore National player.

Congratulations to Anson Khoo for his win.





WAIT FOR THE LORD

BY JOHN LEE

MOOD SWINGS - BETWEEN CONFIDENCE AND LAMENT

Mood swings are common in life. There are moments when people embrace conviction in prayers of praise, and then in the next breath they cry out with despondency in petitions to God for relief from pain and suffering. Even king David exhibits such a dichotomy of feelings in his famous Psalm 27:

- The first part of the psalm (vv 1-6) exudes his confidence in God as his stronghold against adversaries and foes.
- The second part (vv 7-12) is an overt lamentation and an earnest cry for help.

Mood swings reflect our overlapping emotions. Opposing forces in life may seem irreconcilable but they are not necessarily so. In a storm, a ship can still plough safely through the waters if it is savvy to point its bow directly into the waves.

WAIT FOR GOD'S DELIVERANCE

Our travails in life cause us despair. Our faith in God gives us hope.

Here is a piece of wisdom from David in the concluding part of his 27th psalm:

"I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" - Ps 27:13-14 (ESV)

Troubled amid dangers, David did not give up on his faith in God. Instead of surrendering hope, his faith humbled him to draw closer to God to seek divine forgiveness, help and guidance; and he waited for God's deliverance.

He did not wait in vain, and his next psalm carries his testimony as to answered prayer:

"Blessed be the Lord! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him." - Ps 28:6-7

PATIENCE IN WAITING FOR SALVATION

Waiting for the Lord calls for patience, which is a rare attribute of man in this age of instant gratification. Whether chasing dreams, seeking answers to prayers or pursuing righteous goals, people are eager for quick outcomes. They have no patience to wait.

In contrast to our impatience, God is patient with us in pouring out His grace and mercy.

A face of God's patience with His stubborn children is seen in Isa 30. The people heap more distress upon themselves when they follow their own plans. Yet, God waits patiently for them to repent and turn to Him.

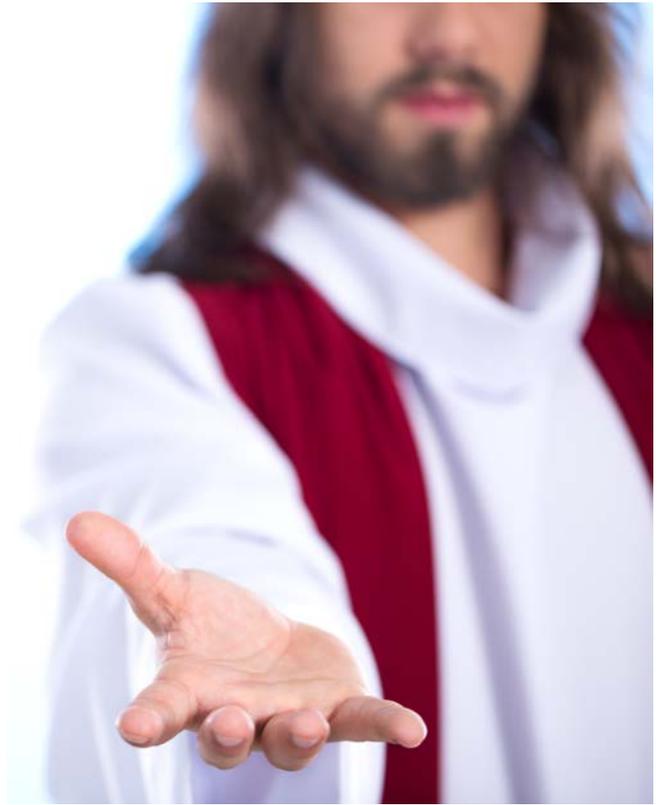
"Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him." – Isa 30:18

God is patient with us, and we have every encouragement to be patient in waiting for Him.

"The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him." (Lam 3:25)

How many Christians have given up waiting for the Lord, and turned away from God? Do they depend on their own plans, adding sin to sin instead of turning to God for deliverance?

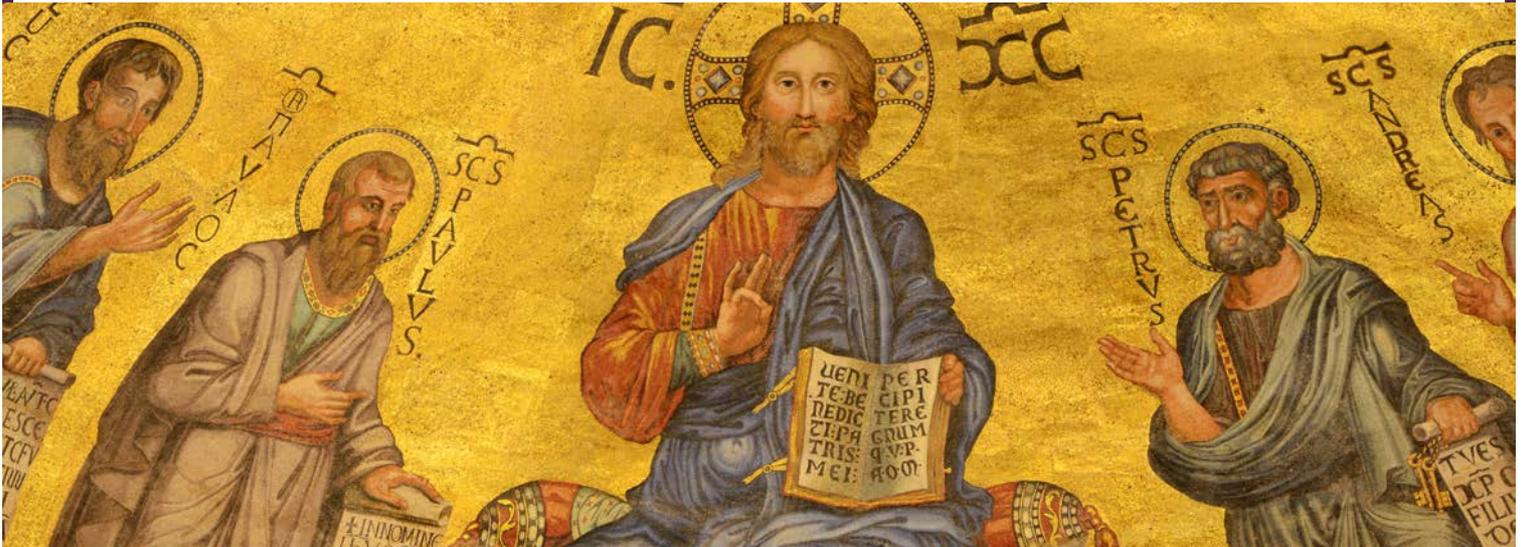
In these last days, God is still waiting for man to turn towards Him, waiting to extend His grace and mercy to man. We do not know when the Lord will return; but, as children of God, we continue to keep our faith *"to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."* (1 Thess 1:9b -10)



THE GOODNESS OF WAITING

"Waiting exposes our idols and throws a wrench into our coping mechanisms. It brings us to the end of what we can control and forces us to cry out to God. God doesn't waste our waiting. He uses it to conform us to the image of his Son." — Betsy Childs Howard, Seasons of Waiting: Walking by Faith When Dreams Are Delayed

"Waiting is a very active part of living. Waiting on God, if we do it correctly, is anything but passive. Waiting works its way out in very deliberate actions, very intentionally searching the Scriptures and praying, intense moments of humility, and self-realization of our finiteness. With the waiting comes learning. I can't think of much I've learned that's positive from the times I've plowed ahead without waiting on God." — Wayne Stiles, Waiting on God: What to Do When God Does Nothing



A REFORMATION LEGACY: HOMILETICS BY JOHN LEE

HOMILETICS (ETYMOLOGY)

On the first day of the week after Jesus' crucifixion, two of His disciples were going to a village called Emmaus.

"They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him." (Luke 24:14-16)

They were **talking** about Jesus. It was a serious topic; yet, they did not know that Jesus had risen. Surely, once they came to realise that Jesus was in fact walking beside them, they had a lot more to talk about the Good News and without ceasing.

The verb **"to talk"** in the bible passage quoted is **"ὁμιλέω (homileō)"** in Greek. From it is derived the English word "homiletics", which means the art of preaching and writing sermons.

In Eph 3:7-9 and Rom 15:15-16, Paul readily acknowledges God's grace upon him as minister with the priestly duty to proclaim the Gospel – i.e., **to talk and talk about** the Good News. To this end, homiletics is a much-desired skillset particularly for one entrusted with the office of preaching the Word.

PRE-REFORMATION ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Martin Luther said:

- "A preacher should have the skill to teach the unlearned simply roundly, and plainly; for teaching is of more importance than exhorting."
- "The certain mark by which a Christian community can be recognized is the preaching of the gospel in its purity."

Unfortunately, during the time of Martin Luther, preaching of God's Word in the Roman Catholic Church had declined to insignificance, becoming an irregular affair, possibly once a year. Besides, even on the few preaching occasions, the priests would betray their ignorance of the Gospel.

How much then would you expect the parishioners not to be confused between loyalty to Christ and allegiance to the Pope, especially when the Bible was inaccessible to most people who were fed false ideas based on man-centred theology and church tradition, such as salvation by good works and papal indulgences?

BE TRANSFORMED BY RENEWING OF MINDS

Rom 12:2 says:

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

It is an exhortation to us not to conform to whatever is not right, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Obviously, in order to be transformed, people in the 16th Century must first know what was wrong with the church then. They had to hear the Gospel preached in its purity.

THE REFORMATION (31 OCT 1517)

Through his famous 95 Theses, Martin Luther lighted the Reformation fire to end the false teachings with truths based on Scripture alone.

The fire, once lighted, was not to be put out. Instead, it roared across Europe and hitherto has anchored us to the inalienable Truth of the Gospel as captured by the Five Solas of the Reformation: *Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria.*

It was not just the 95 Theses alone that contributed to the historic Reformation of the Church. The Theses kindled productive debates. Lending a great force to the renewing of minds was the fervent preaching of the Word of God by Martin Luther and other like-minded theologians – preaching firmly grounded on scriptural authority rather than pandering to papal supremacy.

THE LEGACY (HOMILETICS)

Every year without fail, in celebrating the Reformation, we remind ourselves that salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.

How do we know? Scripture tells us.

The Spirit of God led the reformers to speak the Gospel Truth through their powerful preaching.

As Dr. Carl C. Fickenscher II (lecturer in homiletics at Concordia Theological Seminary) expresses it:

“Without question the period of the Reformation brought the Christian pulpit into the modern age. There had indeed been significant developments in the centuries immediately before, and the contributions which Wycliffe, Tauler, and others made to preaching were by no means abandoned, but it was the preaching of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and the other great men of their age by which preaching finally stepped out of the medieval shadows.”

Thus, while historians can talk and talk about various legacies of the Protestant Reformation, one significant legacy that Christians can include in their conversations is the contribution of the Reformation to the Church’s recognition of the key role of scripture-based homiletics in building lives with Christ in focus.





WHAT IS A LUTHERAN MINDSET?

BY MARTIN CHEAH

Merriam-Webster's definition of Mindset: (1) a mental attitude or inclination and (2) a fixed state of mind. A list of 50 synonyms include: attitude; outlook, feelings, convictions and belief.

Everybody has a set of beliefs that shape how they think of the world and themselves. That is a mindset. It influences thinking, feeling, and behaviour in any given situation. Christians will look at things from Jesus' point of view as recorded in the Holy Bible.

This year is the 505th year of The Reformation which was kicked off by Martin Luther in 1517. The 5 SOLAs passed down to us by The Reformation convey the foundational theological principles that distinguish us from the teachings of Rome:

1) SCRIPTURE ALONE (SOLA SCRIPTURA)

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." – Romans 1:16

2) FAITH ALONE (SOLA FIDE)

"However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness." – Romans 4:5

3) GRACE ALONE (SOLA GRATIA)

"... how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many." – Romans 5:15b

4) CHRIST ALONE (SOLA CHRISTUS)

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus." – 1 Timothy 2:5

5) TO THE GLORY OF GOD ALONE (SOLI DEO GLORIA)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" – Ephesians 2:8

Luther was a Bible scholar who believed strongly that all doctrines must be solidly based on Scripture. The church teaches that every word of the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Luther maintained that salvation comes by grace through faith alone; not by works and sacraments. Luther believed that salvation is through the redeeming work of Christ. Luther believed that it is God and God alone Who is to receive the glory for the wonders of His work of our redemption.

Therefore, in whatever situation you face, consider the 5 SOLAs. Is it according to the scriptures? Is it by grace and faith? Is it through Jesus only and does it glorify God? Then when you think the way Martin Luther did in embracing the 5 SOLAs, you have a Lutheran Mindset.

31 October 1517 was the day Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany. One of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses simply declares, "The Church's true treasure is the gospel of Jesus Christ."

That alone is the meaning of Reformation Day. A day that led Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and many others to help the church find its way back to God's Word as the only supreme authority for faith and life and leading the church back to the glorious doctrines of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed by Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone.

This year, Reformation Sunday falls on 30th October (the last Sunday of the month). We will commemorate The Reformation during our worship service, followed by a celebration of LCS' 25th Anniversary with a dinner at Ban Heng Restaurant in Orchid Country Club.

To God be the Glory!

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS (OCTOBER 1, 2022)

BY MARTIN CHEAN

Did you know that Oct 1 is a day set aside by the United Nations to celebrate Older Persons? You may wonder how we celebrate or observe this day? Do we feast on turkey, ham or give presents? Well, here are some suggestions from an Internet source:

1) CHAT WITH AN OLDER PERSON

"Consider the years of all generations. Ask your father, and he will inform you, your elders, and they will tell you." (Deuteronomy 32:7)

"Wisdom belongs to the aged and understanding to the old." (Job 12:12)





2) VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

The BB is organizing a Christmas Party (21st Dec) for the St Andrew's Nursing Home residents. **They are looking for 10 volunteers to help chat with these older persons.**

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress..." (James 1:27a)

3) BECOME AN ADVOCATE

The United Nations says "enhanced attention to the particular needs and challenges faced by many older people is clearly required". How to do this in a practical way? On the MRT, give your seat to an elderly person, don't sit there with eyes closed, ignoring them.

"Rise in the presence of the aged..." (Leviticus 19:32a)

Why do we even bother about the Older Persons? The world is getting much older. Almost 900 million people in the world are older than 60 and by 2050 there will be more people over 60 than there are children in the world. If we are thinking of Outreach, there are already 900 million people nearer to Death's door now.

Sharing the Gospel with the elderly: (<https://www.eauk.org/news-and-views/secrets-jesus-elderly-parents>)

- Never argue your case, preventing the elderly from building resistance and hardening their heart. Instead show respect.
- Say what you do. Older people's beliefs are more 'evidence based' than the younger generation. The elderly will be influenced by the faith they see in you.
- Effective evangelism comes through good relationships with older people. If a relationship is fraught the elderly is less likely to listen.
- Pray continuously, even when nothing seemed to be happening. Never give up.
- Love the elderly. Although it may be a long journey, love never fails (1 Corinthians 13: 8 - 11).

"Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent. . . But I will hope continually and will praise You yet more and more . . . So even to old age and grey hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim Your Might to another generation, Your Power to all those to come." (Psa. 71:9, 14, 18)





LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF

*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.
-1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV)*

Love is the hallmark of a Christian. Our Lord Jesus commands us to love another so that the world will know that we are His disciples. This is perhaps one of the greatest, if not the greatest test of our love for God. With our sinful nature, we are not capable of fulfilling this commandment. Some of us do not even love ourselves or our family members to begin with. Why should we love someone else who is unrelated to us? But God has given us a new nature. He has come to dwell within us with His Holy Spirit.

We are to surrender ourselves as a channel for His love to flow out from us. God never requires us to do what is impossible with human effort. If we allow Him, He will be the one working in us to accomplish what we thought was humanly impossible. Our love of God and love for God is to be manifested by showing love to others. By doing that, we will definitely draw people to Jesus. If God has said it, it will surely come to pass.

What does God say about this?

*Honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.
Matthew 19:19 (NIV)*

Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV)

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

1 John 4:20 (NIV)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PRACTICAL LIVING?

God's love is the only antidote and cure for all the sins, evil and ills of this world. Look around and we will find that people find solace in songs, movies and events that demonstrate and promote themes of pure, gentle and unselfish love. As God's children, we are made in His image. God is love. He has demonstrated it by sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins so that we can be reconciled to Him and have eternal life.

If we have experienced God's love in our lives, why are we not sharing it with others who do not yet know Him? If we love our families, friends and neighbours, we do not want them to perish in eternity without God.

We can start showing God's love to our neighbours by looking out for opportunities to reach out to them. Share a testimony of God's goodness in conversation, offer to pray for their life situation or simply invite them to practical life events and activities organised by the church. Remember that while God lives in each of us, He is Omnipresent (all present), Omniscient (all knowing) and Omnipotent (all powerful). We simply need to be His channel of love, and He will draw people to Himself. As we love others, the fullness of His joy will fill our hearts.

REFLECT AND RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

- Why did God choose "love" and not "prosperity" as the hallmark characteristic of Christians?
- Why do we find it so easy to loathe someone rather than to love that person?
- Identify somebody "unlovable" by your standards and think of one way to show him/her God's love. Remember that God loves him/her too.

AIR HUGS!



LET'S THINK & TALK STRAIGHT

BY BRYAN TAY



"A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty." Malachi 1:6

Let's face it. We cannot claim to love everybody. I am not talking about allowing God to love other people through us. I am talking about us listening to the old nature within us that says, "Why should I love that person?" We all have our moments and life encounters with people whose very presence may irk us. And it may not even be someone who has offended you. Just the sight of that person or what he/she does or behaves is enough to make you feel that you want to stay away from him or her. Even just the thought of that person! Ever experienced that?

You simply can't stand that person, but you are not to judge him or her!

We need to **repent**. Yes, you know what I am talking about. God says "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a **liar**. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." (1 John 4:20-21 [NIV]). Yes, we are **guilty**. Let's not try to wriggle out of it.

Again, God's Word says: "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:2-3 [NIV]).

GOD IS ASKING

- Who are you to criticize the people that I have created?
- What is so great about you that makes you feel superior to others?
- If you choose to remain proud and do not humble yourself, are you ready for the chastening and discipline that I will bring about to mould you into the image of Christ?

I welcome your comments, thoughts and sharing on this reflection. Write to jccwinepress@gmail.com. We will publish your contribution in the next issue.



HANNAH KOH: CALLED TO MISSIONS

BY TONY, SUSAN & DIANA KOH

Hannah Koh was called up for her 2 years of national service – as a national (citizen) of God’s Kingdom. She joined Operation Mobilization Logos Hope Mission Ship on 16 September 2022 for her first missionary journey out of her comfort zone. She will be sailing with the ship for a period of 2 years.

Naturally, as her family, we were caught by surprise when she first mentioned to us about her missionary calling. We had the usual questions: Is it real? Are you ready for it? How do you know that it is God’s calling?

Loads of questions with no fast answers. As much as she sought our affirmation for her decision to GO, we as family members needed very much the affirmations of our own feelings that were tangled with mixed emotions of gladness (that she is blessed with God’s favour) and apprehension (over the many “what ifs” popping out of our minds).

Going to God in prayer and seeking clarity was instinctive. As time passed, with inputs of wise advice from pastors and church members, God’s calling for Hannah to GO instead of STAY became stronger. It became inevitable for her to confirm her response to God: “Here I am, send me!”

With greater confidence that Hannah truly felt the call to missions, we gave her our encouragement: “Be strong and courageous ... for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Deut 31:6)





So, on 21 August, JCC conducted a short commissioning ceremony to send Hannah off on her missions as the gospel ambassador of God to bring the gospel to places where entire groups of people are living without the knowledge of Christ.

There were still about 3 weeks to go before the official start of her missions on Logos Hope. It was a precious 3 weeks for us to spend quality time together as a family before we LET GO of her for 2 years. We chose to spend this quality time together on a 2-week Turkey and Greece tour on Norwegian Cruise Line. Towards the end of the cruise, we flew from Athens to visit Logos Hope Mission Ship which was docked at Vlorë, Albania to welcome new mission workers, including Hannah. We were guests for a day on the ship, and then we bade farewell with blessings to Hannah as she stayed on in Albania where she would officially board the ship to start her missions on September 16.



The cruise tour we had was an eyeopener. In our interaction with the Greeks, Turks and Albanians, we observed that a large segment of their populations is non-religious with a majority being atheists. They even had an atheist party on board the cruise ship one evening. This observation reinforced what we heard at Hannah's commissioning in JCC, that large communities in the world are living without knowing the love of God, without a church, without a bible. We need to pray for them, and we testify as a family sending off one of us - i.e., our dear Hannah - on the important mission to share Jesus' love with those who don't yet know Him.



To Hannah, we say: Though we are going to be separated by physical distance for 2 years, you are in our heart. We are fully ONBOARD with you in love and prayers. Through the exciting spiritual challenge you have accepted by faith, you will grow strong in your skills, leadership abilities and character as a Christian.

ΑΩ ALPHA TO THE OMEGA

BY SAMUEL CHONG



PURITANS

When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: 'What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents Israel! Look after your own house, David!'" (1 Kings 12:16)

WHO WERE THE PURITANS?

The Puritans were English Protestants in the 1500s and 1600s who were dissatisfied with the limited extent of the English Reformation and advocated greater purity of worship, doctrine, and piety to “purify” the Church of England of all remaining Roman Catholic teachings and practices. The Puritans played a significant role in the English Civil War and in the English colonisation of North America.



“Pilgrims going to Church” by George Henry Boughton (1867), Wikimedia Commons

BACKGROUND

The English Reformation started in the 1530s after King Henry VIII's breaking from Rome. Under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the Church of England was established as the state church in 1559. Despite its Protestant alignment, the Church of England preserved certain characteristics of Roman Catholicism such as cathedrals, a formal liturgy, traditional clerical vestments, and episcopal structures (i.e. hierarchy with bishops).

Many English Protestants and clergy were dissatisfied with the extent of reformation, especially those who had been exposed to Calvinism in Europe clergy. Known as the Puritans, they began to advocate for greater change and nonconformity (e.g. omitting the signing of the cross) to “purify” the Church of England.

PURITANS AND POLITICS

The Puritans had an often-uneasy relationship with the Crown and Church of England. They were for the most part tolerated within the Church during the reigns of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and James I (1603-1625) as many bishops and state officials were sympathetic to their objectives. Nonetheless, Puritans continued to disagree with Church authorities over liturgical practices thought as too Catholic, e.g. clerical vestments, kneeling to receive Holy Communion; some Puritans who were unhappy with the pace of reform chose to separate from the Church of England.

The situation would deteriorate under King Charles I (1625-1649), largely due to Charles' authoritarianism.



Portrait of Charles I by Anthony van Dyck (1636), Wikimedia Commons

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Charles supported attempts to reemphasise liturgical ceremony and clerical hierarchy within the Church of England. The frustrated Puritans saw this as a return to Catholic practices and an undoing of the English Reformation.

Several Puritan parliamentarians spoke out against Charles' policies. They were however often charged with sedition and imprisoned. Amidst Charles' unpopularity, the Puritans organised the Root and Branch Petition in 1640 calling for the complete abolition of church hierarchy due to the wrongdoings of many bishops. Attempts to effect the Petition into law were fiercely debated, and the nation became increasingly divided.

THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

With tensions high, Charles withdrew to Oxford and rallied his supporters (the Cavaliers). The Puritans rallied in London behind Parliament led by Oliver Cromwell (the Roundheads). Clashes between the two forces in 1642 erupted into the English Civil War, which ended in the Cavaliers' defeat.

Charles was captured, tried for treason, and beheaded in 1649. England was subsequently ruled as a Commonwealth with Cromwell (himself a Puritan) as its head. The Puritans were now closely allied with the government. However, the Commonwealth did not last long, and Charles II (Charles I's son) was restored to the throne in 1660.

The government under Charles II moved to effect a reconciliation within the Church of England. When opposition arose from Nonconformist factions, an Act of Uniformity was passed in 1662 prescribing and mandating the rites of the Church of England. Following this, several thousand Puritan ministers were forcefully removed from office, in what came to be known as "The Great Ejection". The Puritan movement would thereafter splinter further and decline as a religious force, effectively ending by the early 18th century.

PURITANS IN NORTH AMERICA

Prior to the "Great Ejection", Puritans had already been leaving England to escape persecution. Emigration would increase under Charles I's reign due to the controls placed on Puritan preaching and removal of ministers.

In 1620, a group of Puritans who had separated from the Church of England crossed the Atlantic and established a colony at Plymouth (Massachusetts, USA). They were later known as the "Pilgrims". As persecution continued in England, more Puritans moved to the New World, believing that reform would not be possible under Charles's reign. The Plymouth Colony eventually grew into the Massachusetts Bay Colony which stretched across the northeast coast of present-day America.



"The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth" by Jennie Augusta Brownscombe (1914), Wikimedia Commons

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Puritans were distinct for their adherence to Sabbatarianism – the devotion of the entire Sabbath Day to worship and the avoidance of recreational activities as a result. Puritan churchgoers would attend two sermons on Sundays since the sermon was central to Puritan piety, seen as the most common way that God prepared a sinner's heart for conversion.

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Puritan ministers also often shortened the liturgy to allow more time for preaching.

In their religious services, the Puritans eliminated choral music and musical instruments, associating them with Roman Catholicism. Singing the Psalms was, however, still considered appropriate.

True to their Calvinist theology, Puritans rejected both the Roman Catholic (Transubstantiation) and Lutheran (Sacramental Union) teachings that Christ is physically present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Instead, they believed in the real spiritual presence – that in the Lord's Supper the faithful receive Christ spiritually.

At home, based on Biblical portrayals of Adam and Eve, Puritans believed that marriage was rooted in procreation, love, and most importantly, salvation. Husbands were to be the spiritual heads of the household while wives were to demonstrate religious piety and obedience under male authority.

CULTURAL IMPACT & NOTABLE PURITANS

The Puritans' strong religious beliefs had cultural impacts. Puritans believed it was the government's responsibility to enforce moral standards and ensure that true religious worship was established and maintained. Puritans objected to Christmas as it was considered a "Catholic invention" and that the alcohol-fuelled festivities were seen as impious. As a result, Christmas celebrations were illegal in New England for part of the 17th century. Christmas would only be freely celebrated after Puritan legislation was declared null and void following Charles II's restoration.

The Puritans also believed that education was essential to every person, male and female, so that they could read the Bible for themselves. The emphasis on education led to many schools being built. Harvard University, named after the Puritan minister John Harvard, was founded in 1636 to train Puritan ministers. Yale University was founded in 1707 for the same purpose.

Several Puritans were notable in politics, literature, and church history:

- Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland
- John Milton, prominent English poet and author of *Paradise Lost*
- Matthew Henry, church minister best known for his six-volume, verse-by-verse commentary of the Bible
- Isaac Watts, the "Godfather of English hymnody" who authored "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross", "Joy to the World", and many other hymns

CONCLUSION

The Puritans showcase how Christianity influenced politics and culture in 16th-17th century England. The Puritans arose during the religious upheaval caused by the Reformation, and became a prominent political force that controlled England after the English Civil War. They were also key actors in the development of the British Empire, being among the earliest colonists in North America.

Describing someone as "puritanical" is usually not a compliment in modern parlance since the word implies that the person is i) not religious but overly rigid in his/her beliefs and ii) not a lot of fun to be around. Despite their often-violent history and extreme conservatism, we can nonetheless still appreciate the Puritans for their zeal for God and emphasis on His Word.

All information and images taken from the respective Wikipedia pages unless otherwise stated.

For further reading:

[Puritans](#)

[The Protectorate](#)

[History of the Puritans in North America](#)



CYCLING IN THE RAIN - 80KM BIKE RIDE

BY ANGIE LAW

24 Oct 2022 was a public holiday. A cloudy sky beckoned the JCC Bike Club to have a cool time cycling from Jurong to Kallang. Indeed, a cloudy day enabled a pleasant experience since we could avoid a blazing sun. Rain itself was a blessing when it fell gently and made us sweat less. We paused only when there was thunder and lightning.

On the whole, the cycling group of 25 had a wonderful experience as explorers as we navigated unfamiliar routes and terrains, with some incidents of bicycles breaking down and going off course. There was a path that the group needed to reach by crossing a 3-storey high overhead bridge. With God's grace, we managed to overcome all the challenges and completed the ride joyfully.

Special welcome to our new cyclists Boris, Sebastian, Peggy's family of 5, Syafiq, Wei Kent, Danny, Joo, Nivien and Reverend Anthony. Of course, the usual camaraderie of our regular cycling enthusiasts is also much appreciated.

We are soon reaching the end of year. The bicycle interest group will take a short break and the next bike ride will be in the coming year.





PEERS AWARDS FOR JCC

BY PEGGY TAN

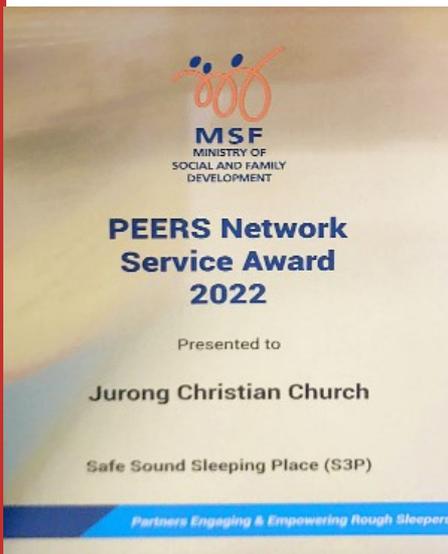


PEERS – Partners Engaging and Empowering Rough Sleepers

BACKGROUND

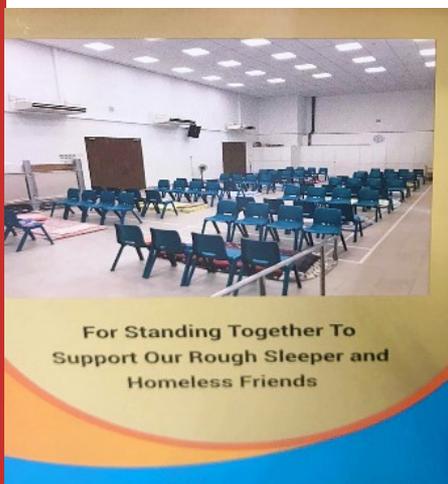
When the Covid storm rose fast and furious 3 years ago, there was an urgency to set up temporary shelters for the homeless. Those were the rough sleepers who became stranded with no place for shelter during the circuit breaker period. Hence, led by the Ministry of Social & Family Development (MSF), the PEERS Network was launched to provide the urgently needed assistance in the chaotic circumstances. According to MSF website:

“There are over 50 partners within the PEERS Network, who share a common mission: to identify, engage and support rough sleepers and homeless individuals, to help them reintegrate into the community. The Network supports rough sleepers and homeless individuals with their underlying issues, and helps them reconcile with family members, seek employment, apply for financial assistance, and/or secure long-term housing.”



JCCIANS RALLIED TO HELP

In such dire times, we JCCians deeply sensed our duty as Christians to sow love and care in the community. Thus, JCC stood up, energetically led by our brother Justin Tay to be counted as one of the partners of PEERS to befriend one of community's vulnerable groups (the homeless people) and provide them with Safe, Sound Sleeping Places (S3P), making full use of the space we had upon the temporary closure of our kindergarten due to the government's Circuit Breaker measures. Befriending and S3P were among the key initiatives of PEERS.



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We had our fears – of catching infection, of not being able to measure up to the strict requirements of pandemic safety protocols, of the tough logistical tasks, etc.

Despite the fears, there was courage in our volunteers, including members from our tenant churches (Hearts Alive Church, New Life Baptist Church, Revival Christian Church), who stood up to the challenge, with God as our ultimate helper.

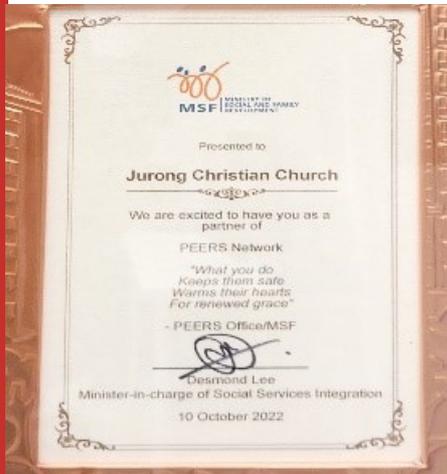
THE AWARDS

On 10 Oct 2022, the PEERS Network held an Appreciation Event at Leng Kee Community Club.

I was glad to receive the following awards on behalf of JCC from Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for National Development:

1. New PEERS Network Partner Award
2. PEERS Network Service Award
3. Covid Public Sector Transformation Award – Star Partner Award

Applause goes to JCCians and all who, through their earnest efforts in the S3P project, truly live out Christ's second greatest commandment to love our neighbours as ourselves.



CALEB + NAOMI'S HOLY MATRIMONY

Caleb and Naomi tied the knot on Saturday 22 October 2022 at JCC. Pastor Jason Wong, founder of Yellow Ribbon Project and Dads for Life movement, as well as former Deputy Director of Singapore Prison Service, spoke at their wedding. Being Caleb's spiritual mentor, he shared some insights (and jokes) about married life and what the new couple could expect. He offered advice on 5Cs:

1. Covenant - marriage as a lifelong covenant more than just a contract
2. Complementary - God made a helper for man, while man is born of woman; 1 complements the other
3. Christ - when the going gets tough, and it will, Christ is still in control and in their midst
4. Checklist - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a is a checklist of love characteristics that each person needs to grow in.
5. Community - continued accountability and support is needful for a lifelong partnership

Congratulations to the happy couple!

