



JANUARY 2023

THE WINEPRESS

O TASTE AND SEE THAT GOD IS GOOD



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RUNNING A FAITH MARATHON

BY REV ANTHONY LOH

We witnessed the retirement service of Rev. Fredric Lee on 15th Jan 2023, conducted by our Bishop Lu Guan Hoe. With Rev Fredric Lee's retirement from full-time service after 29 years as a co-worker in the Lutheran Church, we wish him a blessed new journey in serving God as he moves to BLC.

Personally, I remember him well as my pastor when I was a young person 25 years ago. Through the decades of his service to God, he has imparted his faith in Christ to many people. We have no doubt that his faith and service will continue to inspire all who rub shoulders with him.

In his prayer, Bishop Lu gave thanks to the Lord for supporting Rev Fredric Lee *"so that his faith has not failed; for making him a faithful steward entrusted with your mysteries; for giving him strength in times of weakness, and for keeping him in times of trouble."*

Do we like to have such blessings from the Lord in our spiritual race? What does it take for us to enjoy such blessings?

1) KEEPING OUR FAITH AT ALL COSTS

Hebrews chapter 11 reveals to us many of the great faith heroes of the Bible – people who trusted God to bring them through tight, sometimes death-defying situations.

There were some incredible victories, some truly God-sized events. For example, Abraham and Sarah had baby Isaac in their sunset years, as they began to parent a nation. Moses led the people across the Red Sea on dry land.

But we realise that faith did not always enable the faith heroes to see the complete fulfilment of God's promises in their lifetime on earth.

What kind of faith is this? With such faith, even when things got tough, they just kept believing.

Dr. George Morrison, a great Scottish preacher, once said, "The important thing is not what we live in, but what we look for."

In other words, we are to be spiritually far-sighted to look beyond the now and here on our temporary pilgrimage as "foreigners and strangers on earth." (Heb 11:13) Our endurance in faith will see us ultimately receiving God's rewards at the second coming of Christ. (Heb 10:36)

2) KNOWING THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE

We are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses". (Hebrews 12:1) The saints of old are cheering us toward the finish line in our marathon of faith. Following Jesus is a marathon, not a sprint. And the writer of Hebrews urges us to keep running, even when everything seems against us.

Continued on next page

We don't run alone in the marathon of faith.

When crisis strikes your family, are you going to call a finish?

Heb 11:39-40 says, "These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."

The writer of Hebrews is referring to the heroes of faith before us who had strived for their future hopes which are now for us to pick up as relay companions in the race. These heroes to whom God bore witness by His commendation are the "great cloud of witnesses" who in their turn bear witness to our perseverance that God can see us through the race.

It is through the perseverance of faith by all runners in the race – past, present and future – that God's plans for us will be made perfect. (Heb 11:40)

If you think that you are running the race alone, you are not running it the way God intended for a faith marathon and it won't be surprising if your faith fails you especially when facing a crisis.

3) FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS

We are to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." (Heb 12:2) Jesus, being the originator of our faith, brings it to perfection – which implies the certainty of attaining the goal, of victorious faith.

Let us therefore proclaim like the Apostle Paul:

*"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."
(Philippians 3:10-11)*

Quotation from Christine Caine – "When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit and trust the engineer."

No matter how dark your tunnel, trust God your engineer. God says, "I will bring you through it."

A FAITH MARATHON FOR DISCIPLESHIP

JCC will continue abiding by the call that has been given to us. This year's theme is **Go deep in Discipleship – Be one, Make one, As one.**

All JCCians have a role to play in 2023. Let us ensure that none of us are left out in the faith marathon, in serving and making an impact for Christ.





"Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away." – Ps 90:10

People put up with much trouble and sorrow in the year 2022 – the proliferating coronavirus mutants (even if the pandemic is downgraded to endemic phase), the war in Ukraine, the tensions in the South China Sea, the high inflation due to supply chain disruptions, "Money No Enough", etc.

In the 70 or 80 years of life (average life span), one-third is spent sleeping and one-third is spent working. How much of the remaining one-third is spent on faith-building to feed the spiritual needs of the soul after discounting more time spent on travelling, entertainment and so many of our mundane preoccupations?

We stand at the beginning of a new year (2023). We wish everyone a Happy New Year. We cherish new hope. After a while, the newness of the year fades away, and the freshness of hope also dissipates.

Isa 43:18-19 tells us, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

Instead of heeding Isaiah, we do not forget the former things. We cannot break off the past. Now a new revelation springs up, but we do not perceive it. Instead of discarding our old garment to embrace the new vision, we simply lay new cloth on the old one and betray our folly in trying to contain the New Year hope within the confines of the old.

Recall the Biblical Plagues described in Exodus 7 – 12. The plagues were disasters intended by God to free His people from their abject circumstances.

God led the Israelites on their journey to the promised land – with a pillar of cloud by day showing direction and a pillar of fire by night providing light. (Ex 13:22) God's intervening presence and protection for His people against their enemies were tremendous, to the extent of decimating Pharaoh and his elite army in the Red Sea.

The 10 disasters (plagues) happened in under a year. Yet, in that brief period, God revealed His full power and glory, and held out a great promise of hope for His people.

"The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 'This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.'" (Ex 12:1-2)

The new year was supposed to be a fresh start for the Jewish community to move forward with the triumphant assurance of God's grace. However, less than two months into the new year, they wavered in their hope and started complaining. Still, God attended to their complaints with His abundant grace. (Ex 16)

With the exodus from Egypt, there was no turning back in the new year even if the Israelites wanted to return to the past.

Similarly, with our New Year 2023, we bid farewell permanently to the trouble and sorrow of yesteryear. We may encounter new difficulties, but we should still focus on the vision ahead which will be accomplished as God will see us through our journey with His pillar of fire and cloud (His divine presence) so that we won't lose our way.

"We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose." (Rom 8:28)



The Chinese idiom 人是铁饭是钢 means that people can't function on an empty stomach. Alternatively speaking, an empty sack cannot stand upright. This is also applicable to Christians' need to consume spiritual food. Meaning: We should study the Bible regularly.

What proportion of life span do most people spend in Bible study to ensure that their spiritual sacks are not empty?

New Year = New beginning. We bravely step forward and onward to face new circumstances.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." (James 1:5)

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom 15:13)





A CHINESE COUPLET ON ETERNAL BLESSING

BY JOHN LEE

There are two New Year celebrations this month. We have a New Year celebration on 1st January 2023 based on the Gregorian calendar. Then, based on a lunar calendar, the Chinese New Year will be ushered in on 22nd January. Two celebrations, double blessings?

Thinking of blessings, which the Chinese call 福, my thoughts float towards the many Chinese couplets 春联 or 对联 of greetings that are displayed in Chinese homes and festive settings, especially in China.

福路全凭圣子通

天门久为初人闭

These couplets are pairs of complementary poetic lines (concise and exquisite words following a unique Chinese literary form) emblazoned on red background and laid upright on doors and walls. They also serve to add a propitious element of "good luck."

The Chinese character 福 (Blessings) will not be missed in the abundance of festive greetings:

五福百福全家福

屋满福禄福满屋

五福临门 is an auspicious Chinese saying that expresses a desire for the five blessings; viz., longevity, wealth, health, virtue and a natural passing away.

Who doesn't wish to receive great blessings? Apart from the five blessings just mentioned, is there another that should be foremost for everyone to seek?

康熙帝 (Kangxi, 3rd Qing Emperor of China) wrote: 天门久为初人闭, 福路全凭圣子通。

On this page, the poetic line is displayed as a 对联 (couplet), to be read from right to left. Can it not be a good 春联 (spring couplet) to remind us of the true divine source of our blessings?

The meanings of the Chinese characters are: 天门 (Heaven's gate), 久 (for a long time), 为 初人 (because of our first ancestors, implying Adam & Eve), 闭 (became closed); 福路 (the path towards blessing), 全凭 (all depends on), 圣子 (the Son of God), 通 (to pass through).

We know the Genesis' narrative about Adam and Eve's progression (or regression) from being well-provided for in the Garden of Eden to being banished from the Garden because of their disobedience. From a state of innocence and bliss, they veered off-course whereby their blessed road to heaven was no more. For a long time, 天门久为初人闭 (the gate of heaven had been closed all because of our first ancestors' sin); but now, 福路全凭圣子通 (the path of blessings passes through the Son of God).

As Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Even Emperor Kangxi was aware of the True Way through Jesus Christ to Heaven; and by beautiful poetry, he also reminds us about the wages of sin that Adam and Eve had to pay (天门久为初人闭) (Gen 2:17) and yet we need not despair since we now have the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (福路全凭圣子通) (Rom 6:23)

As we have our New Year celebrations year after year, each time it is a refreshing new season for us to reflect on the blessings we seek.

All roads lead to Rome, along with sweet offerings of earthly blessings for temporary enjoyment. There are many ways people can wish for, to attain the 5 blessings in the traditional auspicious greeting 五福临门。However, for the 福路 (eternal blessing) that is referred to by Emperor Kangxi in the poetic couplet, there is only one Way (NOT one of many ways).

PRAYER FOCUS FOR FEBRUARY

A) DISCIPLESHIP AND DISCIPLE-MAKING

Every JCCian will rise up to be bold in reaching out and to disciple at least one person.

Channels: Cell Group, or one to one

Theme: Go deep in Discipleship – Be One, Make One, As One

B) REACHING OUT TO COMMUNITY

Riding on the CNY season to connect with the community, bringing God's blessing to the community, sharing the Gospel of salvation with our testimony for Christ through our love for God and neighbours. We also pray for the salvation of our own family and clan.

C) DGP

Recruitment of new students and God-sent teachers to DGP.

May God continue to bless His labourers in DGP as they strengthen their outreach to the parents.

D) PURSUIT OF GOD AND ANOINTING OF HOLY SPIRIT UPON EVERY JCCIAN

May the Holy Spirit anoint all JCCians and empower them to live the Christ-like life daily and render service to God with passion.



BEY GOD'S WORD

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- 2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)



Parents expect children to obey their teachings. Governments expect citizens to obey rules and regulations. Bosses expect subordinates to obey their instructions. As earthly citizens, we dutifully oblige in rendering obedience, albeit grudgingly at times. As we grow up, we also learn that where obedience is required or demanded, willful disobedience can result in dire consequences. Here lies the irony: In our relationship with God, we think lightly of obedience to His Word despite His promise of blessings for obedience and punishments for disobedience.

Your obedience to God's Word does not only affect your own life. It affects souls for eternity. It also affects how families, societies and nations will eventually measure up on God's weighing scale. Throughout the Bible, God has shown us many examples in His dealings with mankind. Obedience to Him and His Word will result in blessings while disobedience will lead to punishment, discipline and chastisement. We need to make our choice.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY ABOUT THIS?

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. "It is you priests who show contempt for my name. "But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?'

- Malachi 1:6 (NIV)

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

- Micah 6:8 (NIV)

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

- James 1:23-25 (NIV)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PRACTICAL LIVING?

God desires our good just as our earthly parents and guardians would. Since time immemorial, He has made known to us what we need to do to enjoy His goodness in our lives i.e. obedience to Him and His Word. Such obedience should not be interpreted as a means to avoid punishment, which is what we are more inclined to thinking in our life situations, for that would be totally inconsistent with God's character. When we obey His Word, we set the stage for God to accomplish His will and purposes in our lives.

God demands our obedience because that is the only way to living a holy, abundant and victorious Christian life.

And He will do His part to work through our obedience to make all things work together for good in our lives and that of others. We obey His Word when we speak it as if they are the oracles of God, when we carry out a command that we discovered in studying the scriptures and when we stand firmly on a promise that He has made in His Word to see its fruition.

REFLECT AND RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

- Recall a situation in which you chose to obey/disobey God and His Word. What happened?
- What are the reasons that cause you to take God's Word lightly?
- How would you demonstrate your seriousness in obeying God's Word at home, at work and in social situations?



2022 THANKSGIVING NIGHT

A short summary of all the thanksgiving by various persons on 31st Dec 2022 in JCC Sanctuary for your edification:

Amy shared about her move to Ghim Moh in Jan 2023. She thanked God for giving her this new house as she relocates from her current house of more than 30 years, at Yuan Ching Road.

Patricia was still joyful in the Lord despite facing retrenchment twice in 2022. She thanked God that each time she was retrenched, there was another job waiting for her. She will also be moving to a new house which has a music room for her to practise her music.



Kun Ming was recently baptized and shared how the Lord had made this possible for him. His parents were devout Taoists but one day, his mother suddenly told him that he could get baptized since he wanted to be a Christian. His father also came to JCC to witness his baptism.



Boris shared how God helped him in his workplace even though he was new at the job. He also shared how God continued to multiply his ministry - Ukulele teaching and playing.

Mani and wife, Lya came up together to share how amazingly, one day while praying to his gods, the Lord appeared to him and he was convinced to come to church. He told his wife about it and after a time, she was ready to join him. God directed them to come to JCC which they found to be a great family church.

Susan shared how God provided help for James and herself through her CG members and a Muslim Good Samaritan.

Kumar, who is Mani's father-in-law came up to share that when he was a young boy, he attended Sunday School but did not attend church. Now God has called him to come to church through his son-in-law, Mani.

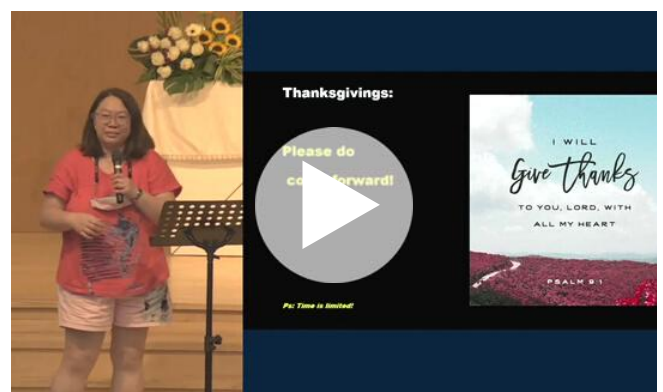
Lydia shared a touching story about her family and how God spoke to her through Isaiah 49:15:

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"

God is working in JCC, bringing people here and there, working in their lives as they reach out to Him in prayer. Life is not one smooth road, but along the road of life, God is there and this was what they shared.

If you find yourself in a similar situation and want to be encouraged, please approach our brothers and sisters above to listen to their experiences with God in more detail.

You can also watch the recording of the Thanksgiving Service here:



ΑΩ ALPHA TO THE OMEGA

BY SAMUEL CHONG



S HIMABARA REBELLION

"Lord, confuse the wicked, confound their words, for I see violence and strife in the city." (Psalm 55:9)

WHAT WAS THE SHIMABARA REBELLION?

The Shimabara Rebellion was an uprising that occurred in Kyushu, Japan, from December 1637 to April 1638. The Rebellion is often portrayed as a Christian rebellion due to the leadership and large number of rebels being Catholics. After it was brutally suppressed by the ruling Tokugawa Shogunate, the Shimabara Rebellion contributed to the tightening of Japan's policies of national seclusion and persecution of Christianity, driving the church underground until the 1850s.

BACKGROUND

Christianity was introduced to Japan in the 1550s by Portuguese Jesuit missionaries such as Francis Xavier. As the number of converts grew, even local Daimyo (feudal lords) converted to Christianity, in part due to the access it granted to Portuguese weapons and trade.

Christianity also entered Japan at a time of internal strife, known as the Warring States Period (not to be confused with the one in China). Various warlords and clans fought for control over Japan and ended with the Tokugawa clan taking power as the ruling shogunate in 1603.

Shimabara was once the domain of the Arima clan, which had converted to Christianity. Many local lords and peasants were also Christian as a result. However, the Arima were replaced by the Matsukura in 1614. The new Daimyo wished to gain favour with the Tokugawa by supporting various construction efforts, imposing a huge tax burden as a result. He also intensified the persecution of Christianity, which the Tokugawa were deeply mistrustful of due to its association with the Europeans.

"HEAVEN'S MESSENGER"

Amakusa Shiro was born in 1621 to Catholic parents. By the time he turned 15, which was shortly before the rebellion, the charismatic youth was known to his Japanese Catholic followers as "Heaven's Messenger", with allegedly miraculous powers attributed to him.

THE REBELLION

Discontented ronin (samurai without a master) and peasants launched an uprising against the Matsukura on 17 December 1637, assassinating the local magistrate in the process.



Anonymous,
"Storming of Hara
Castle by
Shogunate forces",
18th century.
Wikimedia
Commons

Continued on next page



Later impression of Amakusa Shiro, c.1874. Wikimedia Commons.

As the rebels gained momentum, they impressed more into their ranks. Amakusa Shiro soon emerged as the rebellion's leader owing to his charisma. He even flew a Catholic banner to lead his troops.

Despite initial successes and nearly taking several castles, armies from neighbouring domains arrived, forcing the rebels to retreat. They now gathered at the site of Hara Castle – the original castle of the Arima clan – and built up defences.

Shogunate forces, commanding the allied armies of local domains, besieged Hara Castle. The Tokugawa also requested aid from the Dutch, who provided gunpowder, cannons, and ships. The Dutch ships were later withdrawn after the rebels mocked the Tokugawa for having to rely on foreign assistance.

The rebels resisted the siege for months and inflicted heavy losses on shogunate forces, even killing the commander of the besieging army in one instance. Nonetheless, both sides had a hard time fighting in winter conditions, and the rebels slowly ran out of food and ammunition; they held out until 15 April 1638, roughly four months after the rebellion began.



Banner of Amakusa Shiro during the Shimabara Rebellion. The text on the banner is medieval Portuguese reading "Praised be the Most Holy Sacrament". Wikimedia Commons.

AFTERMATH: THE "HIDDEN CHRISTIANS" OF JAPAN

After Hara Castle fell, shogunate forces beheaded ~37,000 rebels, including Amakusa Shiro whose severed head was publicly displayed in Nagasaki. The castle was then burned to the ground together the bodies of the rebel dead within it.

Because the Tokugawa suspected that European Catholics had been involved in spreading the rebellion, the policy of national seclusion was tightened by 1639 – the death penalty was prescribed for any foreigner entering Japan or Japanese leaving the country. An existing ban on Christianity was enforced more stringently and the Church had to go underground, giving rise to the "Hidden Christians" of Japan.

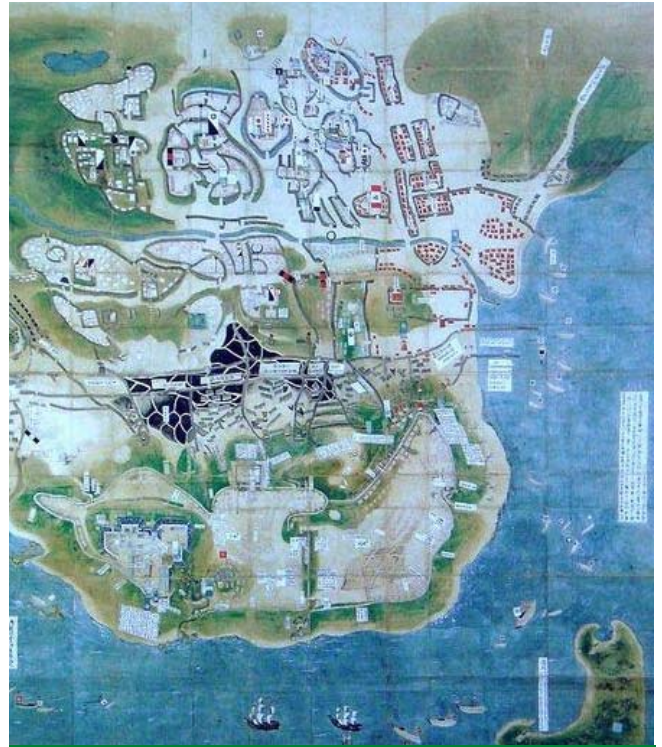
On the Shimabara Peninsula, most towns experienced a severe loss of population due to the rebellion. To maintain crop production, immigrants from other areas in Japan were resettled in the areas. To counter Christian influences, Buddhism was strongly promoted, with all inhabitants having to register with local temples and have priests vouch for their religious affiliation.

With the exception of periodic, localised peasant uprisings, the Shimabara Rebellion was the last large-scale armed clash in Japan until the 1860s, when the Tokugawa Shogunate was overthrown and imperial rule restored under the Emperor.

CONCLUSION

The development of the Church in Asia was usually intertwined with local politics and marred by violence. While the Rebellion is often portrayed as a Christian rebellion, it was ultimately the product of European influence, internal power struggles, and local grievances. Brief as it was, the Rebellion was a major trigger for the intensification of persecution of Christians in Japan. One can read further about the “Hidden Christians” to see how the faith was kept alive throughout 250 years of darkness. The tragedy of the Rebellion is an example of how violence is not the answer; the armour we put on should instead be the armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).

All information and pictures taken from the respective Wikipedia articles unless otherwise stated.



Depiction of the Siege of Hara Castle, c.1630s. The Dutch ships are in the middle foreground. Wikimedia Commons.

For further reading:

[Shimabara Rebellion](#)

[Amakusa Shiro](#)

[Kakure Kirishitan \(“hidden Christians”\)](#)

INTRODUCTION

From the last week of October 2022 until the week before Christmas, a group of 10 to 12 eager learners gathered in the church every Sunday afternoon to join a ukulele class to explore this interesting musical instrument. They were from different age groups and included members and non-members of JCC.

Over 8 sessions, the class taught basic strumming patterns and some ukulele chords – enough to play some Sunday School songs.



UKULELE – A NEW
BRIDGE FOR
OUTREACH

The main aim of this class was to encourage the avid learners to develop their interest in the ukulele which they can then use to serve God in the Kids Church, cell groups and various outreach ministries in JCC.

HOW THE CLASS WAS FORMED

BORIS:

About 4 years ago, a few church members went up to the roof garden for their morning devotion. Exiting the lift, they heard a sweet melody coming from some string instrument. Out of curiosity, they traced the source of the music to the chapel, where they found me playing a musical instrument at the roof garden. They asked me what this instrument was and whether I was teaching anyone. I told them that the instrument is called the Ukulele and I was not teaching anyone as I had only started exploring it myself. They encouraged me to set up a class as they were keen in learning after seeing a few other people also playing the Ukulele in church. I told them that after I gained more confidence in playing it, I might then take up their idea of setting up a class.

At that time, I was down emotionally and almost every day I would go to the roof garden to play my ukulele. After a few months, things started to get better for me, and I discovered that playing praise and worship music had the power to heal and inspire. Recalling having been encouraged to conduct lessons on the instrument, I felt the urging in my heart to take some time out from my busy schedule to impart on interested learners the basic skills of playing the ukulele. I would consider this a good way to spread God's blessings instead of just playing the ukulele well within my own sphere of ministry.

So, the ukulele class came to be formed last year in partnership with Peh Ern to teach our first group of avid learners.



PEH ERN:

A dear sister in Christ asked if I could teach the ukulele as she was interested to pick it up. At that time, I had been learning the instrument for about 2 years. I chose to pick up the ukulele because it was very portable and small enough for my small hands to play. We met once with another sister for one lesson, but did not continue our lesson because of our busy schedules.

About that time, I heard that Boris was playing the ukulele. This prompted me to consider starting a ukulele group together with him after also hearing from him that a few other members of JCC were asking him if he could teach them. The purpose and intention of this group is to equip others so that they too can worship the Lord with music and be a blessing to others. I'm excited to see where God takes us and how he chooses to lead us.



Continued on next page



HOW THE PARTICIPANTS FELT ABOUT THE CLASS

ALICIA:

It was even paced and easy to follow. The instructors were attentive and helpful. I liked it that there was a main teacher to teach and another to help facilitate the class and coach weaker students. My classmates were fun and encouraging and made learning the ukulele an enjoyable experience. I learned how to play the 4 basic chords and mastered island strumming! I also gained a new appreciation of how practice directly improves my playing and is something that cannot be rushed, only nurtured through consistent time, effort and discipline to improve myself.

SAMANTHA:

Singing children songs with a ukulele has been my dream since I joined DGP in 2021. I hope children will be able to experience music in different ways as we sing Christian songs during our daily assembly time. So, when I heard that Boris and Peh Ern were going to start a Ukulele Beginner Class in Oct 2022, my heart leapt with joy.

The class started at the end of Oct 2022 and finished before the end of Dec. There were about 8 to 10 of us. Within the 8 lessons, we learnt the basics of the ukulele, such as how to tune a ukulele, how to see and play a simple cord, how to strum, etc.

With the guidance of two very patient teachers, we were able to play a few songs, including Silent Night. Personally, I felt accomplished and joyful whenever I was able to play a song. This is a way of worshipping the Lord, too. Learning ukulele is easier than I had imagined. It just began with a small step. I thank the Lord for helping me to persevere, blessing us with talented people like Peh Ern and Boris from whom we are able to learn new skills.

While I have not been able to play smoothly like my teachers, I know that with the help of God, I will reach there. I am looking for a dream come true in the year 2023. 😊



MONG:

As a Sunday school teacher, I saw the need to learn a musical instrument so that I could sing hymns with the kids. So, I was delighted to know my cell group leader Samantha was learning the ukulele with Peh En. Subsequently when Peh En collaborated with Boris to start a class on Sunday, I had this urge to join them.

However, for some reasons I needed to bring my girl Celeste with me to attend the lesson. I was worried that it would be hard for me to care for her and learn at the same time.

One day, my neighbour was giving away her ukulele. This gave me the idea to let Celeste learn with me since I had two ukuleles then. I thought this could occupy her time in the class even if she never really learned.

To my surprise, she picked up the skills way faster than me and after 3 lessons, she could play and sing at the same time. I thank God for the opportunity to discover such a gift in her, though I am ascertained not to have the gift of music.

Seeing Celeste serve in the children ministry with the ukulele, I was deeply touched. I thank God for good teachers Peh En and Boris, and for enabling us to serve using the skills we learned. God is good!

CELESTE:

When my mother asked me to join her ukulele class, I was delighted. I always wanted to learn a musical instrument other than the piano. As I was learning the ukulele, I enjoyed myself very much. I like the fact that my teachers were kind and patient.

One day, one of my teachers asked me to serve the Sunday School. At first, I felt nervous, but then I thought it would be a good way to serve God through leading others to sing hymns and praises to our God. Hence, I agreed, and I am thankful for such an opportunity.



ADRIAN AND KHAN LIAN:

We were very excited and elated when we heard about the ukulele class. I (Khan Lian) joined the lesson with the goal of using simple music therapy with the ukulele for children under my care (children with cancer). Songs such as “Jesus loves me this I know” and “This is the day the Lord has made” can also lift spirits through the story of God.

For Adrian, he joined the lesson as he has great interest in the ukulele. Hopefully, he can play for Sunday school or teach the children (in the future).

We started our first lesson on 30th Oct 2022. Boris and Pei Ern were excellent teachers. They were patient, creative and clear in their instructions. Our first songs were “Therefore being justified by faith” and “This is the day that the Lord has made.” We rejoiced playing the songs repeatedly with voice of praises to the Lord.

10 adults and 2 children (Celeste and Jerrica) joined the class. We had a great fellowship with everyone (especially Soon Wei and Alicia).

By the 3rd lesson, we were getting better. We strummed better, with our fingers moving easily to correct chords. 😊

We had a total of 8 lessons. “Silent night” and “Joy to the world” came right in time as we learned them during the Christmas season. We enjoyed the fellowship with new friends that we got to know as we practised on the ukulele, praising God with songs and music.

We are still at the basic level of playing the ukulele; yet, the skill we have acquired will enable us to play for cell, children around us and during our night devotion.

Thank you, Pei Ern and Boris! May the Lord continue to bless you and use you in His ministry.





MANNA BRIDGE
TESTIMONIES -
HIS NAME BE
HEARD. LOVE BE
SHARED & GLORY
BE SEEN
BY LAWRENCE LOW



I have participated in community walks as part of our church's Manna Bridge initiative for quite some time. We encountered residents who were very glad to see us and accept our goodwill gifts. However, we also met a few who were aloof towards our friendly greetings and offers of food. The cautious response of some residents was not surprising, as we ourselves may be wary of strangers at our doors.

Occasionally, we also experienced shortage of labour to carry out our food distribution - our small effort in sharing Christ's love. It is always in our prayers that God will send more workers into his fields. (Luke 10:2)

Notwithstanding any circumstance, we always kept walking with continual prayers to God who had commissioned me to do 3 things in my walks - let the name of Jesus Christ be heard, His love be shared, and God's glory be seen. With that commission, I always end the encounter with everyone I met with a wholehearted greeting: "Jesus Christ loves you" / "耶稣爱你".

God began to open more house doors as well as the hearts of residents as we continued walking.

Residents who used to shut their doors or reject our offers of food responded to us with a more friendly gesture. Some of the residents who always accepted our offer of food became more willing to spend longer time interacting with us, with some even inviting us to chat with them inside their homes: Mrs Yxx of #09-XX who lost her husband just weeks before our visit shared with us her emotion and listened to our prayer; Mr Lxx of #09-XX who used to turn us away became more friendly with kind words like "辛苦你们了" (It's hard for you guys) when he took the food. Surely there are many more encouraging testimonials from fellow labourers in the fields. Some residents accepted our invitations and visited JCC at our Barang Fair in Aug 22 and Christmas BBQ party in Dec 22.

God not only moves the hearts of those who receive but also those who are willing to give. God blessed us in our recent walks with more hands from young Christians; e.g., KC's children Jazreel & Jarrel, Lydia who is new to our church and her children Joseph and Anna.

As the walks continued, the name of Jesus Christ was repeatedly mentioned and heard, His love would continuously be shared.



And as a matter of time, God's eternal glory would be seen by more and more residents in Taman Jurong and beyond. Amen.

IN ALL MY WALKS, I'M NOT ALONE

Indeed, God is the One who commissions us to walk to and within the community of Taman Jurong under His church's Manna Bridge initiative so that His name is heard, His love shared and His glory seen. And the LORD will never see us walking alone in this journey of faith.

In the recent walk on 26 Nov 22, we were needed to cover certain levels at a HDB block that used to be under the care of another group. Perhaps because we were strangers to the residents at the new levels and many of the familiar residents at our regular levels were not around that night (likely due to the school holidays), we had to be more determined in warming ourselves up to the residents especially those who were understandably cautious when seeing unfamiliar faces.

My spirit was disturbed and voices of negativity troubled my heart.



But the Spirit of God spoke louder and I was moved to pray. I gathered the other members who walked with me that night (Grace, Lydia & Joseph) and I shared the experience of my heart. I asked if it was okay that we paused our walking and prayed together. We did.

Immediately after our prayer, we came to a unit at Level 6 of the Block. A grandmother called 杨阿姨 (Auntie Yang) who was in the middle of eating with her family from China came by. After greeting and explaining the purpose of our visit, she shared that she is a Christian and knew our pastor in the Chinese congregation. She was very touched with our initiative and offered us her prayer. Her prayer in Mandarin was full of comforting and encouraging words, giving praises of God's glory. As she prayed, I felt her prayer so powerfully as if Jesus Christ was tapping on my shoulder telling me: "It's okay, I know it's not easy but I'm with you."

We invited Auntie Yang to our Christmas BBQ party and she came along with her Indonesian helper. I also encouraged her to pray along with us for the residents of her Block, that the saving grace of our good God will be showered upon them. Amen!



CHRISTMAS OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER 16 - DOT CHRISTMAS CAROLLING TO THE RESIDENTS - BY TAN WING TER

It was joyful carolling time for us on 16 December 2022 to spread the joy of Christmas to residents in Taman Jurong.

We started off the evening with preparations and final rehearsals, followed by a wonderful fellowship time over a simple dinner prepared by capable members. Then we set off with enthusiasm to the HDB blocks in our neighbourhood. As the harmonious sounds of Christmas carols filled the air, curious neighbours peeked out of their homes to soak in the atmosphere.

It was truly a blessed and precious opportunity to share the joy and spirit of Christmas with our neighbours. We are thankful that in His mercy, our prayers were heard and we were able to have cordial conversations with some of the residents.



Unlike normal times when they might be weighed down by burdens, on this night their faces lit up when they heard the carols.

One of them, Mrs Peng, joined us in the singing and shared her memorable encounters in church in the past. Another, Mdm Chua, was also touched by the carols. She expressed her appreciation to us with the kind words, “你们真有心了!” She also shared with us that she was a free thinker before.



“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” Let us continue to pray for the residents of Taman Jurong – for God’s blessings in spiritual uplifting. After Christmas, our Manna Bridge outreach activities will continue to reach out to our neighbours. We will continue with supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving for everyone as Apostle Paul urges us in 1 Tim 2:1-4.

We welcome all JCCians to join us in these Manna Bridge activities.

MOCHA CHRISTMAS OUTREACH EVENT - BY PEH CHIHUNG

We, the youth Bible study group (also known as MOCHA), had our 2022 Christmas Outreach event on 18th Dec. It was a Christmas Party that would enable us to reach out to our young pre-believer friends.

Initially we planned for a party for around 40 pax, so I was mentally preparing myself to facilitate the games for that number of participants. However, when registration closed, we realised we had only about 15 youths coming. While the smaller number made me breathe easier to manage the party, I was also feeling a tinge of disappointment.

I was also afraid that the atmosphere wouldn't be lively enough for such a small party, that my pre-believer friends might feel it as underwhelming and not enjoy it. As my anxieties about the success of the party weighed on me, I was reminded at one of our weekly prayer meetings to do the best we can in our planning, and commit the rest to the Lord. As Jeremiah 17:7 says, “But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him.”





Thanks be to God that the atmosphere of the party turned out just right. The modest group size lent a warm and cosy ambience to the party. We had an exciting gift exchange and cookie decoration segment, and everyone had a good time of bonding through the games and conversations.

At the end of the day, my friends shared that they found the friends at JCC really wholesome, and are looking forward to join our other events. To know that they felt so welcomed and had a meaningful time here really encouraged me,

I pray that in 2023, PULSE (the youth fellowship) will see more new faces and God will bless all with fruit-bearing conversations about Christianity and why we believe.

**DECEMBER 21 – CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION
@ ST ANDREW'S NURSING HOME
- BY PEGGY TAN**

Someone says that Christmas isn't just a season; it's a feeling. We were so filled up with our Christmas joy as to be unable to contain it. We wanted to share it with others.

A group of us from JCC (Bee Teng, Loh Shan, Chiew Geok, Henry and myself) decided to be cheerleaders visiting St Andrew's Nursing Home at Taman Jurong – to bring festive cheer to the residents there.

We were glad to meet four other churches, the scouts from Jurong Secondary School and the Jebesen & Jessen company in the Christmas celebration.

At the start, we gathered on the first floor and listened to the welcoming speech by Revd Lew of the Home. This was followed by the singing of Christmas carols and the water baptism of eight residents.

St Andrew's Nursing Home is a large place providing warm care to many residents housed in different wards. In one of these wards, we the cheerleaders from JCC continued with entertaining the affable uncles with lively Christmas carols to the accompaniment of music from the ukulele played by Bee Teng. We were glad that these affable uncles also welcomed the games and physical exercises we had with them. We were happy; they were happy and willingly accepted our request to pray for them.



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The best way to multiply your happiness is to share it with others. Our Christmas joy was certainly multiplied as we took in the serenity on the faces of the elderly residents as they enjoyed their bento lunches.

DECEMBER 22 - DIALECT CHRISTMAS PARTY
- BY MARTIN CHEAH

About 60 plus Dialect worshippers and guests attended this party where they had fun playing games, listening to Christmas Carols in Hokkien and a short message about Christmas by Deacon Nathan. Many of the Dialect team members had to take leave to help out in this party, which started at 2 pm and ended after a sumptuous hi-tea.

The food was catered from a hawker stall in the Jurong West 505 Market and Food Centre, supplemented with Christmas Ham, Curry Chicken and Mango Pudding from some of the members. In the end, there were a lot of leftovers as the elderly probably are not big eaters as before.



TAKING A FAITHFUL STAND: RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AGAINST FAMILY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

GUEST-OF-HONOUR
Ms Sun Xueling
Minister of State for Social and
Family Development and Home Affairs
14 January 2023

Brought to you by the Family Violence Workforce
Supported by:
 



TAKING A FAITHFUL STAND: RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AGAINST FAMILY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

BY KULIE CHIA

On Saturday 14 January 2023, over 100 religious leaders and representatives of various religious organisations and social service agencies gathered to listen and discuss about "Taking a Faithful Stand" against family and domestic violence (FDV in short). The symposium was addressed by guest-of-honour Ms Sun Xueling, Minister of State for Social and Family Development and Home Affairs, who talked about the growing number of FDV enquiries over the past 5 years and how FDV is still a generally taboo topic in the society. With up to 80% of Singapore residents reported to have religious affiliation, Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) identified the potential role religious organisations could play in addressing and managing FDV.

She further shared that in 2020, at the national level, a multi-stakeholder Taskforce on Family Violence which comprises members from social service agencies, non-governmental organisations, the Courts, hospitals and Government agencies, was set up to comprehensively understand Singapore's family violence landscape and develop recommendations to tackle FDV on every level. Ms Sun advised that it is not enough for victims to know the Signal for Help hand gesture as the other person the victim may try to approach may not know what they mean, and may inadvertently alert the perpetrator instead. Hence the call for religious leaders, teachers and laypeople to be educated, and to educate young and old on how they can seek help safely using the hand gesture or any other means.

She said, "Abuse is not only physical, it can also be verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual and financial; and sometimes it comes in the form of neglect." Ms Sun shared, "Whether it's elderly, spouse or children, abusers usually do so out of a power play - using fear to control others and feeling a sense of superiority. And victims may not report their family members out of love, that's why it may fall on others like educators, neighbours or colleagues to report the abuse." Additionally, Ms Sun recommended the book "Engaging Men who Abuse: a PAVe Experience" by Pang Kee Tai, which has a chapter on how an understanding of cultural and religious influence can help us better manage complex issues such as family violence.

Ust Irwan Hadi of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore quoted the example of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who never lifted a hand against a woman, and taught his disciples not to strike or revile (verbally abuse) their spouse. "An honorable man treats women with honor and integrity, and only a vile and dishonorable man humiliates and degrades women (Narrated by Imam Ahmed Musnad)." However Ust Irwan noted that the hand signal may not be used by abused men, who make up 25% of adult abuse cases; but he concluded that we therefore need to ensure communication lines with men remain open should they need help.

Rev Terry Kee from JCC admitted that preachers set the tone in allowing abusers to step forward to seek counsel. "The harder one preaches against a certain sin, the harder it may become for someone in his congregation to seek help in that area of sin (ie. abusers may not dare to approach the pastor for help for his problem should he wish to repent). So while we still need to preach against sin, we need to offer them hope and help, and confidential platforms like prayer boxes so that counsel remains accessible and pastors can be easily reached," he said.

Ms Susila Ganesan from the Hindu Advisory Board provided karmic insight when she rebuked an abuser, who outrageously claimed this was his wife's karma. She countered that likewise he would have bad karma as "you don't get to order your menu, you create it", which essentially meant you get what you deserve eventually." As a lawyer she has counselled women on Protection Orders, Domestic Exclusion Order etc under the Women's Charter and Protection from Harassment Act.

Dr Lee Foong Ming from the Buddhist College of Singapore advised that "Buddhists hold strongly to 'giving fearlessness': by standing up for the weak to give them courage and hope." She said, "Anyone can give fearlessness not by being bystanders but 'upstanders' for the vulnerable."



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Mdm Zaharah Ariff, founder of Casa Raudha Ltd, was direct about the stigma victims face. She said in all scenarios, everyone has a choice and should know that. "An abuser cannot justify violence but has to acknowledge that he chose violence. The victim also cannot resign themselves to fate or the false belief that God has determined them to live with a violent person for life - God is not cruel. And they can choose."

If you or someone you know may be experiencing FDV, you can call the 24-hour National Anti-Violence and Sexual Harassment Helpline (NAVH) at 1800-777-0000, or call the police at 999 or SMS 71999 if there is an immediate threat of life. For more info on FDV, you may refer to msf.gov.sg/breakthesilence.



The panelists gesture the Signal for Help. From left: Ust Irwan Hadi, Ms Susila Ganesan, Mdm Zaharah Ariff, Minister of State Ms Sun Xueling, Rev Terry Kee, Dr Lee Foong Ming and moderator Mr Mohd Imran Mohd Taib.



STOP FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

SIGNAL FOR HELP



1 Palm to witness/camera and tuck thumb



2 Trap thumb

CALL FOR HELP
1800-777-0000
(NATIONAL ANTI-VIOLENCE AND
SEXUAL HARASSMENT HELPLINE)



ABCG 1 & 2 CELEBRATES PASTORS' APPRECIATION

BY JOYCE TAN

On 15 Jan 2023, Pastors' Appreciation was celebrated by ABCG 1 & 2 at MPH5. We had bento for lunch followed by sharing from Rev Fredric, Rev Anthony, Deacon Nathan and Bro Joseph. There is a Wonder Foot game played with 3 teams of people. The game is played with marbles being picked up with toes and the team which dropped all marbles into the box within 1 minute or earlier wins! More fun and lots of blessings.

CGL Tony Koh in his opening speech admitted how difficult it is to come up with new ways to show Pastors Appreciation every year.

In his farewell address, Rev Fredric mentioned that he has seen JCC grow over the years and he reckons that it must be a work of God. Rev Fredric closed the event with a benediction and prayer.





REVEREND FREDRIC LEE RETIRES BY JOHN LEE

After 29 years of service, Rev Fredric Lee Tiong Chen is retiring from full-time ministry effective 10th February 2023. A service for his retirement was held for him on Sunday, 15th January 2023, conducted by Bishop Lu Guan Hoe of LCS.

Rev Fredric was first called to serve as co-worker at Jurong Christian Church (JCC) in 1994 and was ordained into the public Ministry of the Word and Sacrament of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore (LCMS) by Bishop Gideon Chang at JCC in 1997.

He was then assigned to Bedok Lutheran Church (BLC) effective January 1998. In subsequent years, he also served at Yishun Christian Church and Queenstown Lutheran Church before coming back to serve in JCC from January 2019 until now.

Rev Anthony reminisced about Rev Fredric being a pastor to him when he was still a young man. He commended Rev Fredric for his wisdom in imparting insights on how to pastor a church. He noted Rev Fredric's passion for God too. Bishop Lu prayed over and blessed Rev Fredric in his new phase of life. He also presented Rev Fredric with a letter of appreciation.

Rev Fredric and his wife Dorothy were thankful for the privilege and joy of serving in JCC and the large Lutheran family of LCS. He made special mentions of his gratefulness to the successive bishops in LCS (Bishop John Tan, Bishop Terry Kee and Bishop Lu) and fellow co-worker in JCC, Rev Anthony Loh, for their love and care.

As Rev Fredric and his wife move back to BLC, may God continue to bless them with happiness and good health.

JCC (ENGLISH) CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2023

JANUARY		MAY		SEPTEMBER	
1	JCC Dedication Sunday	1	Church Family Day	17	Dialect Evangelistic Sunday
	PULSE Welcome Event	7	9 am Pre AGM (MPH 1)	24	Koinonia Lunch
15	Dialect Evangelistic Sunday	14	Mother's Day Sunday	30	8 pm Prayer and Praise
22	CNY Sunday Worship	14	Dialect Service Parent's Day		
28	8 pm Prayer and Praise	21	9 am AGM Combined Service		
29	CNY Koinonia Lunch	27	8 pm Prayer and Praise		
		27	Pulse Anniversary		
		28	Pentecost Sunday		
		28	Koinonia Lunch		
		20	LCS AGM (MPH 1)		
FEBRUARY		JUNE		OCTOBER	
3-4	CNY - Blessing the community (Church wide Manna Bridge)	8-10	Church Retreat at Batam (302M)	1	Children Sunday
5	Combined Council meeting	18	Father's Day Sunday	?	LCS Ministerium
22	8 pm Ash Wed Service	18	Dialect Evangelistic Sunday	21	9:30 - JCC Review and Dialogue - HOM & MLT (MPH 1)
	MPH Lent Season begins	16-18	APCC	22	Koinonia Lunch
25	8 pm Prayer and Praise	24	8 pm Prayer and Praise	28	8 pm Prayer and Praise
26	Koinonia Lunch	25	Koinonia Lunch	29	LCS Reformation Sunday
MARCH		JULY		NOVEMBER	
19	Dialect Evangelistic Sunday		JCC 50th Anniversary Service (Combined Eng/Chi/Dialect) (Sanctuary 2, 1:40L-1)	4	Combined Council Retreat (1D) [Council 2023/24]
25	8 pm Prayer and Praise	2	9 am	11-12	PULSE Leaders Retreat
26	Koinonia Lunch	8	9am-5pm (MPH 1)	17	8 pm Combined Chi/Eng Prayer Meeting (Eng IC)
31	Easter - Blessing the Community (Church wide Manna Bridge)	9	Youth Sunday	?	DGP Graduation 2023
		15	9:30 - JCC Review and Dialogue - HOM & MLT (MPH 1)	26	JCC Servers' Appreciation Sunday
		21	8 pm Combined Chi/Eng Prayer Meeting (Chi IC)		
		30	Koinonia Lunch		
APRIL		AUGUST		DECEMBER	
2	Palm Sunday	8	Day of His Power	8	Christmas - (Church wide Manna Bridge)
6	Maundy Thursday (Chi and Eng)	?	National Thanksgiving Service	15	LCS Christmas Gathering
7	Good Friday Service	26	8 pm Prayer and Praise	24	10:45 am Christmas Eve Service
8	Easter day Service	27	Koinonia Lunch	25	10:45 am Christmas Day Evangelistic Service
16	2-5pm Seminar on Aging (Rev John Tay)			25	Dialect Evangelistic Sunday (Christmas Lunch Together)
16	BB Enrolment			31	8 pm Thanksgiving Service (MPH 1)
21	8 pm Combined Chi/Eng Prayer Meeting (Eng IC)				
23	2-5pm Seminar on Aging (Rev John Tay)				
30	GB Enrolment				
30	2-5pm Seminar: LPA, AMD, Will Writing				
30	Koinonia Lunch				

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PLANNED EVENTS MAY BE CANCELLED, POSTPONED OR CHANGED