

The **WinePress**

ANNUAL 2023



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JANUARY 2023



Running A Faith Marathon

We witnessed the retirement/commendation 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.

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.

c) 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.

Rev Anthony Loh

PRAYER FOCUS FOR FEBRUARY 2023

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 the DGP as they strengthen their outreach to the parents.

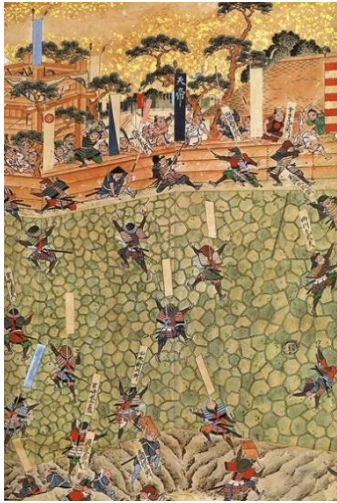
d) Pursuit of God and Anointed of Holy Spirit upon every JCCian

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

S is for...

Shimabara Rebellion

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



*Anonymous,
“Storming of Hara
Castle by Shogunate
forces”, 18th century.
Wikimedia Commons*

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”



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.



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

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. 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.

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.

Further Reading

[Shimabara Rebellion](#)

[Amakusa Shiro](#)

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



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

NEW YEAR: LOOKING AHEAD

“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)

John Lee

A CHINESE COUPLET ON ETERNAL BLESSING

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. 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).

John Lee

REVEREND FREDRIC LEE RETIRES

John Lee

After 29 years of service, Rev Fredric Lee Tiong Chen is retiring from full-time ministry effective 10th February 2023. A commendation service 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 July 1994 and was ordained into the public ministry 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 boy. 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 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, for their love and care.

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



CHRISTMAS OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

December 18 – DOT Christmas Carolling to the Residents

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.

Peh Chihung

MOCHA Christmas Outreach Event

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.

Tan Wing Ter

December 21 – Christmas Celebration @ St Andrew's Nursing Home



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 Jebson & 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.

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.

Peggy Tan

December 22 – Dialect Christmas Party

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.

Martin Cheah





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: <https://tinyurl.com/2xt62tta>

Martin Cheah

UKULELE – A New Bridge for Outreach

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. 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.



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

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!



Taking a Faithful Stand: Religious Communities against Family & Domestic Violence

Kylie Chia

On Saturday 14 January 2023, over 100 religious leaders and representatives of various religious organisations 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 3% of Singapore's population who have been victims, and how FDV is still a generally taboo topic in the society. With up to 80% of locals reported to have a religious affiliation, Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) identified the potential role religious organisations could play in rehabilitating victim-survivors.

She further said that adult and child protection service cases almost doubled in 2020, hence a Taskforce on Family Violence was set up to collaborate with social service agencies, religious institutes and even individuals to tackle FDV on every level. Ms Sun advised that for victims to know the hand gesture signalling for help was simply not enough, as the other person the victim may try to approach may not know what they mean, and may in reverse 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.

She said, "Abuse is not only physical, it is also emotional and psychological; and majority of the time 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, to encourage leaders to help remand but restore perpetrators in closed-door settings as they open up about their actions and thought processes.

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. "A woman completes a man, an honorable man treats women with honor and integrity, and only a vile and dishonorable man humiliates and degrades women (Hadith Sahih - 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 they will ensure communication lines with men remain open should they need help.

Rev Terry Kee from JCC admitted that preachers are important in allowing abusers and the abused to step forward to confess their sins and seek counsel. "The harder one preaches against a certain sin, the lesser they will perceive that issue in their congregation because no one dares to speak out about it. So while we can preach against sin, we need to offer hope and help, and confidential platforms like prayer boxes where anyone can approach us," he surmised.

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 so you get what you deserve." 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."

Mdm Zaharah Ariff, founder of Casa Raudha Ltd, was direct about the stigma victims face. "Women are seen by society to respect and obey their husbands instead of 'blowing the situation up', as one of my beneficiaries related to me her conversation with another woman. It made the victim feel like the perpetrator instead." 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 if there is an immediate threat of life. For more info, go to msf.gov.sg/breakthesilence.

ABCG 1 & 2 CELEBRATES PASTORS' APPRECIATION 15TH JAN 2023

Joyce Tan



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.



Obey God's Word

Bryan Tay

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?

JCC (ENGLISH) CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2023

JANUARY		MAY		SEPTEMBER	
1	JCC Dedication Sunday PULSE Welcome Event	1	Church Family Day	17	Dialect Evangelistic Sunday
15	Dialect Evangelistic Sunday	7 9 am	Pre AGM (MPH 1)	24	Koinonia Lunch
22	CNY Sunday Worship	14	Mother's Day Sunday	30 8 pm	Prayer and Praise
28 8 pm	Prayer and Praise	14	Dialect Service Parent's Day		
29	CNY Koinonia Lunch	21 9 am	AGM Combined Service		
		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 (3D2N)	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 - 12:00 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 56th Anniversary Service	4	Combined Council Retreat (1D) [Council 2023/24]
25 8 pm	Prayer and Praise	2 9 am	(Combined Eng/Chi/Dialect) (Sanctuary & MPH 1)		
26	Koinonia Lunch	8 9am- 5pm	New Council 2023/24 Summit (MPH 1)	11-12	PULSE Leaders Retreat
31	Easter – Blessing the Community (Church wide Manna Bridge)	9	Youth Sunday	17 8 pm	Combined Chi/Eng Prayer Meeting (Eng IC)
		15	9:30 - JCC Review and Dialogue - 12:00 HOM & MLT (MPH 1)	?	DGP Graduation 2023
		21 8 pm	Combined Chi/Eng Prayer Meeting (Chi IC)	26	JCC Servers' Appreciation Sunday
		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

FEBRUARY 2023



40 DAYS OF LENT

The annual observance of Lent is a traditional custom of Christian churches.

The word “Lent” comes from the Anglo Saxon word “lencten”, which means spring. In 325 the council at Nicaea discussed the Lenten season, but it wasn’t until the time of Gregory the Great that the start of the season was established on a Wednesday, called Ash Wednesday. This year, the season will begin on Feb 22 and end on Apr 8, a period of 40 days before Easter, without counting Sundays. The 40 days is symbolic of the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert and endured the temptation by Satan.

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.” (Mt 4:1-2)

1) A time for spiritual renewal

Also called the Passion season, Lent is intentionally for our self-examination, instruction, repentance and prayer. It awakens us to the suffering, death and resurrection of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Because Jesus died, and thus paid for our sins, we have life. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we too will rise and enjoy heaven forever. This season is a time for spiritual renewal for all the people of God as we grasp the deep meaning of God’s grace in our hearts.

Martin Luther says, *“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times.”*

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Ps 51:10)

2. Lenten Fast

Fasting as a tradition of Lent is a spiritual discipline practised by Christians, and is meant to help us focus on spiritual matters, to prioritize a spiritual hunger for God over physical desires.

There is a variety of propositions on the Lenten fast from different church denominations. However, most churches view fasting as a private matter between the individual and God.

Here is a quote from “*Concerning Christian Liberty*” by Martin Luther:

“Now I would advise you, if you have any wish to pray, to fast, or to make foundations in churches, as they call it, to take care not to do so with the object of gaining any advantage, either temporal or eternal.”

In that book, Luther has more to say about fasting, In gist, we are to maintain a holistic theological outlook about fasting without misunderstanding it as crushing the flesh as to earn rewards for good work.

An individual’s response to the call for purposeful reflection on one’s need for God, to bring our souls closer to Him by our repentance, should be our apt focus to make our observance of Lent most meaningful.

“Lent is not just fasting or praying ... It is the season, when Jesus did sacrifices ... and is calling us to sacrifice the bad in us and to outshine our good nature.” – The Broken One, by Brittney Sahin.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the

throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Conclusion

Christ spent 40 days in the desert. He devoted His time to prayers and thus drew strength to resist temptations. The Passion of Christ will culminate in His death on the Cross as propitiation for our sins.

We spend 40 days in prayers and meditations through the season of Lent. May we share our thanks to God for the greatest sacrifice, and pursue godliness and useful actions to share our love with our neighbours.

Rev Anthony Loh

PRAYER FOCUS FOR MARCH 2023

a) JCCians who have come back to God

Pray for JCCians who have come back to God during the Lent season after falling away. We give thanks to the Lord for His grace and mercy. May the Lord continue to guard the heart of every JCCian, for it is the wellspring of life. (Prov 4:23)

b) DGP

We thank God for our new Chairman of DGP, sister Gek Luang. May God bless her with wisdom, strength and resolve to lead the DGP team, rise to every challenge and not grow weary.

c) Cell Ministry

How can we build up our cell groups to bring spiritual growth to members of all ages and backgrounds, including both mature Christians and new believers?

"With man this is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God." (Mark 10:27)

Commit the cell ministry to God in prayer.

d) Goshen Bridges

Give thanks to God for the passionate work of His servants in the outreach field. The Lord has blessed us with the Goshen Bridges linking us with our neighbours in Taman Jurong. We continue to pray for His spiritual empowerment to establish a strong relationship between the church and the community.

Are we dispensable or indispensable?

Here is an anonymous poem titled “No Indispensable Man” from the Internet.

No Indispensable Man

Sometime when you're feeling important
Sometime when your ego's in bloom.
Sometime when you take it for granted
You're the best qualified in the room.
Sometime when you feel that your going
Would leave an unfillable hole,
Just follow these simple instructions
And see how they humble your soul.
Take a bucket and fill it with water
Put your hand in it up to the wrist,
Pull it out, and the hole that's remaining
Is a measure of how you'll be missed.
You can splash all you want when you enter,
You may stir up the water galore;
But stop, and you find that in no time
It looks quite the same as before.
The moral in this quaint example
Is to do just the best that you can;
Be proud of yourself, but remember
There's no indispensable man.

How much do you agree or disagree with the poem? Below are my thoughts.

Indispensable

There are people who think of themselves as indispensable in their work. It is not a case of being self-conceited. Self-recognizing their indispensability provides strong motivation for them to uphold a serious attitude towards the importance of their presence instead of shirking responsibilities.

Dispensable

There are people who think of themselves as not indispensable. It is not a case of them feeling dispensable like unimportant digits among other people who display higher capabilities. Instead, they do not pride themselves as being the most talented person in the job. They are unpretentious about themselves. Instead of being domineering over their space, they welcome opportunities for others to come into the space, to work for a good result.

The Indispensability Of Moses

In Exodus 3:10, Moses received a direct call from God to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

But Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.”
(Exodus 4:13)

While Moses felt that he was dispensable, God's will was set. God arranged for Aaron to meet Moses, and the two would go together to Egypt to fulfil God's will. In other words, it was God who enforced the indispensability of Moses for the task.

The Dispensability Of Moses



At last, by faith, Moses led the Israelites to cross the Red Sea. For a duty well carried out, was he indispensable to lead God's people into the Promised Land? This time, Moses did not beseech God to send someone else. It was God's sovereign will to dispense with Moses because of an incident at the waters of Meribah Kadesh. (Deu 32:51-52; Num 20)

God's Will

The experience of Moses informs us that one may be indispensable at one time and not indispensable at another time. Whatever we think in human terms, God's will prevails.

Unity and diversity of Christians in the church is God's will. (1 Cor 12:12-31) This means that even if a weak member of the body thinks of himself as dispensable, the reality that is in accord with God's will is that he is indispensable. (1 Cor 12:22) Despite his "weakness", he is still needed by the church and he can still render service to God in some way. Even if his role is not high up in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, his "imperceptible" position as a small cog can be critical to enabling the big wheel of ministry to rumble.

Similarly, if strong members of the body smugly think of themselves as indispensable, their self-accreditation of superior prominence will come to naught according to God's will which gives them no special treatment but gives greater honor to members that lack it. (1 Cor 12:24)

We can also draw a parallel from the story of the widow's offering (Luke 21:1-4) that even in our contribution of service, what counts as more in our effort is determined by our attitude. The church is like a tree, in which the right attitude is the good root that produces good fruit. (Mt 12:33)

We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps. (Prov 16:9)

Concluding Questions

Now, what do you think?

Are you dispensable or indispensable?

Are the motivations of your thoughts right?

John Lee

God's Grace

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage. "As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a spring; The rain also covers it with pools." – Psalm 84:5-6 (NKJV)



The pilgrims passed through a dry valley. They dug the grounds. They put in a lot of effort, expecting blessings of one kind; i.e., groundwater to spring up from below. They didn't get it. Were they frustrated?

No, they had expected it tough. Despite knowing the uninviting physical attributes of the land (a vale of tears – a scene of trouble and sorrow), they persevered with strength of faith in their pilgrimage to Zion. God blessed them with a blessing of a different kind – rainwater in abundance to fill the whole place with pools!

The blessing of rain was many times more uplifting than the groundwater they sought.

We are not unfamiliar with our experience of having yearnings for things which in the end we fail to get for all our efforts. We may be seeking a job opportunity, desiring service in a ministry in church, looking for some fulfilment of personal interest, etc. Are our efforts in vain? No!

Despite not getting what our minds think of, and running into seemingly hopeless situations, our intact faith through our resilient pilgrimage will touch heaven and change the circumstances to reflect the glory of God.

We dig wells, thinking in human terms that the deeper we dig (our striving), the greater will be the collection of groundwater (our gain). However, outcomes do not always follow what we normally fathom by our creature faculty. Instead of springs rising from the ground, we may have unexpected showers of blessings pouring down.

"The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the LORD." – Prov. 21:31 (NKJV)

Put in another way by German-born clergy Thomas à Kempis (c. 1380-1471) in his Christian devotional book "The Imitation of Christ":

*"For the resolutions of the just depend rather on the **grace** of God than on their own wisdom; and in Him they always put their trust, whatever they take in hand. For man proposes, but God disposes; neither is the way of man in his own hands."*

Grace – a gift that the Pharisees overlooked when they esteemed works and laws.

Grace – the gift we treasure from Heavenly Father given through His Son – with its enabling power for all who believe in Jesus Christ!

Shakespeare says in Hamlet: "There is a divinity that shapes our ends ..."

The divinity working through the mysterious enabling power of God's **grace** shapes our testimony for Christ!



T is for Timor

"Therefore in the east give glory to the LORD; exalt the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, in the islands of the sea." (Isaiah 24:15)

What is Timor?

Timor is an island in the Indonesian Archipelago, 500km away from Australia. The name is a variant of *timur* (Malay for "east") because it lies at the eastern end of the Lesser Sunda Islands. The island is divided between the sovereign states of Timor-Leste (East Timor) and Indonesia. A predominantly Catholic country today, East Timor is another interesting case study of how political changes can make or break the church.

Portuguese Timor

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in Timor and its neighbouring islands, attempting to establish a foothold in the Spice Islands in the early 1500s. The Dutch entered the region in the 1600s and progressively ousted the Portuguese. West Timor came under Dutch control by 1640, and the Dutch eventually controlled the entire Indonesian Archipelago save for East Timor which remained under Portuguese control.

The Portuguese introduced Catholicism to Portuguese Timor but did not evangelise the entire population. At the end of Portuguese rule in 1975, only 20% of East Timorese considered themselves Catholics.



Timor Island as seen from space (1989), Wikimedia Commons.



Wooden statue of the Virgin Mary and Christ Child, 19th Century, Wikimedia Commons

The Invasion and Occupation Years

A revolution in Portugal in 1974 installed a new government which favoured the immediate decolonisation of Portugal's empire. Conflict soon broke out between Timorese partisans which resulted in a declaration of independence by the socialist Fretilin party followed by Portuguese forces retreating from the island in November 1975.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in December 1975 under the pretext of anti-colonialism and anti-communism to overthrow the left-leaning Fretilin regime. The Indonesian occupation lasted until October 1999, during which many Timorese died.

The Catholic "Revival"

During the period of occupation, East Timor was subjected to Pancasila, Indonesia's official state philosophy, whose first principle is "Belief in the one and only God". East Timorese animist belief systems did not fit in with Pancasila, resulting in mass conversions to Catholicism. By 1985, 95% of East Timorese

identified as Catholics.

The Catholic Church in East Timor officially split from the Portuguese Church in 1975. However, while Portuguese clergy and Latin/Portuguese mass were replaced by Indonesian clergy and Indonesian mass, the Church in East Timor never joined the Indonesian Church.

The Catholic Church played an important role in society during the Indonesian occupation. Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo became one of the most prominent advocates for human rights in East Timor, and many priests and nuns risked their lives to shield citizens from military abuses. In 1996, Bishop Belo and Jose Ramos Horta, a fellow independence activist, received the Nobel Peace Prize for "their work towards a just and peaceful solution to the conflict in East Timor".

Pope John Paul II visited East Timor in 1989, exposing the occupied territory's situation to the world media and catalysed global support for East Timorese independence. John Paul II spoke out against the violence in East Timor, calling for both sides to show restraint and for East Timorese to "love and pray for their enemies". Nonetheless, the Vatican was officially neutral and also wished to maintain good relations with Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation. Upon his arrival, John Paul II symbolically kissed a cross and pressed it on the ground, alluding to his usual practice of kissing the ground on arrival in a nation, yet avoiding overtly suggesting that East Timor was a sovereign country. While he spoke fervently against abuses in his sermon, he avoided naming the Indonesian authorities as responsible. John Paul II is especially beloved in East Timor; a statue of him stands in the capital Dili today.

The Indonesian occupation ended in 1999 after the fall of Suharto's government and mounting international pressure on B.J. Habibie's administration. East Timor came under United Nations administration before gaining full independence in May 2002.

The Protestant Minority

Protestants had been a tiny minority in East Timor under Portuguese rule. Protestant congregations only increased during the Indonesian occupation owing to significant numbers of Protestants among the Indonesian military forces and civil servants. After Indonesia withdrew, the number of Protestant churches and adherents dwindled drastically, with many moving to West Timor.

Conclusion

Several past articles have explored the relationship between Christianity and politics, whether colonial or post-colonial. East Timor is yet another example of this, showing how political changes can make or break church congregations. Nonetheless, East Timor remains a predominantly Catholic country today, unique in Asia alongside the Philippines.

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

Further Reading

[Timor](#)

[Religion in East Timor](#)

[Catholic Church in East Timor](#)



East Timorese mourning for Pope John Paul II after his death, BBC News 5 April 2005

Schadenfreude



Martin Cheah

I came across this word in the Straits Times 19th Jan 2023 under the headline, “Is it wrong to feel happy about someone else’s misfortune?”. The meaning of schadenfreude: the emotional experience of pleasure in response to another’s misfortune. Schadenfreude is a German word that combines Schaden, which means “damage,” and Freude, which means “joy.” In other words, pleasure on observing misfortune and in particular, that of someone who somehow deserved the misfortune.

Now when you hear someone say, “She/He deserved it”, that’s schadenfreude. Researchers have found that there are three reasons behind schadenfreude: aggression, rivalry, and justice.

The synonym of schadenfreude is epicaricacy (rejoicing or deriving pleasure from the misfortunes of others).

An example from modern context may be more suitable. For example, when the England captain, Harry Kane, completely missed an important penalty in the recent World Cup Quarter Final match against France, the French fans and players were obvious in their happiness.. When the winning team saw their rivals saddened by defeat, they felt a sense of schadenfreude.

Here is another example of usage of the word: Jeremy had a feeling of schadenfreude when his ex-wife’s second marriage failed.

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; Lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, And He turn away His wrath from him. Proverbs 24:17-18

So dear brothers and sisters, I hope we have no use of this word in JCC.

Here are some fancy words with simple meanings for you to impress your teachers, bosses or colleagues:

WORD	SIMPLY MEANS	USAGE
Penultimate	second to last	It's the penultimate episode of the series tonight
Confluence	coming together	A confluence of events make us think the end is coming
Despondent	hopeless	She started to feel despondent about ever finding a good job
Erudite	smart	She is a scholarly and erudite person
Ennui	boredom	Ennui crept up in the heart of the lonely child
Pusillanimous	afraid or timid	He is too pusillanimous to stand up to his opponents
Pervicacious	stubborn	Your grandmother had spunk, bless her pervicacious soul
Resplendent	gorgeous	His crown will be resplendent

MISSION UPDATES

JCC have members who are called to bring the Good News to people in other countries. Here are some of their exploits as reported in their newsletters.

Thailand

Chih Chiang shared about the visit from a Korean Mission team to Thailand where he is currently working. Read about it here: <https://tinyurl.com/94fum434>

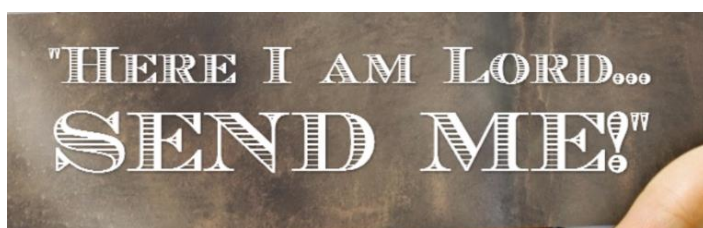


Bee also shared her work in Thailand and you can find her report here: <https://tinyurl.com/3vu8xu7w>



Nias

In December, Pastor Michael Christian visited Nias and he gave an insight into what is happening there and how we can pray for the orphans. Read about it here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc8pr79p>



JCC Mission Trips 2023

2 locations, 4 trips: Nias, Cambodia

Nias (End June, End Dec)

Cambodia (End June, Mid/End August)

SIGN-UP DEADLINE: 28th Feb 2023

CONTACT: NIAS - Ewe Ewe (97860250) / CAMBODIA - Amos (93921530)

Cell Groups Ablaze@JCC

A Tale of 2 Haircuts

Bryan Tay



Make a guess. Where is this “barber shop” located? Looks like times are “bad” and CG members are giving one another free haircuts!

This is how CG life can be fun. In our **BFF Cell Group**, Brother Ronnie has an old-style barber chair, complete with reclining feature (not auto though, don’t ask for too much!) and fully equipped with scissors, comb and a pair of real-clickety hair snipper to look and sound real!

Bryan Tay is seen choosing a hairstyle for Ronnie to “execute”! Who says seniors cannot have fun?

In another saga, brothers-in-arms from **e-LIDs Cell Group** were invited to “demolish” Malcolm’s centre-parted oppa hairstyle, razing it to a perfect round of black, bushy 2-mm spikes, ready for enlistment into National Service the following day!



Needless to say, some professional trimming was needed to clean up the new-style “aftermath”. But it was all fun, evident from the smiles, both from the “demolition experts” and the recipient!

We live, grow and fight the good fight together...leaving no man behind!

Want to join BFF (Seniors) or e-LIDs (Young Adults: 20-24 years old)?

Contact Bryan Tay: 9720 7979

Prioritise spiritual discipline

Bryan Tay



Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. -- 2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

It is easy to fill our day with activities, running from place to place and engaging ourselves with people and programmes. It is also possible to fill our days with nothing but simply lazing around as if God were transparent and dead. That is not what God has intended for our lives. He has created us in His image to have fellowship with Him. We are made to know Him and enjoy Him. He has given each of us gifts and talents to work with so that we can live this earthly life purposefully. Guided by His strength and wisdom, we can then reach our fullest potential in life according to His

perfect will for us.

To achieve that, we need to do some things first – Surrender ourselves unreservedly to Him and spend time to seek His will for our lives through prayer. Study God's Word together with fellow Christians and spur one other to pursue holiness, righteousness, and goodness. To that end, we need to prioritise these spiritual disciplines in our daily lives.

What does God say about this?

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

1 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Galatians 5:17 (NIV)

What does this mean for practical living?

We are probably very good in planning, organising, and prioritising tasks relating to our studies, job roles and social responsibilities. We do this because we can see the fruit of our labour in getting good grades, job promotions and satisfied customers. These are all well and good. We may even be disciplined to set aside an hour for exercise thrice a week. But what are we doing for our spiritual disciplines?

There are four important disciplines that we need to maintain if we want to live a victorious Christian life.

Imagine the four arms of the cross: Prayer (upward arm), Word (downward arm), Fellowship (right arm) and Evangelism (left arm). Each of these is critical in developing our spiritual strength and character in our walk with God. These four arms work like the four well-balanced spokes of a wheel to set us in a smooth rolling motion. Work these disciplines as priority activities into your daily and weekly life routines and experience

the reality of God's power and revelation in your life.

Reflect and respond to God's Word

- How often do you talk with God in prayer? What are most of the conversations about?
- What tools and methods are you using to study His Word and fellowship with other Christians to edify one another?
- When was the last time you shared the gospel with someone and/or played a part in leading them to Christ?

Manna Bridge Lunar New Year Tea Party

Florence Tang

On the 4th of February, JCC hosted a Lunar New Year tea party for our friends from Taman Jurong. These are residents from the neighbouring blocks whom we have been reaching out to through Manna Bridge.

The week before the party, the Manna Bridgers walked the blocks to distribute goods and extend personal invitations to the residents. Sixty residents indicated they would come for the party. The team rejoiced and continued to pray that God would open doors for all of them to come.

On the day of the party, it was raining heavily. An hour before the event, some Manna Bridgers went out again to remind the residents to come but found that many had other commitments or were not feeling well. When the time came to start the celebration, only four guests had arrived. It was a discouraging sight, but the team continued to trust that God would bring the people and sent another team to a nearby block to invite anyone else who would come. Bryan even drove to the block to ferry people to church. We were surprised to see the open doors and to find people who were so excited to immediately come to church and join the party.

In the end, more than sixty guests attended the party! We praise God for the powerful testimony by Mong, the sharing by Samantha, hearty dumpling feast prepared by the helpers, and energetic *lo hei* facilitated by our emcees. There were many good conversations and we all shared a warm time of fellowship. One of the residents told us he was touched by the sharing and said he wanted to share his own story of coming to know Jesus at the next event!

Through this experience, I am reminded that God is sovereign and works in ways we sometimes cannot see. I am also reminded that outreach is a team effort and everyone plays a part. Indeed, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6 "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow."

At the tea party, a husband-and-wife pair also came to the church but stayed outside. They had met multiple Manna Bridgers (Xavier, Caleb, Naomi...etc.) through the previous walks and came to ask for help with some forms. Caleb was able to help with the forms and Lawrence approached to pray for them. The next few days, Wen Wei and Jinfay then followed up with the application. This week, we received great news that Lawrence and Grace had further shared God's word with them and the wife had become a Christian!

Though the effects of outreach may not be immediate or visible, let's continue to faithfully sow seeds and water them. God will make them grow, and in the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up!

Join us for Manna Bridge. Come for Manna Bridge training on 19th March!

<https://tinyurl.com/MBtraining19Mar>

THE WINEPRESS' LAST ISSUE

IN NEWSLETTER FORMAT

Martin Cheah

For thirty over years The Vine (started in Nov 1989) and later The Winepress (started in Nov 2020) have existed in a newsletter format. In the beginning, it was a hardcopy, printed and distributed to members monthly by the church office. With the advent of the Internet, it was transmitted to members as a PDF file monthly via email. When Kylie joined JCC in 2020, she contributed her talent to transform this newsletter into a more interactive softcopy format using a web-based publishing and graphic design tool called Lucidpress. I take this opportunity to thank Kylie for all the help she had provided while she was with us and wish her God's blessings for her future.

This year, new members joining the Winepress team have contributed fresh and interesting ideas. This February 2023 issue of The Winepress is our last one to be in a newsletter format. Beginning from April 2023, The Winepress will be a blog within the JCC website. If no hiccups, we expect to start blogging by the first week of April with weekly updates or new posts.

One of the objectives of The Winepress is outreach to the community. The trend these days is to read blogs instead of newsletters. People want their newsfeed in small portions rather than a whole issue of 20 to 28 pages and they want it faster. We welcome your continuing support in one way or another to make The Winepress Blog work.

"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." – Isaiah 43:19





Discipleship
BE MAKE AS ONE
JCC RETREAT '23

3D2N

Room Types	Rate per Pax
Adult single room	\$440.00
Adult twin sharing room	\$350.00
Adult triple sharing room	\$350.00
Child (5-12) with bed	\$265.00
Child (5 - 12) without bed	\$200.00
Child below 4 years old	\$70.00

Rates inclusive of hotel stay, all meals, ferry, keynote speaker, organized games, shopping trip and a batik shirt.

Venue : Swiss-Belhotel Batam

Speaker : Mr Yap Kim Meng (former National Director of Navigators)

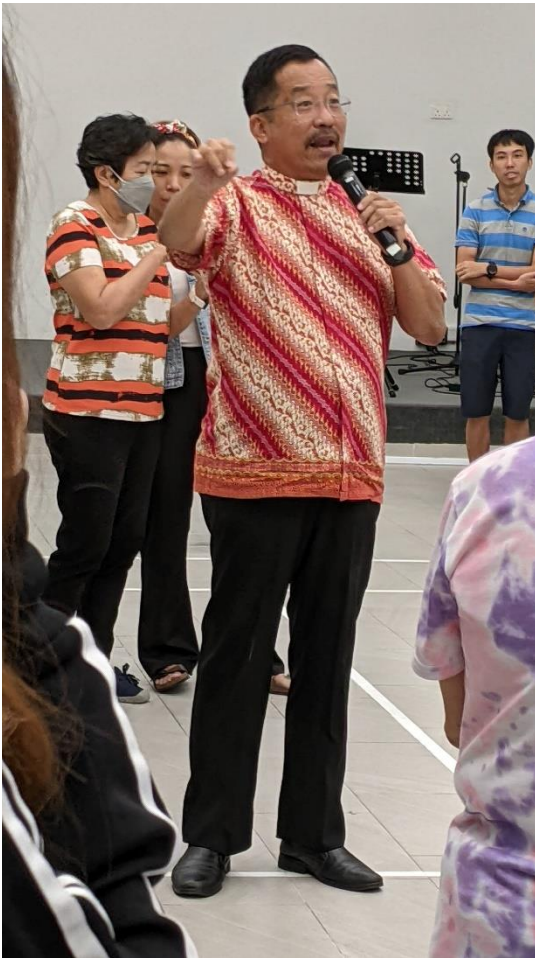
Ferry time :
Thursday 8 June 2023, 10.15am @Harbour front
Saturday 10 June 2023, 6pm @Batam

Press this button now!

**Why wait?
Sign up now!**

Closing date for registration: **30th March 2023**

APRIL 2023



The Empty Tomb (John 20)

Easter, which falls on 9 April this year, is the most important event celebrated by Christians. It celebrates the resurrection of Christ; i.e., God's victory over sin and death. The Son of God "was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (Rom 4:25)

Question: Why is the empty tomb so significant that we can't miss out in our preaching? If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, what would be the implication? The Bible gives us this answer:

"And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith." (1 Cor 15:14)

The truth: Our preaching and our faith are not useless.

As we celebrate Easter, let's focus our attention on Christ:

1. The divine nature of Christ – He is Who He claimed to be!

Here are seven "I am" statements made by Christ, and their significance:

I am the bread of life

John 6:35 Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

I am the light of the world

John 8:12 Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

I am the gate for the sheep

John 10:7 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

I am the good shepherd

John 10:11 The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

I am the resurrection and the life

John 11:25 I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.

I am the way, the truth, and the life

John 14:6 No one comes to the Father except through me.

I am the true vine

John 15:1 You are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

The phrase "I am" is in the present tense, suggesting that what Christ declares of Himself has the mark of unchangeability. It also reflects Exodus 3:14 in which God said to Moses, "I am who I am." It is a phrase that clearly refers to God and His unmistakable presence. When the Jews questioned Jesus' claims about Himself, Jesus answered them: "Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58)

Before He was betrayed, He told His disciples, ““I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am.” (John 13:9)

The death and resurrection of Christ have happened as He predicted. Do you believe that He is the “I am who I am”?

2. Christ has the Power that He Claimed to Have!

It is the resurrection of Jesus that promises us eternal life. He says in John 10:17-18, “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Christ died for us willingly, in obedience to the Father. On the Cross, He voluntarily yielded up His Spirit with the utterance, “It is finished!” (John 19:30) – a clear acknowledgement of completion of God’s plan for Him.

Three days after laying down His life, He took it up again – with His victorious resurrection.

3. Our hope in the resurrection of Christ

Easter confirms Christ is who He says He is; He has the power to do what He claims He will do; and He keeps the promises that He makes! When we drink from the cup in the Eucharist (Holy Communion), we are receiving the promise of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. (Mt 26:28)

Christ has promised His presence with us. All who believe are assured of His presence in the Person of the Holy Spirit not just in the present time, or in the visible horizon, but extending “to the very end of the age,” (Mt 28:20) which will be marked by His return.

For now, Christ has gone to prepare a place for us in the Father’s house. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:3)

“The resurrection reminds you that God’s love is eternal, God has a purpose for your life, and that death is not the end. There is an eternal hope waiting for you in heaven!” – Pastor Rick Warren (author of “The Purpose Driven Life”)

The tomb is empty. He is not here. He has risen! (Mt 28:6)

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice!

Rev Anthony Loh

Prayer pointers – April 2023

Goshen Bridges

Pray that more JCCians will rise up in engaging the community. As we sow the gospel seeds, we have hope to reap the harvest.

“Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.” (2 Cor 9:10)

David & Goliath Preschool

We thank God for blessing us with talented people to anchor a good learning environment for the little children. Continue to pray for wisdom and strength for the principal, teachers and volunteers as they carry out their duties of leading and guiding the children.

Cell Group Life

“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” (Prov 27:17)

May we keep the fire of fellowship burning in our Cell Group Life. Pray that more JCCians will join the Cell Groups where “we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Heb 10:24-25)

Good Friday Service & Easter Evangelistic Sunday

On these special days, may our invited guests experience the love of God and may the gospel touch their hearts. Pray that as JCCians go out to invite their friends, they will have a good response.

TGNC IS MOVING TO BLC

Thai Good News Centre (TGNC) held its worship service for the last time at the Golden Mile Complex on 19th March 2023.

With the impending redevelopment of the building at Beach Road where TGNC has called its home since 1989, our ministry serving the Thais in Singapore will be temporarily relocated to Bedok Lutheran Church (BLC).

We thank God for His gracious sustenance of the TGNC through the decades, and trust that our Lord Jesus Christ will continue to bless His faithful servants for the harvest through the mission to the Thais in Singapore.

We pray also for blessings of a new and stable home for the TGNC.



U is for...

University of Wittenberg

"I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens."
(Ecclesiastes 1:13)



Seal of the University of Wittenberg. The man depicted is Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony. The Latin reads "The University of Wittenberg began teaching under my protection in 1502". Wikimedia Commons.

What was the University of Wittenberg?

The University of Wittenberg was a university in Saxony, Germany. It is most famous for being the workplace and residence of Martin Luther in

the early days of the Reformation. The University was later merged with the University of Halle and is today known as the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg. The University of Wittenberg was a significant location for many important developments in the Reformation.

The University in the White Mountain

Wittenberg (*White Mountain*) was an important trade centre because of its central location in Germany. It also became an important regional political and cultural centre at the end of the 1400s, when Frederick III "the Wise", Elector of Saxony from 1486-1525, made his residence there.



Portrait of Frederick III, Elector of Saxony (c. 1531). Wikimedia Commons

In 1502, Elector Frederick founded the University of Wittenberg to train lawyers, theologians, and physicians for the service of Saxony. This was to build on the momentum of the Renaissance – a period of advances in art, literature, the sciences, mathematics, and culture across Europe.

Prominent academics were recruited for the new university, who gave the institution the Greek name *Leucorea* (Wittenberg in Greek). The university was also aligned with the existing universities in Germany in terms of content and structure; the Faculty of Philosophy laid the foundation on which the Faculties of Law, Medicine, and Theology were built. [Author's note: That's why PhD is short for Doctor of Philosophy]

Martin Matriculates

The first Dean of the Faculty of Theology was Johann von Staupitz, Vicar General of the Augustinian Friars in Germany and the Father Confessor of Martin Luther during his years as an Augustinian monk.

Luther chose to forsake his legal studies and joined the Augustinian Order after his experience in the thunderstorm ("Help me St Anne, I will become a monk!"), devoting himself to fasting, prayer, and frequent confession. Luther would confess his sins to Johann von Staupitz for hours on end, frustrating the latter. Von Staupitz concluded that Luther needed more work to distract him from excessive introspection and ordered him to pursue an academic career.

After his ordination in 1507, Luther began teaching theology at the University of Wittenberg in 1508 and was awarded his Doctor of Theology in 1512 [Author's note: That's why Luther is referred to as "Dr Luther" in some sources]. Luther eventually succeeded von Staupitz as Chair of Theology and would spend the rest of his career in this position at the university.

The Doctor is in the House

Luther lived on campus, in an Augustinian cloister. It was during his time living here that Luther wrote his *Ninety-Five Theses*. He continued to live in Wittenberg even after the Reformation first started in 1517, until he was temporarily hidden by Elector Frederick at Wartburg Castle after the Diet of Worms in 1521. Luther only returned to Wittenberg in 1524 after the university was partially abandoned amidst a mass peasant revolt stemming from the Reformation.

The Electorate of Saxony granted Luther residence in the now-empty cloister, where he subsequently raised his family, taught students, and revised his translation of the Bible which he started at Wartburg Castle. He continued to live here for most of his adult life. The building was sold back to the university in 1564 after Luther's death and is known today as the Lutherhaus.

Philip Melanchthon, the other great reformer and shaper of Lutheranism, also held a faculty position at Wittenberg. He was initially appointed professor of Greek in 1518 upon Luther's invitation, later transferring to the Faculty of Theology.



Lutherhaus building today. Photo by "Marcus Singer", Wikimedia Commons

Merger

About a century later, another university was founded in 1694 in Halle, 60km away from Wittenberg. This university was also founded by an Elector Frederick, this time Frederick III, Elector of Brandenburg, who later became King in Prussia in 1701.

By this time, Halle had become Prussia's centre for Pietism – a Lutheran movement that combined emphasis on Biblical doctrine with individual piety and holy living. Ironically, its university was a centre of the German Enlightenment – rationalism was prioritised over religious orthodoxy, lectures were held in German rather than Latin, undermining the hitherto unquestioned superiority of aristocracy and theology. [Author's note: Much can be said

about the "damage" done by 18th and 19th century German scholars to the Church, not least the promotion of textual criticism of the Bible which undermined belief in its inerrancy, however this requires an entire article on its own.]

After the Napoleonic Wars, Wittenberg was granted to Prussia in 1815, and the University of Wittenberg was merged with the University of Halle in 1817. The merged university was given present name in 1933, to commemorate the 450th anniversary of Luther's birth.

Today, the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg's main campus is in Halle, while the *Leucorea Foundation* in Wittenberg serves as its convention centre.

"To wi (be) or not to wi (be)" – Wittenberg U in Popular Culture

The University of Wittenberg counts several famous fictional characters as alumni, such as Prince Hamlet (from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*) and Doctor Faustus (from Christopher Marlowe's *Faustus*).



Leucorea building today. Photo by "A.Savin", Wikimedia Commons

Conclusion

The University of Wittenberg was a centre of the Protestant Reformation, being literally where Luther lived and developed his ideas, which were then furthered by Melanchthon who also taught at Wittenberg. European universities in general show how the same institution can follow the trend of initially promoting religious thinking and orthodoxy (be it Catholic or Protestant), only to subsequently challenge the Church and faith altogether (e.g. Protestant Reformation, Enlightenment).

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

Further Reading

[Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg](#)

SELECTIVE HEARING OF BIBLE VERSES

Martin Cheah

Jesus said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel...” (Mark 16:15)

Most of us hear the first part and then we travel all over the world on holiday but we fail to preach the gospel. Worse yet, if we make ourselves poor witnesses for Christ by our offensive conduct overseas.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. (Matthew 6:12)

Usually we find it so easy to ask God to forgive us our trespasses but almost impossible to forgive those who have stepped on our toes.

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (Luke 6:38)

In this case, we hear the second part of the statement. We expect to receive until overflowing but we miss out on the first word – Give.

You cannot serve both God and money. Therefore I tell you, **do not worry about your life**, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? (Matthew 6:24b-25)

We always imagine that God tells us not to worry about our life because we are more important to Him than the birds. However we forget the “Therefore” which tells us that we cannot serve both God and money. So, while we are serving money, we will constantly be worried as the banks keep collapsing.

Of course, there are many, many more verses which people use selective listening that leads to erroneous understanding. Maybe you would like to share some with us on The Winepress Blog.

Interpreting Dreams

Do you dream every time you sleep? There is a Chinese saying, 日有所思, 夜有所梦, *which means that your dreams at night reflect your thoughts during the day. This implies that the basis of our dreams is our own thoughts.* According to scientists, everyone dreams numerous times each night.

In most people's experience, dreams have quite a variety of types over which we have no control: plain and unexciting, terrifying nightmares, fantastic, lucid or vivid dreams, etc. You may even have experienced dreams within a dream. No matter what type, whether you deem it ordinary or extraordinary, simple or complicated, the dream always seems real until you wake up to the realisation that it is but a dream. Do you then let it pass or do you dwell on it to strive for an interpretation?

Many beliefs about dreams lend themselves to fervent efforts to seek interpretations. "Explanations" are devised for the panoramas, things, animals, symbols, numbers, colours, incidents and every "interesting element" in the dream episodes. It can be dangerous when what is a normal dream without any significance to it other than being the natural functioning of our physiology becomes a source of harmful tension because of some gratuitous divinity.

MILLION-DOLLAR QUESTION: Should Christians learn to interpret dreams, since the Bible is replete with examples of dreams being an important means that God used to communicate with man?

In Gen 37-50, Joseph was a great interpreter of dreams who was greatly blessed. In the NT, God also gave instructions to man through dreams. (Mt 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22; 27:19)

While we can cite many more cases in the Bible to show the abilities of man to interpret dreams, it must be noted that the dreamer himself is not necessarily the person who understands his dream; and the person who does the interpretation is also not just any average person but someone whom God chooses to reveal His mysteries.

For example, when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was troubled by his dream, he was not able to interpret the dream himself. When the king inquired of Daniel, the latter replied, *"No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries."* (Dan 2:26-28)

So, while we may not deny that man may be spiritually enabled to interpret dreams, we should not suggest that any Christian should relish chasing after curiosity to acquire that ability. It is not a matter of learning for anyone, but of God's appointment. (Dan 2:47) God chooses whom He favours for the appropriate role. (1 Cor 2:8-10)

Deu 13:1-5 warns us against the "dreamer of dreams" – the term used in KJV describing someone who falsely claims to have received a word or vision from God. We are in the last days, and Christians are frequently warned about false prophets, including fake interpreters of dreams and purveyors of their diabolical schemes.

Presently, it is possible that God, by His sovereign will, still guides some people by their dreams under special circumstances. Nevertheless, the Bible does tell us that a time comes when prophecies will cease. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. (1 Cor 13:8-10) Yet, even when grass withers and the flowers fall, the Word of the Lord endures forever. (1 Pet 1:24b-25)

So, is focusing on dreams and prophecies more important or focusing on the Word of God?

Martin Luther said, "One must rest wholly on the Word alone and shut out everything from eyes and senses, because when the Word is lost, God is lost."

ANSWER TO MILLION-DOLLAR QUESTION: With God's Word and the Holy Spirit guiding us into all truth, it is not quite needed for most Christians to have the ability to interpret dreams; and, for the few members of His church to have the gift of prophecy or for interpreting dreams, the gift is a blessing by His grace and only for a time before it ceases. It is not an acquisition by an earnest desire to learn. Misguided "interpreters" or "interpretations" can be dangerous.

YOUR VIEW: If you have a different view, please feel free to share.

John Lee

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Martin Cheah

Recently I came across an article that the US Moon Landing in July 1969 was fake and the videos of it were created by the famous Stanley Kubrick (director of "2001-A Space Odyssey"). There were many seemingly valid points brought up by the conspiracy theorists as to why the videos were actually taken in a film studio instead of on the moon itself.

To counter their arguments, someone wrote that for the videos to be fake, there would be a large number of people involved that needed to be kept quiet. The list would include the US president, high ranking US government officials, the astronauts themselves, all the workers and engineers in NASA, Stanley Kubrick and the film and studio crew.

There is similarity between this conspiracy theory and the one that claims actually Jesus didn't die on the cross.

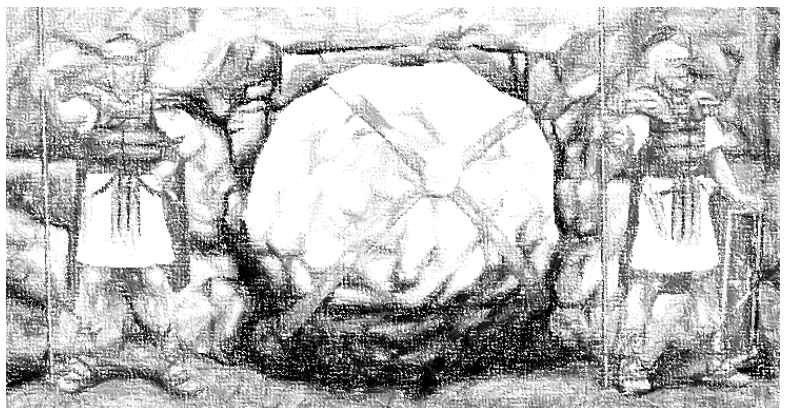
One theory was that Jesus was given some drugs on the cross to fake his death and later to be revived by his disciples. (Matthew 27:34).

With a detachment of soldiers guarding the tomb, this is a very unlikely scenario. How could the disciples get past the guards?

Another theory was that they don't know which is the actual tomb of Jesus and so they mistook an empty tomb as that of Jesus'.

Matthew 27:62-66

⁶² The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."



⁶⁵ "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Matthew 28:12-13

¹²*And after the chief priests had met with the elders and formed a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money ¹³and instructed them: "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.'*

The fact that the Pharisees posted a guard at the tomb and later claimed that the disciples came and stole the body away clearly meant that the tomb of Jesus was well known at that time. To quash any rumours that Jesus was alive, the Pharisees only needed to produce the body of Jesus which they could not.

Other theories include that it was not Jesus on the cross but someone else.

Certainly, the death and resurrection of Jesus is of prime importance for Christians because "... *the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" (Mark 10:45)

And Apostle Paul puts it this way: "*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.*" (1 Corinthians 15:17)

So for the theories that Jesus did not die and later rose to life, we have to look at the changed lives of the disciples. At his death, they all fled for their lives. But when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples were greatly empowered and went out sharing the good news at the risk of beatings and eventually death for many of them. Would anyone choose to die for a lie?

In Acts 5:38-39, Gamaliel, a teacher of the law warned the Sanhedrin:

³⁸ *Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.*"

Approximately 2.38 billion people practice some form of Christianity globally. This means that about one-third of the world's total population is Christian. This itself should be indicative that the conspiracy theories about Jesus' death and resurrection are not sound.

Would you then like to consider the case for Christ instead of listening to conspiracy theories that are only suppositions?

WHAT'S HAPPENING

MARCH 22 – RECEIVING AN AWARD FROM MSF

Life Shine Community Services received an appreciation from the Ministry of Social & Family development for the work done in VIC (Vulnerable In Community).



MARCH 21 – RECEIVING FOOD SUPPLIES FROM FOOD BANK

A lorry load of food stuff arrived for JCC Goshen Bridge project.



MARCH 19 – REACHING THE COMMUNITY WITH URBAN FARMING

JCC had a display in the CC to attract the neighbourhood for our Urban Farming project.



MARCH 19 – TRAINING SESSION FOR MANNA BRIDGE

About 40 persons attended a course conducted by Wen Wei and Jinfay on how to outreach the neighbourhood through the Manna Bridge.



MARCH 19 – SELECTION OF BATIK SHIRT & DAY 2 ACTIVITY FOR RETREAT 2023

The Retreat 2023 committee were on hand to help those going for the retreat in June to select their Batik shirt size and color and also to select their preferred activity on Day 2 of the retreat, whether a Jungle Walk or a splashing time in a Waterpark. For those ready to pay, there are facilities to receive their payment through PayNow.

FEB 25 – PRAYER AND PRAISE

A night of transformation when many young people joined in the Prayer meeting and were prayed over by the prayer intercessors.



MAR 25 – PRAYER AND PRAISE

The growth in numbers coming for Prayer and Praise continued in March. Praise the Lord for raising up so many prayer warriors.



CHURCH ACTIVITIES

RETREAT 2023

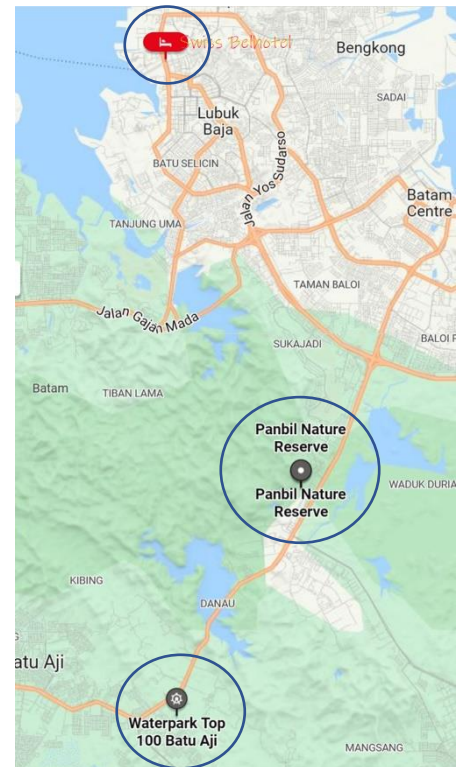
BE ONE, MAKE ONE, AS ONE

Martin Cheah

Sitting in the Retreat 2023 committee as the Treasurer, I take note of the good mix of people who are signing up for the retreat at Batam from 8 to 10 June. For instance, the ratio of Male to Female participants are 49% males to 51% females. There are 21 children below 11 years old, 19 youths from 12 to 24 years old, 119 adults from 25 to 69 years old and 11 elders above 70 years old.



Out of the 170 participants, 121 are from one of the Adult, Young Adult or Pulse cell groups. So there should already be a high percentage of close bonding and hopefully this closeness will attract the 28 non-CG participants to want to join a cell group, thereby achieving the theme of the retreat to Be One, Make One and As One.



On the 2nd day of the retreat, there will be two main attractions, the Panbil Nature Reserve and the Waterpark TOP 100 Batu Aji, which the participants can only choose one.



These 2 attractions are quite a distance from the hotel (about 45 minutes travel). 95 persons chose to go for the 2 hours walk in the Nature Reserve and 49 persons decided to go for a dip in the Waterpark. The rest chose neither of these 2 activities as they probably have their own plans for a free-and-easy time.

Unique to this retreat is the Batik shirt. Some may find it doesn't fit their wardrobe but I believe that the majority will find it a convenient wear for a smart-casual look on many family or social occasions.

The Winepress team and the Intercessors will be at the retreat. One to make a report with photos/videos of the whole event and the other group to pray for protection and a great revival.

However you look at this year's Church Retreat, it will be the One.

Quieten your heart

Bryan Tay

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. -- Psalm 139:23 (NIV)



We live in a restless world. The daily issues of life can bog us down and negatively affect our physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. We are affected by what we see, what we hear and what we read. We may not even be aware that unwelcome thoughts and feelings are building up within us. We do not live only in the physical realm, but also in the spiritual realm where spiritual battles are waged, whether we know it or not. Amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life, we need to discern the root cause of issues, whether they are physical or spiritual.

As such, it is important for us to have moments of retreat to quieten our hearts to nestle in God's presence. When we are ready to listen, He is always ready to speak. Such quiet moments will help us to discover God, discover ourselves,

discern the root cause of issues and take appropriate courses of action as the Holy Spirit leads.

What does God say about this?

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

Psalm 4:4 (NIV)

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Psalm 37:7 (NIV)

What does this mean for practical living?

We are surrounded by too much noise and pressing concerns from different quarters in our daily life. To manage that, we attempt to prioritise our life activities in daily living. We know that everything seems important but not everything is urgent. We plan and take actions to acquire resources and execute our planned tasks. As Christians, we are asked to live wisely and make the most of every opportunity. We cannot do that with a clouded mind and a crowded heart.

Before all else, we should sit in God's presence, be still and quieten our hearts. Before we make any plans to achieve our goals or respond to any situation, we ought to consider: "*What do you say, Lord? What is your will concerning this matter?*" When we do that and commit our plans to Him and trust Him to act, He will grant us His perfect peace from above. Receiving His perfect peace is a good test for any situation after you have made your decision or response in any given situation.

Reflect and respond to God's Word

- Do you give priority to quietening yourself daily before God to listen to Him? Why?
- We live in the physical and spiritual realms. How does this affect the way we handle daily life situations and issues?
- Identify a suitable period of the day to quieten your heart and spirit so that you can listen to God. Be sure to protect that period daily and observe how it has helped you to draw closer to Him.

MAY 2023



Jesus' Ascension and Pentecost

Pastor Anthony Loh

Give Thanks

April was an event-filled month. During the Holy Week, we observed Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter – remembering Jesus' last days with His disciples, His death and resurrection.

In the month, we were also kept busy with the Enrolment Service of the Boys' Brigade 28th Company from Yuhua Secondary School and Shuqun Primary School on 16th April, followed by the Enrolment Service of the Girls' Brigade 51st Company from Shuqun Primary School on 30th April. It was our pleasure to welcome the principals and teachers from the schools, and also the parents of the boys and girls joining us on the special occasions.

April was also exciting for us to welcome 18 brothers and sisters to the big JCC family through baptism and transfers.

Everything good is because of God's grace and favour.

We give thanks to God who is always leading us through Jesus Christ.

Important Dates in May

In May, we have two key dates to mark on our calendar. On 18th May 2023, we commemorate the Ascension of Jesus to Heaven and on 28th May 2023 (Pentecost Sunday), we remember the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Jerusalem church on the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection.

The Ascension

The Ascension is clearly expressed in the Apostles' Creed in the article that says, *"He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty."*

What is the significance of the Ascension? Let's look at what happened before and after:

Before the Ascension, Jesus said to His disciples, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."* (Mk 16:15)

"After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God." (Mk 16:19)

"Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it." (Mk 16:20)

Therefore, when we commemorate the Ascension, we recall the Great Commission that the Lord gave His disciples, and we learn to emulate the disciples' obedience. The Ascension reminds us that we need to go out and preach the gospel everywhere.

Pentecost Sunday

On Maundy Thursday (at the Last Supper) Jesus let on that He would be leaving His disciples. However, He gave them a clear promise that He would send them the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17) They were to wait in Jerusalem for the fulfillment of this promise. (Acts 1:4)

So, as promised, when the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after Jesus' Ascension, the Holy Spirit came upon them as a "power from on high" and transformed the fearful disciples into fearless witnesses. (Acts 2)

“The Holy Spirit took that motley collection of disciples who had followed Jesus for as long as three years and turned them into a unified body. It is the Holy Spirit, sent to us at Pentecost, that draws us into the body of Christ.” – Ed Jarett in Christianity.com

We too can avail ourselves of the Holy Spirit empowerment to transform our life and witnessing – working as ONE in the body of Christ. (1 Cor 6:19)

Jesus will return again

During the Ascension of Jesus, the angels (‘two men dressed in white’) attested that this same Jesus who has been taken into heaven will come back in the same way. (Acts 1:10-11)

When He returns to establish His reign, no one can miss Him. (Rev 1:7)

Will we be ready to meet Him like the five wise virgins? (Mt 25:1-13)

Prayer Focus For May

a) Revival of JCC

- The Holy Spirit to guide the leadership of JCC to advance in the Lord's service.
- Boldness for the Care Group Leaders and the Core Team in tending to the life, growth and health of the cell group ministry.
- Empowerment for every JCCian to live the Spirit-filled life.
- Goshen Initiative to make a deeper impact on the community.

b) AGM 2023

- Praise God for His blessings in 2022 and pray for His continuing divine direction for 2023.
- May God's will be manifested in the election of the new Council. May the Councilmen be blessed to serve with wisdom and boldness for the advancement of His Kingdom.

c) David & Goliath Preschool (DGP)

- Enable and empower the principal and teachers to continue their progress in reaching out to the children and parents with Christian love.
- Pray for the provision of new staff to meet DGP's growing needs. Pray that God will send the right people who feel His calling to join the DGP as teachers and volunteer assistants.

d) JCC Retreat 2023

- Wisdom for the retreat speaker, Mr. Yap KM, to minister strongly to the retreat participants.
- A God-seeking heart in every retreat participant.
- Lives to be transformed.
- Strengthening the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Eph 4:3)

V is for...

VeggieTales

"Daniel then said to the guard... 'Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.'" (Daniel 1:11-12)

Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber. VeggieTales Facebook page.

What is VeggieTales

VeggieTales is an American Christian cartoon series featuring fruit and vegetable characters retelling Christian stories from the Bible, with the overall aim of conveying Christian moral themes and teaching Biblical values and lessons for a child-based audience. Since its inception in 1993, the series has grown to become the most successful Christian children's franchise of all time, spanning CD episodes, movies, books, stage productions, and video games.


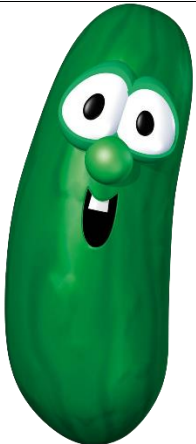



The Seeds of VeggieTales

VeggieTales was created by Phil Vischer and Mike Nawrocki through the production company Big Idea Entertainment. Due to the technological limitations of the time, Vischer opted to avoid the technical hurdle of designing characters with arms, legs, hair and clothes. While the initial animation model was a candy bar, Vischer's wife suggested designing characters based on fruits and vegetables to promote healthier eating habits. The show was first released in December 1993 in the direct-to-video market.

A Cornucopia of Characters

Vischer and Nawrocki, together with some friends voice the *VeggieTales* cast of over 50 characters. Prominent recurring ones include:

	Bob the Tomato. A friendly but slightly high-strung tomato and host of the show. Alongside his best friend Larry the Cucumber, the pair introduce and wrap-up almost every episode and respond to viewer mail. Bob plays the "straight man" character and often serves as the narrator of the teleplays.
	Larry the Cucumber. A silly cucumber, Bob the Tomato's best friend and co-host of the show. Larry has a quirky, child-like personality to complement the more mature Bob. Sometimes, Larry faces similar struggles to the kids who send in fan mail and ends up learning the episode's lesson alongside the viewer.
	Junior Asparagus. A courteous little asparagus and co-star of the show. Junior is effectively a five-year-old boy who is generally good-hearted but can let his curiosity get him into trouble. His trademark is a yellow baseball cap. Junior plays a lead role in several episodes.



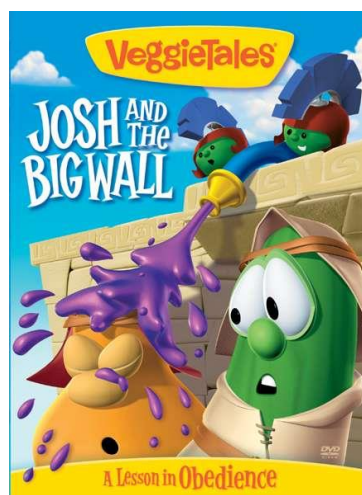
"Allow us to introduce ourselves"

The Scallions. A trio of devious scallions who often serve as show antagonists (e.g. the administrators/satrapes against Daniel), having appeared as bandits, swindlers, dishonest salesmen etc. They have no names but are distinguished by their appearances.

Moral tales and off-beat humour – A typical *VeggieTales* Episode

Each *VeggieTales* episode generally starts by presenting a moral issue in the opening countertop sequence, either through a viewer question or an issue brought up by Bob or Larry. Usually this is followed by one or more short segments that address the issue, either through the retelling of a Bible story, a fictional story, or combining both – retelling Bible stories in a different fictional setting. These teleplays (often featuring musical numbers) are performed by the various vegetables and fruits that live together on the kitchen countertop. Examples include:

Episode	Moral Issue	Story
"Are You My Neighbor?"	Loving your enemies	Adaptation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), within a "Tale of Two (warring) Cities". The kind act from a supposed enemy eventually ends the inter-city conflict.
"Josh and the Big Wall!"	Doing things God's way instead of our way, even when it doesn't make sense	Adaptation of the Battle of Jericho (Joshua 6), just that the defenders of Jericho use slushies. Despite some wanting to destroy Jericho with a giant rocket and others wanting to go back to Egypt, the Israelites continue with God's plan and emerge victorious.
"Madame Blueberry"	Materialism vs Being grateful with what God gives you	Fictional story of a rich lady who buys more and more material possessions but ends up losing everything. She eventually realises the importance of contentment and being thankful for what she has.



DVD cover for "Josh and the Big Wall", featuring the defenders of Jericho and their slushy attack.
Veggietales.com

Silly Songs with Larry

A highlight of the show for children is the middle segment – *Silly Songs with Larry* – the part of the show where Larry comes out and sings a silly song. Bearing no relation to the episode’s topic whatsoever, *Silly Songs* presents lighthearted musical and comedic entertainment for kids, although they often include (clean) jokes/references that only adults understand (e.g. slamming the door on the taxman).

Silly Song	Theme
<i>The Song of the Cebu</i>	Larry sings about a boy and his three “Cebu” (cow-like animals) in a canoe, who must navigate both natural hazards and the Cebus’ colourful personalities.
<i>His Cheeseburger</i>	A special edition sung by Mr Lunt (a gourd) instead of Larry, declaring a passionate love for a cheeseburger.
<i>The Pirates Who Don’t Do Anything</i>	Three pirates sing about the things they have <i>never</i> done (which includes “going to Boston in the Fall”). The last pirate (Larry) has apparently never done many ridiculous, non-piratey things.



*Title card for “Silly Songs with Larry – The Song of the Cebu”.
VeggieTales Wiki.*

At the end of each episode, Bob and Larry talk about what was learnt (triggering a short song that increasingly annoys Bob) before reading a relevant Bible verse from Qwerty, a desktop computer. The pair then say the programme’s signature sign-off: “Remember kids, God made you special, and He loves you very much” – reassuring viewers about their Creator.

Award Winning Vegetables

VeggieTales has been nominated for several awards, including three Emmys. As of 2019, the franchise had sold 75 million videos (VHS, DVD, Blu-Ray), 16 million books, 7 million music albums, and 235 million music streams.

The show enjoys a cult-following among Evangelical Christian young adults, probably due to them having watched it as children. Creator Phil Vischer would claim that “one-third of American homes owned a *VeggieTales* video by the year 2000”.

Going Vegetarian?

VeggieTales was a Christian cultural icon at the turn of the millennium. Like Fred Rogers (Mr Rogers) before it, *VeggieTales* was a ministry that spoke directly to home audiences in America and abroad. A generation of children grew up learning from *VeggieTales* (including the author, who has memorised many musical numbers and silly songs). Like Daniel and his three friends who remained faithful to God on a diet of vegetables and water (Daniel 1:11-20), perhaps children and adults alike can grow spiritually on a diet of *VeggieTales*.

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

Author’s Recommendation

Like *Mr Roger’s Neighborhood*, the author also recommends parents to show episodes of *VeggieTales* to young children, to help them learn godly values applicable to everyday dilemmas. Episodes can be found on YouTube.

Furthermore, the series is notable for its colourful 3D animation, musical numbers, and most of all, wit and humour. In the author’s opinion, while children often get a good laugh out of the show, they also walk away imbibing the show’s lessons and values.

Further Reading

[VeggieTales](#)

WHAT'S HAPPENING

FAMILY DAY AT JURONG LAKE GARDENS

1st May 2023

As someone who is (relatively) new to JCC, I was quite interested to hear of a 'Family Day' event. My cell members told me it would be a great opportunity to mingle with the bigger JCC family and get to know others. It did not disappoint.

On Monday, 1st May 2023, over 70 church members of all ages gathered excitedly in MPH 5 for games and kite painting. We then took a stroll to Jurong Lake Gardens for a picnic. Everyone was upbeat and the only Monday Blues in sight were the clear blue skies.

The activities gave me the opportunity to speak with a few people I had never met before. I was also glad to spend some extended time with my cell group and other church members.

Florence Tang

Being part of the JCC family for the last 35 years, I have joined and enjoyed many Family Days, Retreats and Outreach events. In my external HDD, I have about 1TB of photos and videos of such memories.

This year's Family Day is good like all the previous ones and we have a new Jurong Lake Gardens to play in. What impressed me most was that the little girl my wife taught in Sunday School had grown up and was leading the whole event.

It was a fine day. Enjoying the warm sunshine, I did not see any need to apply sunblock. When I arrived in JCC at 9 am, I had a pale face and by lunch time in the park, someone commented that I had red skin. The next morning when I looked into the mirror, I was sunburned.

Was I missing something – singing of worship/ fellowship songs and thanksgiving for the lunch? I could have missed these because I did not come in from the start and I did not stay to the end. Still, it was a delightful Family Day with wholesome and enjoyable activities for all. Kudos to the organizers!

Martin Cheah

My sister and I enjoyed the Family Day on Labour Day! We had a great time enjoying the activities and building bonds with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Doreen Chow

The games that we played in MPH were very family friendly and suitable for all ages. I had a good time bonding with the rest of the JCC family. A big THANK YOU to the committee for the effort in organizing the event and ensuring that all of us had such fun!

Jie Min

Wonderful to see both young and old in the church playing games together and getting to know one another's name! So much fun and laughter! During lunch, got to know people whom we see in church every Sunday but never had an opportunity to chat with them.

Ewe Ewe and Soon Eong

Enjoy this series of photos and video by our JCC photographers and videographers.





Kudos to the organising committee for planning a great outing for all of us!

23rd April 2023

Baptisms & Transfers

A record number of candidates were baptized and transferred on the 3rd Sunday of Easter 2023. There was a whole family baptized, young people baptized and even an elderly couple transferred membership to JCC.

Baptisms

Christan Mani, Christine Lea Christan, Asher Ritesh Christan, Tabitha Reva Christan, Zack Ritheesh Christan, Zayn Rikesh Christan, Fong Soon Wei, Jean Loke Kit Foon, Germaine Koh Shao Yi, Ao Yang.

Alicia Tee Jing Yee was baptised on 22nd April in the hospital. We rejoice with her, such a strong lady, who put her trust in the Lord. She has been faithfully joining our Sunday Service via live stream and also Christal CG via zoom. She has been in the hospital for the last 2 years with a health condition.

Transfers

John Wong Heng Joon, Sebastian; Jebaraj, Vasantha, Patricia Lau Ai Leng, Gary Tan Meng Gee, Lim Wei Kent





May you all trust in the Lord with all your hearts and may the Lord make all your paths straight.



9th April 2023

BADMINTON CHALLENGE



A friendly badminton match between JCC and NLBC on Easter Sunday in MPH1 resulted in us winning more friendships. All the participants in the 5 games played were given a medal for participating.



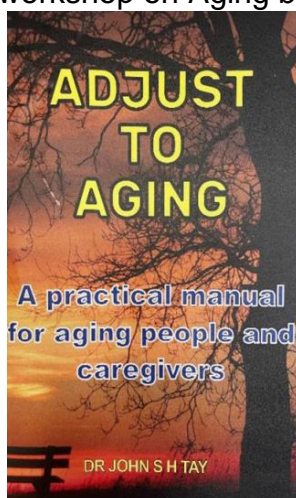
23rd April 2023

SEMINAR ON “ADJUST TO AGING”

More than 20 people attended a workshop on Aging by Dr John Tay in MPH1. They wanted to learn how to live a purpose driven life and how to be a good caregiver for seniors.

As we grow older, these 4 scenarios will occur:

- People around you will decrease in number
- Your status in life will be forgotten
- You might have illness and ailments
- You might return to infant state being looked after by others, probably not by loved ones.



Dr Tay's book Adjust to Aging gives 10 profound life principles in living a full life and aging gracefully:

1. Walk with God
2. Live one day at a time
3. Be thankful and grateful
4. Slow down
5. Learn new things

6. Be conscientious
7. Eat appropriately
8. Exercise
9. Watch your health
10. Socialise

9th April 2023

BAPTISM IN DIALECT SERVICE



Three persons were baptized on Easter Sunday by Rev John Tan during the Dialect service. They were Low Boon Chong, Wong Khan Foo and Tiew Ah Hua.

On 5th April, Uncle Wong invited Deacon Nathan to go to his house to remove their idols. Deacon Nathan was accompanied by Wong Mui, Beng Lay and Peggy to do the IRS (Idol Removal Service).



Uncle Low's sister was ecstatic that her brother is finally baptized. A large number of family members turned up for the ceremony. Uncle Low sponsored 80 bento sets for the Dialect Service refreshment.

There were spiritual battles before the baptism.

Weeks before Uncle Low's baptism, he has had several accidents and health issues. On the eve of the baptism, our brother Cassidy (worship leader for that day) was admitted to hospital. Peter Cheong had to replace him.

Praise the Lord, everything went smoothly.

Dialect Ministry also celebrated its 15th Anniversary and here is a short video clip:

<https://youtu.be/Ojq5sTjwzxU>

21st April 2023

COMBINED CHINESE & ENGLISH PRAYER & PRAISE

Led by Rev Terry Kee and Rev Anthony Loh, a large group of members from both sections came together to pray for the church, for salvation of the people of Taman Jurong, for blessings for Singapore and for Israel.



"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)



30th April 2023

GIRLS' BRIGADE ENROLMENT 2023

Girls' Brigade 51st Company (Shuqun Primary School)

Yap Xiu Zhen (Captain of 51st GB Coy)



We are delighted to have successfully held our Annual Enrolment in the church recently, welcoming all the girls and parents.

The Girls' Brigade Ministry faces several uncertainties in 2023. As the Ministry of Education transitions to a 5-day work week for

teachers, we are confronted with the critical decision of whether the GB should continue as a Saturday CCA. If we were to switch to a Friday CCA, the officers (mainly from JCC) would be unable to commit to the allocated time, rendering the ministry impossible to sustain. Additionally, we are experiencing a shortage of manpower as our officers are also being called to serve in other ministries.

However, God has always been faithful. I pray that God will provide a way for us to overcome these challenges.

This year, we have successfully enrolled six new recruits, all of whom chose The Girls' Brigade as their top preference. God has also graciously blessed our current girls with enthusiasm, curiosity, and a heart to serve one another. Furthermore, I am grateful for two teachers who, despite being new, serve in The Girls' Brigade with immense pride.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my officers who have been supporting me behind the scenes as I continue to serve in other ministries. Last year, we welcomed a new volunteer, Naomi Soh, an ex-GB/Shuqunite. I am excited to serve alongside her as her captain and witness the growth of the once young girl from PULSE into the remarkable woman she is today. Her younger sister, Neri Soh, has also been assisting us as an alumna for one year. As an older peer, she is greatly admired by her juniors, who eagerly look forward to seeing her every week.

Last but not least, we have been blessed with a church that is always there for us. I am sincerely thankful for the church's support, both spiritual and practical. The love and care from JCCians is a source of continuous motivation to me and my officers to keep going no matter what challenges we face.

From the depths of my heart, I express my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to The Girls' Brigade ministry over the years. Your contributions, big or small, have made a real difference in the lives of young girls. I eagerly anticipate what God has in store for The Girls' Brigade in 2023.

God Bless!



Unconditional Love of God? A different perspective

Lim Cheng Teck

An expression that we hear often these days is 'the unconditional love of God'. Some preachers and worship leaders used this expression during worship services, to mean that God loves us, no matter what. However, this is not what the Scriptures say. Without a doubt, God loves us, enough to send his Son to die as a sacrifice for our sins, but it would appear that the above expression is often taken out of context. Let me explain.

God's love must be seen in the light of the need for our repentance to restore our relationship with our Creator. God's love for us must not be used as an excuse for continuing to sin.

Repentance means to stop doing that which is against God's will. John the Baptist preached a message of repentance. (Luke 3:3) Jesus himself said, "but unless you repent, you too will perish." (Luke 13:3) Peter, whom the Lord commanded to take care of His flocks following His ascension, said in Acts 3:19, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out ..." The New Testament and the gospels are full of examples of the need for repentance and belief in God, in order that our relationship with God may be restored. Without repentance, the gap in our relationship with God can never be bridged. God abhors sin. In Genesis 3, following Adam's disobedience, God said, "cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life." Then, He drove both Adam & Eve out of Eden. Henceforth, our relationship with God is broken. Repentance is the only way back to God.

God delivered a very strong message for repentance, through the prophet Amos, to the people of Israel. He said, "I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the music of your harps." (Amos 5:21-23). Strong words indeed, but God demands true repentance of the heart. This is a message of substance over form. Without repentance, there is no reconciliation with God.

God has made the first move, by sacrificing His Son for our sins. Are we 'stiff-necked' like the Israelites who turned away from God on many occasions after He had delivered them from Egypt. The message delivered through Amos is one of many that God has made. The message is abundantly clear, and repeated many times in The Scriptures. The only way to be reconciled with God is to repent.

Unconditional love of God? It is more appropriate to refer to the unfailing love of God, as David cried out in Psalm 51:1-2, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." We must respond similarly to the unfailing love of God, who said, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Unconditional love of God? I think not. It is not scriptural. The Scriptures tell us that we must repent from our sins in order to restore our relationship with God and enjoy His unfailing love.

Life's Disruptions, do we understand?

Martin Cheah



My mother-in-law celebrated her 91st birthday on 12th November 2022. It was a joyous occasion, with all of her family gathered around her. Even her granddaughter from the UK had come back to celebrate. Plans were being made to celebrate Christmas at one of the homes and booking 2 tables in a restaurant to have a CNY Eve family reunion dinner.

Unexpectedly, just two weeks later at 3 a.m. on 30th November 2022, she suddenly fell ill. We received an urgent call from her maid. After frantically calling around and finally finding an ambulance, we took a taxi and rushed down to her house at Kim Tian Road, just in time to meet the ambulance at the lobby.

The ambulance sped her to the hospital emergency room, while we followed in another taxi. At that time in the morning, traffic was light. The hospital initially said that there was no bed in ICU for her but later confirmed that there was indeed a bed available. Her heart specialist arrived very shortly. It was confirmed that she had suffered a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) and she was given medication to treat it. She seemed to respond to the medication and was sitting up after about 2 days in ICU.

Suddenly, her condition worsened and she went into a semi-conscious state. She remained in ICU for 3 months and later moved to a normal ward for about 1 month before we decided to bring her home, where she lived another month. The maid stayed with her in the ICU and managed to learn some of the home care procedures, like tube feeding, changing diapers, providing oxygen and cleaning her. Without the maid, we probably could not have brought her home.

My wife Joo See and I visited her almost every day. Joo See would sing to her some Hokkien worship songs at her ICU bedside, while I hummed along. Some of the nurses were curious about the songs because they could not understand the language but eventually, they realized that we were Christians, as some of them were also.

We prayed for her constantly, both at the hospital and at home. We also anointed her with anointing oil. We struggled, like Habakkuk 1:2a, "How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?"

Out of 150 Psalms, 64 are laments. The emotions of the psalmist resonated with us. "How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" (Psalm 13:1) and "How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smoulder against the prayers of your people?" (Psalm 80:4)



In the beginning we prayed for healing. We believe that God can heal and we hoped that she would recover and be back to normal. However, as time went on and her condition did not improve, we started to pray for God's will to be done. We knew that God loved her, and we trusted that He would take care of her. He had a plan for her life, even if we didn't understand it. We also knew that God loved us, and that He would be with us through this difficult time.

There were times when we felt hopeful. Although she could not talk because of a tracheotomy, she opened her eyes occasionally and moved her hands or legs. We took it as a sign that God was at work to restore her health.

Finally, she passed away at 4 a.m. on 8th May 2023. Grief-stricken, but we know that she is in a better place.

With advice and assistance from her pastor, we managed to book a hall in the Church of the Holy Spirit at Upper Thomson Road to hold the wake services. It was a convenient location with the TEL MRT station just beside it.

The maid's story is the only highlight to this tale. At around 4 am in the morning, she was awakened by a voice calling her name 2 times. She opened her eyes and saw that it was only 4 am and went back to sleep but she heard her name being called again. This time she woke up and went to call on my sister-in-law who was staying with her that particular night. Both of them went to look at my mother-in-law and witness her drawing her last breath and peacefully passing on. We are thankful that my mother-in-law died peacefully.

My mother-in-law's health crisis had been a 5-month disruption to our lives. What is God's purpose in all this? I don't have the answer, perhaps it was to strengthen family ties as we kept meeting each other daily for these 5 months.

In the midst of such a huge disruption, it is easy to lose sight of hope. However, we turn to God's Word for it is the Truth.

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)



JUNE 2023



Pentecost Season – Pray for Church Revival

We are now in the Pentecost Season.

In the book of Acts, we see Jesus' disciples waiting in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised them. But when would it be? The disciples didn't know how long they would have to wait. Meanwhile, they were hiding behind closed doors, fearing that the Roman and Jewish leaders might persecute them.

God had His timing. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit arrived. *“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”* (Acts 2:1-4)

The coming of the Holy Spirit was a powerful event that transformed the disciples. They were no longer afraid to speak about Jesus, and they went out into the streets of Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to all who would listen. As a result, many people were saved and added to the church. (Acts 2:41)

The Pentecost season is a time for us to reflect on the power of the Holy Spirit. He is with the church today. He is present in the life of every Christian. He empowers us to live a holy life, to grow in our faith and to share the gospel with others.

Question 1: Are we experiencing the Holy Spirit?

Henry Blackaby is a well-known author and speaker on Christian topics. In his book “Experiencing God”, Blackaby writes about the realities of experiencing God. These realities include:

- God is always at work and seeking to reveal Himself to us.
- We must be sensitive to God's leading and be willing to step out in faith.
- We must expect God to do great things.
- We must be willing to share with others what God has done.

Question 2: Do we get the above realities into our hearts and act on them positively?

Question 3: Do we see many significant events happening in the world pointing to the urgency to reach more people for Christ?

A man once came to Gipsy Smith, an English evangelist, and asked him how to have revival. Gipsy enquired of him, “Do you have a place where you can pray?”

When the man answered in the affirmative, Gipsy said, “Go to that place, kneel down there, and draw a complete circle all around you with chalk — and pray for God to send revival on everything inside of the circle. Stay there until He answers—and you will have revival.”

This story is a reminder that it is possible for revival to come to our lives, to our families, to our communities, and to the world. But revival comes only when we pray with faith and persistence. Such prayers move the heart of God.

Another story is about five young college students who went to hear the great evangelist Charles Spurgeon preach. While waiting for the doors to open, they were greeted by a man who asked if they would like to see the heating plant of the church. Not wanting to offend the man, the students agreed.

The man took the students down a stairway and opened a door. He whispered, "This is our heating plant." The students were surprised to see about 100 people bowed in prayer, seeking a blessing on the service that was about to begin. The man then introduced himself as Charles Spurgeon.

This story shows us that prayer is the fuel that drives God's blessings. When God's people pray, they release His power into the world. Revival is not just a blessing to wish for; it is something that we bring about through prayer.

So, will revival happen in this Pentecost season in JCC?

Let us pray for a revival of God's Spirit in our hearts. Let us pray for a revival of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let us pray for a revival of evangelism, as we share the good news of Jesus Christ with others.

Prayer is the key to revival. Let us pray and let us believe that God will answer our prayers.

Rev Anthony Loh

Prayer Focus For June

a) Pentecost Season

Pentecost season begins on Sunday 28th May and lasts until November.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower JCCians to be Christ-like and be bold witnesses for Him.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to move powerfully in our Sunday Services (Chinese, English and Dialect) and His anointing be upon our worship team as we enter into the Father's presence with our praises and thanksgiving in Jesus' name.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen our Cell Groups, and raise up intercessors and prayer teams to pray in the Spirit for all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. (Eph 6:18)

b) Post-AGM

We give thanks to God for the AGM 2023 we had in May.

Paul's words in 1 Cor 1:10 are a challenge to us to live in unity with one another and thus be effective witnesses for Christ.

- Pray for unity of JCCians across all language sections (English, Chinese, Dialect) as we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Pray for unity upon the leadership of JCC (Councilmen, HOMs/MLTs, Cell Leaders).

- May the “fear of the LORD” give us encouragement to serve Him faithfully with all our hearts as we consider what great things He has done for us. (1 Sam 12:24)

c) Theme of JCC: Go Deep in Discipleship

- Pray for a deep conviction to live a life of discipleship for all JCCians.
- Pray for faith and boldness to rise up to be disciple-makers.

d) Church Ministries

- Pray for more teachers in the Children’s Ministry.
- The JCCians serving in the Pulse Ministry are mainly young working adults with a commitment to prayer. Let us pray for them too, that despite the busyness of life they will continue to grow their relationship with the Lord.
- For young adults, pray that they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to rise up and serve the Lord in church leadership.
- For all adults, pray that they will be effective mentors to the young ones.
- Pray for all ministries to rise up in harvesting souls through the Goshen Initiatives as well as in the marketplace and schools.

d) Goshen Initiatives

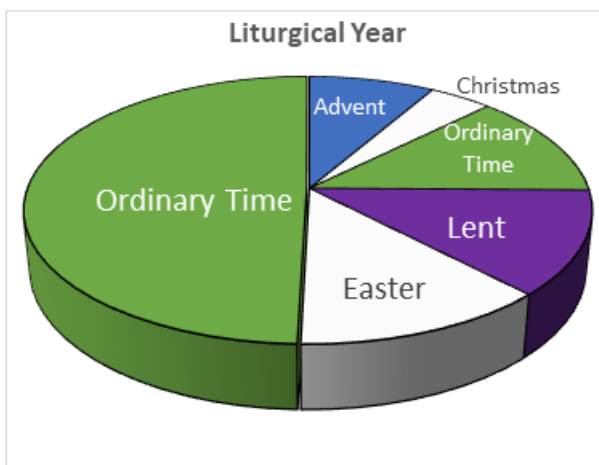
- Pray for open doors to reach out to more families.
- Pray for strengthening of relationships with the community.
- Pray for the gospel to reach every home, the Holy Spirit to convict souls.

Ordinary People in Ordinary Time

People celebrate special days and events throughout the year, such as birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day, Christmas, and Easter. However, ordinary days make up the most of our life. Are they less important? On ordinary days, do we stop expressing our love for those we care about? In fact, we have more opportunities to put our love into practice on ordinary days because such days are many while special days are few.

It is also in ordinary time that major events or blessings emerge in life:

- In the story of Hannah (1 Sam 1-2), God worked in her ordinary time of sadness and infertility to bring about good things, including the birth of her son Samuel.
- In the story of Samuel (1 Sam 3), God spoke to him in his ordinary time, even when he didn't recognize it at first.



In the church liturgical calendar, Ordinary Time takes up a major part of the year, outside of the special seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. While it is right and good for us to observe the special seasons, it is not right or good for us to underestimate the importance of Ordinary Time, the days that occupy most of our life.

We are now in the days after Pentecost, which is a lengthy period of Ordinary Time until Advent arrives on 3rd December 2023. To most people, the term "Ordinary Time" is bland in taste. It does not excite us as the festivities and holiday mood that Christmas and Easter bring, or inspire us as the tongues of fire

on Pentecost. However, God is still at work in Ordinary Time.

Outside of the special seasons, we do not stop reflecting on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. In fact, Ordinary Time gives us more opportunities to put the teachings into practice than we have in the limited number of days of the special seasons.

Many good things happen in the world in Ordinary Time (outside of celebratory seasons) because of ordinary people who are kind, compassionate, honest, trustworthy, hardworking, responsible, creative, innovative, brave, courageous, humble, selfless, grateful, appreciative, hopeful, optimistic, loving, and caring.

In the church, Christ's disciples are called to be "salt and light" of the world (Matthew 5:13-16) during Ordinary Time. We are all ordinary people with ordinary hearts. We may not be famous or powerful, but we can still make a difference in the world, even in small ways.

Ordinary Time is a time to grow in our relationship with God. It's a time to learn to trust God, and to count our blessings in our quiet moments without the distractions of festive busyness.

The next time you're feeling bored or restless in Ordinary Time, remember that God is still at work.

John Lee

A DISCIPLESHIP CONCERN

Wandering Sheep

Someone posed this question: After Covid, why are people not returning to church, and those who came back are not the same anymore?

This question seems to reflect a discipleship concern about wandering sheep. The following are some reasonable assumptions:

- Some individuals may not be returning to church because they have become accustomed to alternative ways to connect with their faith, such as online services or small group meetings.
- Some people who came back are not the same as before because they have experienced suffering or loss (physically, emotionally or spiritually) during the pandemic.

Do not be discouraged!

The pandemic forced churches to cut back on programs and physical meetings. Obviously, safety regulations curtailed church attendance and personal contacts. Spiritual care was significantly impacted.

It is important for churches to have a strong discipleship program, but disciples and disciple-makers should not be disheartened by inevitable imperfections.

Discipleship is a lifelong process of learning and growing in our relationship with God in incremental steps. The right attitude encouraging perseverance is to recognize that God is the one who produces good works in us whereby our fruit-bearing is simply a result of His work. (Philippians 2:13)

No matter what challenges we face, we should not give up hope. Instead, we should continue to strive to do good and to seek God's grace.

Discipleship Journey

In our discipleship journey, we have all been beneficiaries of the disciple-makers who have served as our spiritual guides. Although our spiritual benefactors may not wear a "disciple-maker" badge that visibly identifies them as such, **they have undoubtedly served in one or more of the five-fold ministry gifts that God has bestowed upon the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry. (Eph 4:11-12) Disciple-makers are those who use their gifts to help others grow in their faith and walk with God.**

Discipleship is not a destination, but a journey. Whether we experience it as a maturing disciple or as a disciple-maker, we cannot depart from ongoing personal development and Christian service as God's servant, to serve others for God's glory with our different gifts and talents.

Like Timothy, we should be diligent in our study of God's word so that we can be approved as a worker who does not need to be ashamed. (2 Tim 2:15)

Prayer

Prayer is a conversation with God. It is a way for us to express our love for Him, to thank Him for His blessings, and to ask for His help. It is also a way for us to listen to God and to receive His guidance.

Let us bring our discipleship concern to God in prayer!

John Lee

AGM

20th May 2023 - Thanks be to God for leading the **27th LCS Annual General Meeting** to proceed smoothly, and to elect a new Executive Council (2023-25), they are:



Bishop - Rev Lu Guan Hoe
Secretary - Dr. Samuel Wang
Treasurer - Bro Tan Kok Leong
Chinese Clergy Rep - Rev David Ng
English Clergy Rep - Rev Sarah Ang
Chinese Lay Rep - Bro Albert Lau
English Lay Rep - Bro Bryan Tay

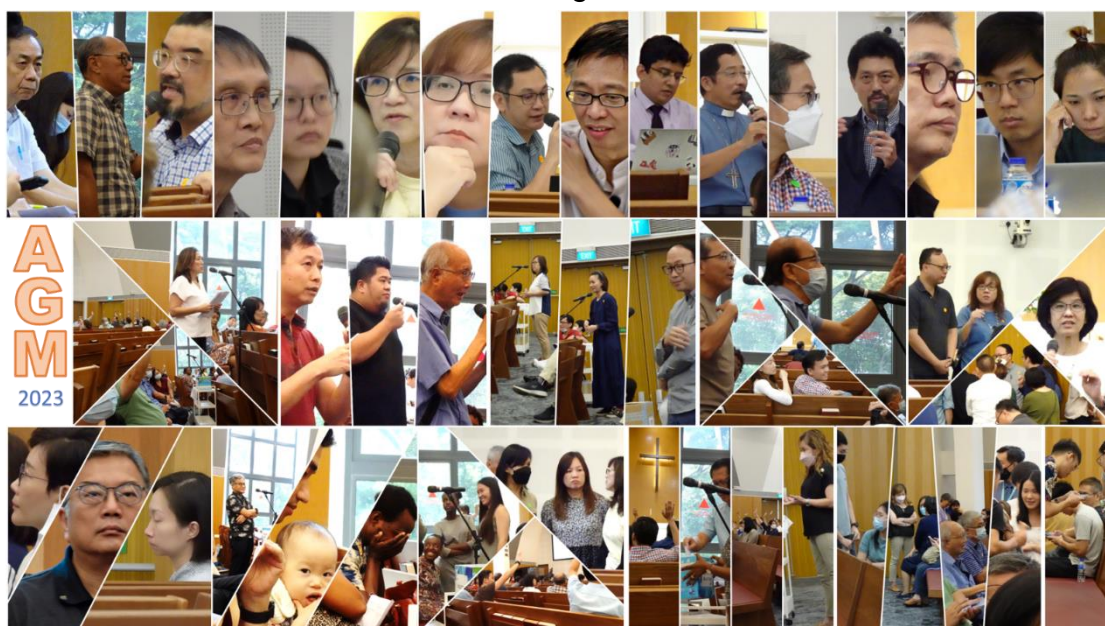
21st May 2023 – JCC held its **55th AGM** with the Chinese and English sections in the Sanctuary and the Dialect members in MPH1. There was a slight delay in starting the proceedings due to a lack of quorum but eventually at 11.30 am the meeting was able to commence and it

went on until 4:30 pm.



A word of thanks to our outgoing Combined Council

Chairman, **Frank Jonathan**, who was very calm, collected and fair in managing the meeting.



At the end of the day, the following were the elected Council for JCC:

S/No.	ENGLISH SECTION	CHINESE SECTION
1	Joyce Tan	Chong Shao Sung
2	Pearl Chua	Yong Yoon Chang
3	Nathanael Yeap	Teo Chee Haw
4	Lim Cheng Teck	Wayne Ma
5	Chong Wong Mui	Kelly Kuo
6	Bryan Tay	Khoo Sze Ean
7	Caleb Lee	Janet Cher
8	Amy Yau	Yap Earn Wei

Martin Cheah

JCC DIALECT CELL GROUP

Martin Cheah

Joo See had always said that she would help out with the Dialect CG meetings when she retired. On 16th May she retired, and on 18th May she attended the Dialect CG meeting with the elders for the first time. I accompanied her and tried to remain inconspicuous in the background, but I think everyone there noticed me because I was taking photos throughout. In all, I took more than 100 photos and videos of a 2-hour CG session. Watch the photo shoot here:

<https://youtu.be/FcNyd7cRFDE>

We left the house and crossed the street to the hawker centre to collect the famous Bukit Timah white carrot cake that Seline had ordered for the tea break. Twenty packets were quite a weight to carry by bus to JCC. We reached JCC earlier than the elderly, but Deacon Nathan was already in MPH1 managing the PA system. We went inside the hall to enjoy the air-conditioning.

Soon the elders arrived and Joo See began to introduce herself to them. She was surprised that some of the people did not recognize her. There were about 20 elders in the group that day.



The CG started with some worship songs followed by some low-impact exercises led by Florence. Then it was time for games.



When the elders were all fired up, Deacon Nathan shared a short devotional with them. Meanwhile, at the back of MPH1, tea break was being prepared. After the message, the people broke up into small groups for discussion, food and tea.



The group closed with a short prayer. Then the elders were sent on their way home.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good

works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Is this God's purpose for Joo See?

Alpha to the Omega

Samuel Chong

X is for...

Xerxes

"When [Xerxes] saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand." (Esther 5:2a)

*Rock relief of an Achaemenid king, most likely Xerxes I, National Museum of Iran.
Photo by "Darafsh", Wikimedia Commons.*

Who was Xerxes?

Xerxes I (c.518 – 465 BC) was a Persian king of the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire best known for his invasion of Greece in 480 BC, which ended in Persian defeat. Xerxes I is also commonly identified as the Persian king in the Book of Esther.



X marks the spot

Xerxes was born to Darius the Great, the second Achaemenid king. He was also a grandson of Cyrus the Great (Ezra 1:1), the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, through his mother. The name "Xerxes" is a Greek and Latin transliteration of an Old Iranian name meaning "ruling over heroes".

Xerxes was brought up as a typical Persian prince, which included military service. When Darius prepared to crush a revolt in Egypt, he was required by Persian law to choose a successor before embarking on dangerous expeditions, and appointed Xerxes as heir. Darius died on that expedition and Xerxes ascended the throne in 486 BC at the age of 32.

Xerxes' early years as king were marked by major revolts in Egypt and Babylon, which were successfully suppressed.

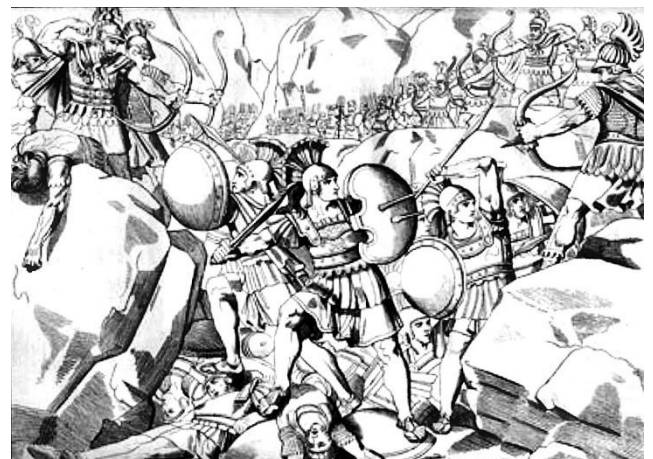
Invasion of Greece

The Persians under Darius had first attempted an invasion of Greece in 492 BC in order to punish the Greeks for supporting a revolt by Greeks in Asia Minor (i.e. Turkey), which was then under Persian rule. That invasion ended in defeat at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC (from which the marathon race got its name).

A decade later in 480 BC, Xerxes attempted to finish what his father started, mustering a huge army and navy. After charging through much of northern Greece, the Persian advance was blocked at Thermopylae by a small Greek force led by the Spartan King Leonidas I. The Greeks held back the Persians for three days before perishing while making their last stand. Leonidas and his Spartans have been immortalised ever since, e.g. in movies like *300* (2006).

Spartans surrounded by Persians at the Battle of Thermopylae, 19th century illustration. Wikimedia Commons.

The Persians continued their advance southwards, capturing and burning Athens in the process. Despite being outnumbered, the Greeks achieved a crucial naval victory at the Straits of Salamis which destroyed the Persian fleet. Robbed of a quick victory and fearing being trapped in Europe, Xerxes retreated to Asia Minor (i.e. modern day Turkey), leaving his generals to



continue the fighting. The Greeks eventually defeated the Persians and expelled them from Europe by 479 BC.

Death and succession

After his military defeat in Greece, Xerxes returned to Persia and oversaw the completion of many huge construction projects that Darius initiated; some of their ruins still stand today in Iran.

In August 465 BC, Xerxes was assassinated by Artabanus, commander of the royal bodyguard and the most powerful official in the Persian court. Xerxes' third son Artaxerxes ascended the throne, and after discovering Artabanus's treachery, had him and his sons executed.

Xerxes in the Bible?

The Persian king mentioned in the Book of Esther is named Ahasuerus in the original Hebrew. Ahasuerus is commonly identified by Bible scholars with Xerxes I since the name was derived from Persian (*Xšayāršā*) into Babylonian (*Aḫšiyaršu*), into Hebrew (*Āḥašwêrôš*), and into Latin (*Ahasuerus*) – the form traditionally used in English Bibles. However, the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) and Vulgate (Latin translation of the Bible) identify Ahasuerus as Artaxerxes; the Jewish-Roman historian Josephus relates that Artaxerxes was the name by which he was known to the Greeks.

Ahasuerus is also mentioned in the Books of Ezra (4:6) and Daniel (9:1), the latter one being the father of Darius the Mede.

Ultimately, since Ahasuerus is a transliteration of either Xerxes or Artaxerxes, which were both names of multiple Persian kings, it is difficult to identify which king he corresponds to.

"Esther denouncing Haman" by Ernest Normand (1888). Wikimedia Commons. Ahasuerus is in the background.

Conclusion

Whether or not Xerxes I was the Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther, we know that he continued the policies initiated by Cyrus by allowing the Jews to live and worship in Judea. While he was a powerful ruler, he ultimately failed to conquer Greece, and the Greeks under Alexander the Great would later conquer Persia just over a century later in 330 BC, just as Daniel prophesied in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue – the belly and thighs of bronze (Daniel 2:1-39) and in his vision of a ram and a goat – the shaggy goat (Daniel 8:1-22).



Further Reading

[Xerxes I](#)

[Ahasuerus](#)

Serve God with your gifting

Bryan Tay

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. -- 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

It is more blessed to give than to receive. God has given gifts and talents to each of us. No one is left out. We are members of ONE body of Christ. No one can claim to be more important than any others because each of us has our strengths and limitations. We work together as His living channels and instruments of honour to reach out to those in need with God's love in tangible ways.

Our Lord Jesus led by example – He came into the world not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for the world. He even washed His disciples' feet. He expects us to follow His example and be accountable for the gifts and talents that He has bestowed on us. He does not demand from us what we are not capable of. He only expects us to do our best with what He has given us.



What does God say about this?

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Romans 12:6-8 (NIV)

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Ephesians 4:11,12 (NIV)

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV)

What does this mean for practical living?

Start doing something! Avoid listening to the devil's lies that you cannot contribute anything because you are not as talented as Mr. So-and-so. God does not expect us to do what we cannot do. He is more interested in our availability rather than our ability. If you do not know where or how to start, talk to your pastor, church ministry leaders or a church member serving in a particular ministry. Somebody will be able to direct you to the right person for a fruitful conversation.

You can start serving in these ways: Do what you are good at, share what you are passionate about or sign-up for something that you wish to learn and eventually contribute. God has given everyone talents and gifts, no matter big or small. You can give time, energy, material resources or money to support all the church's work in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Reflect and respond to God's Word

- What are your reasons for not availing yourself to contribute to God's work via your local church? Or perhaps you have served God faithfully but feel fatigued/burnt out. How would you hold a conversation with God about this?
- What are the things that you can do well, are passionate about or prepared to learn?
- Seek out somebody in church to start a conversation on how you can start/continue serving God with your gifts and talents.

A Journey of Faith and Belonging in JCC

Jane

On November 13, 2022, I was introduced to JCC for the first time by a friend, I had no idea that JCC would hold such a special place in my heart, leaving behind cherished memories.

At the entrance of the hall, I received a warm welcome. The friendly reception from JCC's members immediately put me at ease. As we sang the hymn "God Will Make A Way," the lyrics felt like whispers of God's comfort to me, penetrating the walls of my busy and anxious heart as I embarked on a new country, a new place, and a new life. Tears gushed uncontrollably, streaming down my face, impossible to contain. After the service, many new sisters approached me, engaging in conversations and inviting me to join them for lunch. Every Sunday thereafter, I was greeted by friendly faces of brothers and sisters, and each song felt like a divine whisper to my heart, while every sermon inspired and enriched me. One week later, I was introduced to Bryan's CG. I hesitated about joining, as I had always considered faith and personal connection with God to be private matters, and sharing deep emotions within a group made me feel awkward. However, that particular weekend, I happened to have some free time, and Bryan's place happened to be just a few minutes' walk away from where I lived. Anyway, for whatever reason, I am grateful that I went. I never expected that the brothers and sisters in the CG would make me feel like family, providing me with comfort and a sense of belonging.

Every Sunday and every other Friday became an essential part of my routine. After a busy and chaotic week, I relied on and yearned for God's baptism and solace every Sunday, along with the gratitude, testimonies, and prayers shared with the brothers and sisters in the CG. JCC's enriching activities, gatherings, group prayers and volunteering works make me belong to the family. Every person I met has been kind, sincere, and has made my first long-term experience living abroad fulfilling, peaceful, and loving.

Next week, I will be leaving Singapore to start a new life in the USA. What I will miss the most is JCC and its brothers and sisters.



I thank God for leading me to JCC and I express my gratitude to the brothers and sisters for embracing me in JCC and the CG! The ten months I spent in Singapore mark the longest time I have ever stayed outside of China, and undoubtedly, it will be one of the most unforgettable milestones in my life. I have cherished every precious moment and experienced tremendous spiritual growth with all of you, receiving abundant love and peace to embark on the next chapter. I will dearly miss Singapore and all of you.

Just as the blessings and words of encouragement from the brothers and sisters go, "Honour God and He will honour you." Live a godly life in the power of the Holy Spirit and stand firm in your faith and identity in Jesus, no matter what happens. For our God is faithful, and He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Although a new adventure awaits, I am confident that we will meet again, whether here or in any other place, at some point. And surely, we will always be together and united under God's shelter! Until then ...

A Family Bonded Over Bread And Faith

I am Eunice Tan from e-Lids (Bryan's YAM cell group).

One of the weeks, after a regular cell group meeting, some of us stayed behind for an impromptu baking session. We bonded over the tedious labour of baking bread (easily 4-5 hours!). By tedious, I mean having to measure all the ingredients with precision, knead and shape the dough and wait in anticipation for the final product.

I truly respect home bakers for their passion and commitment to the craft that requires such tedious effort. I am also grateful to have cell leaders who embody



these same traits as they labour in the Lord's vineyard. They consistently pour out timely advice, form crucial conversations about our faith, and mould us into better versions of ourselves. Much patience and dedication is needed to continuously oversee the spiritual health of so many cell members. And if you ask any of them, they would probably say it's worth it.

Our cell group is like a family. We have a diverse range of members whom I have had the

privilege of growing up with, bantering with during lessons, and learning from. Returning to this homely circle of friends at the end of the week reminds me to count my blessings. I am grateful for the support of my cell group, which continues to shape me into a better Christian amidst life's challenges.

A Wonderful Retreat in Batam

8 – 10 June 2023



After a four-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the JCC church retreat was finally held again. The picture shows that JCCians responded strongly to Rev. Anthony's exhortation in his retreat invitation, "Let the retreat be a God-encountering place for us. Let the 'dry bones' be made flesh and empowered by the Holy Spirit. New hope, new season, new wine to flow into all of us."

After years of being caged up by the pandemic, many of us had become like the 'dry bones' in Ezekiel's vision (Eze 37:1-14) – spiritually lifeless and facing a pressing need to be brought back to life, to be made whole and complete with new hope based on God's promises, in a new season (new beginnings, new opportunities for spiritual growth), to taste new wine (a symbol of God's abundance, His grace and His love)!

Thank God that the retreat speaker, Yap Kim Meng, was still able to deliver his messages via video despite his recent accident that prevented him from travelling. The three messages (based on 1 Kings: 17-19) were each only 20+ minutes long, focussed and easy to digest.



I have the following takeaways from the retreat:

Man of God, Man for God, Man who seeks God

- MAN OF GOD:** Elijah, a prophet called by God, confronts the people of Israel about their sin. He challenges them to choose between following God or following Baal, the false god of the Canaanites. He then calls down fire from heaven to consume a sacrifice, which further proves God's power working through him.
- MAN FOR GOD:** Elijah is not afraid to speak out against evil, even when it is unpopular. He is also a man of great compassion, as evidenced by his willingness to help those in need.
- MAN WHO SEEKS GOD:** Elijah is a man of great faith and courage. He is always seeking God's will and guidance, and he is willing to do whatever God asks of him.

Elijah's story is an inspiration to us all. His life is a powerful reminder that we should all strive to be "**men of God**," "**men for God**," and "**men who seek God**." We should be faithful to God, stand up for what we believe in, and be willing to sacrifice for the sake of God's people. We should also be men and women of prayer and meditation, always seeking to know God more.

Discipleship Theme

The retreat reinforces the discipleship theme of JCC: **BE ONE, MAKE ONE, AS ONE**.

BE ONE means that every JCCian is called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. This means following Jesus' teachings, living in accordance with his values, and being committed to his mission. It also means being part of a community of believers who support and encourage one another in their faith journey.

MAKE ONE means that every JCCian is called to invest their lives in building other lives. This can be done through evangelism, discipleship, and acts of service. It means sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others, helping them to grow in their faith, and meeting their physical and emotional needs.

AS ONE means that JCCians are called to work together as one body of Christ. This means being unified in their love for God and for one another. It also means working together to reach out to the lost and to make a difference in the world.

How can JCCians improve their lives with the inspiration from Elijah (**MAN OF GOD, MEN FOR GOD, MAN WHO SEEKS GOD**) as encouraged by the retreat speaker, and with the exhortation on discipleship to **BE ONE, MAKE ONE, AS ONE**? Is it a tough call?

Making a Stew

In thanksgiving at the end of the retreat, Bryan Tay helpfully shared an interesting acronym: **S.T.E.W.** It conjures up the idea of stewing our spiritual food; i.e., we should take time to nourish our souls carefully and thoughtfully with spiritual nourishment.



Here are some specific ways that we can **S.T.E.W.** in our daily lives:

- **S**eek God's will in all things. We can do this by reading the Bible, praying, and seeking wise counsel from godly people.
- **T**rust God's promises. We can do this by meditating on His promises and believing that He will keep His word.
- **E**xpect great things from God. We can do this by focusing on His goodness and His power.
- **W**ait patiently for God's timing. We can do this by staying focused on Him and not getting discouraged when things don't happen immediately.

When we **S.T.E.W.**, we are putting our lives in God's hands and trusting Him to lead us. We are also opening ourselves up to receive His blessings. When we seek God, trust Him, expect great things from Him, and wait patiently for Him, we can be confident that He will work all things together for our good.

Fellowship & Recreation

As mentioned above, the retreat messages were each less than 30 minutes long, yet focussed. So, in the 3 days, we had enough time to spare for group sharing, fellowship bonding, recreation and shopping.

One of the most interesting activities was called "Generation Glow". In this activity, six participants from different generations were grouped together. They shared some brief information about

themselves, and then members from each group were called to the stage 2-by-2 to participate in fun interactive activities. It was a great opportunity for me to get to know better the younger generation of active members in JCC. Before the retreat, we were all “strangers” to each other. But through this activity, we were able to break the ice and learn more about each other.

I am thankful to God for raising a promising young generation of His faithfuls. These young people are the future of JCC, and I am confident that they will carry the torch of leading the church in her march forward. I am excited to see what God will do through them as they continue to **BE ONE, MAKE ONE, AS ONE!**

Thanks to the Retreat Committee

It is worth noting that the only people who had little time to relax were the retreat committee members who gave of their best in taking care of every little detail to make the event a success.

Bravo to Yew Moi and his capable team for being thoughtful and attentive to everyone’s needs – both spiritual and physical. They created a warm and welcoming environment where retreat participants could connect with God and one another.

God sees their sacrifices and dedication and will bless them with many blessings.

John Lee



JULY 2023



UpReach, InReach, OutReach

Rev Anthony Loh

We are halfway through 2023. Our AGM 2023 has concluded, and the JCC retreat 2023 will remain a cherished memory. We hope that it will serve as a spark to propel us strongly forward spiritually.

What will the next six months look like for us?

How will God work through us?

One day, DL Moody was walking down the street when he approached a man and asked if he would like to meet Jesus. The man was irritated and said, "Sir, mind your own business." Moody's response was, "But sir, this is my business!" The man said, "Then you must be Dwight Moody!" Will we receive the same reaction when we interact with people?

The answer depends on us. If we are truly committed to following Christ, then we will be compelled to share our faith with others. We can expect to be challenged and even ridiculed. But we can also expect to see God work in mighty ways through us.

Be challenged and changed!

As we go through the book of Acts in our preaching calendar, how much are we challenged and changed by it?

The book of Acts tells the story of how the early church was transformed from a small group of scared believers into a movement that changed the world. But this transformation didn't happen overnight. It began with the hearts of the believers being changed inside out by the Holy Spirit.

As we follow the story of the early church in Acts, we are reminded of three important things that we need to do if we want to be effective disciples of Christ and bolder disciplinarians:

1. We need to be up-reachers!

This means that we need to be constantly reaching out to God in prayer and Bible study. We need to be hungry for God's presence and willing to be transformed by His Spirit.

How do we do this?

- We stop asking questions about the end and start praying and seeking God in the present. We focus on our relationship with God, not on what the future holds.
- We obey the clear commands Jesus gives us. The apostles obeyed Jesus, and they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to do great things.
- We devote ourselves to the study of His Word from which we gain wisdom.

Up-reach is about getting our hearts and minds in spiritual consonance with God. It takes our attention off unimportant things and distractions that can weaken our walk with the Lord.

The 40-day prayer devotion organised by "LoveSingapore" (a unity movement with a purpose: loving Singapore together, turning Singapore Godward) from 1 July to 9 Aug is a great opportunity to renew our up-reach with God. This is a time to focus on our relationship with Him and to seek His power for our lives.

2. We need to be in-reachers!

This means that we need to be loving and supporting our fellow believers. We need to be committed to building up the body of Christ and willing to help others grow in their faith.

This is when God looks into our hearts and lives and shows us our true condition. He exposes our sin and guilt, but he also offers us forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ.

When we experience in-reach, we realize how far we have fallen from God's perfect standard, but we also see His love and grace for us. We are convicted of our sin, but we are also filled with hope.

In-reach is essential for salvation. We cannot be saved without first being convicted of our sin and turning to God in repentance. But in-reach is also essential for our growth as Christians. When we experience in-reach, we are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The early church experienced in-reach in a powerful way. The apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and were able to do great things for God. We can experience the same kind of transformation if we allow God to reach into our hearts and lives.

3. We need to be out-reachers!

This means that we need to be sharing the gospel with others. We need to be bold in our witness and willing to let our light shine before others. **The great commission of Christ is not just for the apostles.** It is for all of God's people.

Outreach is the plan of God for the work of His people. We don't need to know when Jesus is coming back, or when the end times will happen. We just need to do the job Jesus gave us to do: Love God and love our neighbours.

When we share the gospel with others, we are not just telling them about a historical event. We are inviting them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We are offering them the hope of eternal life.

Outreach is not just about telling people about Jesus. It is also about showing them the love of Jesus through our actions. We can do this by serving others, being kind to them, and showing them compassion. We are bringing people into the family of God, and we are making the world a better place.

If we are willing to do these things, then we can expect to see God work in mighty ways through us in 2023. We can expect to be challenged and changed, but we can also expect to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER ITEMS

Prayer Focus For July

a) New Season with God's Purpose

JCC is entering a new season with God's purpose. As we celebrate our 56th Anniversary, we are united in loving and serving the Lord. This is a time to give thanks to God for all He has done for us. We continue to seek God's guidance upon the pastors, the council, ministry leaders and CG leaders to commit ourselves to His work in the years to come.

b) One Body in Christ – We Love Singapore

Pray for blessings upon the country. Together with the rest of the churches in Singapore, we will be participating in the 40-Day Prayer 2023 from July 1 to August 9. This is a time to encounter God in a new way, and to be empowered by His Spirit for His work. The high point of the prayer season will be the Day of His Power on August 8.

c) Empowered by the Holy Spirit

We continue to seek the power of the Holy Spirit to empower us for the gospel ministry:

- i. To be effective witnesses for Christ in all places (home, offices, schools, etc.).
- ii. To produce a good harvest in our outreach to the community in Taman Jurong via the Goshen Bridges.
- iii. To make the most of open doors where the gospel seeds are sown into lives.
- iv. To be disciples of Christ and disciple-makers for Him.

We believe that this is a season of great blessing for JCC. Let's seek God together, with confidence that He will pour out His Spirit on us and empower us for His work. We are excited to see what He will do in the days to come!

FEAR NOT! (Mt 10:24-39)

(A summary of the sermon by Rev. Dr. William Chang on 25 Jun 2023)

Introduction

The Augsburg Confession is a central statement of faith for Lutherans. It was one of the most important documents of the Protestant Reformation that the reformers presented before the Diet of Augsburg on 25 June 1530.

Today, 25 June 2023, is the 493rd anniversary of that momentous event. To commemorate this, we have a Pulpit Exchange in LCS, where all the pastors are preaching in different congregations away from their home congregations. This is a sign of our unity and our confession of the same beliefs as professed in the Augsburg Confession.

On this special Sunday, Rev. Dr. William Chang preaches a sermon based on Matthew 10:24-39. He encourages the congregation to "Fear Not!" in the face of persecution and challenges. He reminds them that Jesus is with them always, and that they can find strength in his Word.

Below are some salient points from the sermon.

Fear and Courage in the Christian Life

Fear is a natural human response to the unknown, but Christians are called to not fear. Jesus acknowledges that fear is real and intense, but He tells us not to fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather to fear the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Mt 10:28) Christians should not fear because the Holy Spirit living inside them gives them the power to overcome fear.

When we live out our discipleship, we will face opposition, but we should not let any fear of this opposition control us. Instead, we should be courageous and continue to proclaim the gospel.

The sermon includes a warning about the dangers of living in a comfortable and secular environment. When we are comfortable, we are more likely to compromise our faith and lose our courage. We need to be aware of this danger and stay focused on our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Martyrs of Nagasaki

In 1549, the Jesuit priest Francis Xavier arrived in Japan with two other priests from Portugal. They were hoping to bring Catholicism to Japan. The feudal lord of the region of Kagoshima agreed to allow them to build a mission, hoping to create a good relationship with Europe.

However, the Imperial government soon became worried about foreign influence and began to persecute Christians. In 1597, 26 Catholics were martyred in Nagasaki. Nine were priests and 17 were lay people. Three of the lay people were teenagers.

When Rev. Dr. Chang visited the monument to the martyrs, he was moved by their courage. He asked himself if he would be able to be as fearless as they were.

Three Reasons to Overcome Fear

Rev Dr Chang goes on to talk about the different fears that Christians face, such as fear of the future, fear of our children, and fear of our health. He says that we should not give in to fear, but should trust in God.

He discusses three reasons why we should overcome fear:

1. Nothing is lost. Whatever we do for God, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem, will not be lost. God sees everything we do, and he will reward us accordingly.
2. God is greater than our fear. We should not fear our enemies or our fears, because God is greater than anything we can imagine. He is the one who ultimately controls our lives, and he will protect us from harm. Not fearing our fears means not succumbing to the fears that are stumbling blocks to the living out of our discipleship life.
3. God knows us and cares for us. God knows everything about us, and he loves us unconditionally. He will never abandon us, no matter what we face.

We are encouraged to focus on God, to trust in his power and love, and to know that our efforts are not in vain.

Conclusion

Fear is a natural human emotion, but it is not something that we should let control our lives. As Christians, we are called to be courageous and to trust in God. When we do this, we can overcome any fear that we face.

The full sermon can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/4c85tcvj> (starting at 29:55).

Lectionary Readings for 2 July 2023

Fifth Sunday After Pentecost

Jeremiah 28:5-9; Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18; Romans 6:12-23; Matthew 10:40-42

You may have your favourite Bible Study guide (Our Daily Bread, Navigators series, etc.). If you are a worshipper in JCC, you would regularly notice the Bible Reading list in our Sunday bulletin. These weekly selections of scriptural readings (or lectionary readings) can serve as your regular reference for Bible Study too. One may discern a common theme that runs through each week's selection of OT & NT passages, and it is aligned with the church season.

As illustration, here I share my lectionary readings for 2 July 2023. The passages Jeremiah 28:5-9, Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18, Romans 6:12-23 and Matthew 10:40-42 all bear the theme of faithfulness. (Note: You may perceive a different theme as God speaks to you personally.)

Jeremiah 28: Trusting in God's faithfulness

In Jeremiah 28, Hananiah and Jeremiah were both prophesying about the future of Judah. Hananiah prophesied that God would soon overthrow Babylon and restore Judah to its former glory. Jeremiah, on the other hand, prophesied that Judah would remain in exile for many years.

- Jeremiah's prophecy was based on his trust in God's faithfulness, even amid difficult circumstances.
- Hananiah's prophecy, on the other hand, was based on his hope for a quick and easy solution to Judah's problems.

In the end, Jeremiah's prophecy was the one that came true. However, God was faithful to His people throughout this time. He provided for them in their exile, and He eventually brought them back to their homeland.

Lesson: We can trust in God's faithfulness, even when things are difficult. God may not always give us the easy answers that we want, but He will always be with us and He will never abandon us.

Psalm 89: Struggles of faith

Psalm 89 is a song of praise to God, who is described as a faithful and trustworthy God. The psalmist sings of God's covenant with David, and how God has always been faithful to his promises. The psalmist also prays that God will continue to be faithful to his people, even when they are unfaithful to him.

The psalmist is facing a dilemma in trying to reconcile his faith in God's promises with the reality of the current situation in which the nation is suffering. He is struggling to understand why God has allowed this dilemma.

This psalm offers a glimpse into the struggles of faith that God's people often face. It is a reminder that even the most faithful people can sometimes question God's promises.

David's faith in God was ultimately vindicated. This is supported by the fact that God's promises to David and his descendants were ultimately fulfilled, as Solomon became king and the Davidic line continued.

Romans 6: Faithfulness in our Christian Life

Romans 6:12-23 reminds us that we have been freed from sin. We are no longer slaves to sin, but we are now slaves of God. This means that we are free to choose to do what is right, even when it is difficult.

However, Paul also warns us that we should not use our freedom to sin. Just because we are free from sin does not mean that we can do whatever we want. Instead, we should use our freedom to choose to obey God.

When we obey God, we will be rewarded with eternal life.

Matthew 10: Importance of Faithfulness

Matthew 10:40-42 teaches us that faithfulness to Jesus is not just about following his commands or believing in his teachings. It is also about showing hospitality to those who are following him, and about serving others in need. When we are faithful to Jesus in these ways, we are showing our love for him and for the Father.

The passage also teaches us that faithfulness is rewarded. Jesus says that those who serve Him will be honoured by the Father. This means that they will be rewarded in the future, both in this life and in the life to come.

Conclusion

All these passages teach us about faithfulness in different ways. When we are faithful to God, we are trusting in his promises and living in obedience to his commands. This does not mean that we will never face challenges or difficulties, but it does mean that we can have hope in God's faithfulness, even when things are tough.

John Lee

Alpha to the Omega

Samuel Chong

Y is for...

YMCA

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word." (Psalm 119:9)



YMCA Logo, Wikimedia Commons. Designed in 1891, each of the triangle's sides represent "the whole man" – Mind, Body, and Spirit.

What is the YMCA?

The Young Men's Christian Association, better known by its acronym YMCA, is a worldwide youth organisation that aims to put Christian values into practice by developing a healthy "body, mind, and spirit" – the principles of "muscular Christianity". It is also known for being the subject of the 1978 hit song of the same name by the Village People.

Young Man – The YMCA's Origins

The YMCA was founded in 1844 in London by George Williams, an English businessman and philanthropist. Williams and his friends were concerned about the lack of healthy activities for young men who moved to major cities during the Industrial Revolution, many instead spending their time in taverns and brothels. William's idea of providing social and spiritual development grew out of meetings he held for prayer and Bible reading among his fellow workers. The concept soon gained a following as other industrial companies and factories started their own groups.

Go West – The YMCA goes Global

The YMCA spread outside of the UK thanks in part to the Great Exhibition of 1851 which brought in visitors from around the world. By the end of that year, there were YMCAs in Europe, America, Hong Kong, and Australia.

Henry Dunant, Secretary of YMCA Geneva (and later the co-founder of the Red Cross and recipient of the first Nobel Peace Prize) was responsible for making the YMCA a globally coordinated movement. He convinced YMCA Paris to organise the first YMCA World Conference in 1855. The Conference agreed to respect the local autonomy of YMCA societies while working together towards the common mission of uniting all young, male (later including females) Christians for the extension and expansion of the Kingdom of God. The Paris Basis, as this understanding came to be known, formed the basis for all present and future national YMCAs.

The YMCA now operates globally on a federation model as laid out in the Paris Basis, with local, national, regional, and international bodies. The World YMCA is the highest affiliation body and convenes a World Council every three to four years as the highest decision-making forum.

Macho, Macho Man – The YMCA and Muscular Christianity

The YMCA was associated with and promoted “muscular Christianity” – the cultural philosophy that combined Christianity with patriotism, discipline, self-sacrifice, and athleticism. It was believed that physical training built the stamina necessary for performing service to others, and that physical strength developed moral character.

As YMCAs introduced sports facilities in the 1870s, it became the site where many modern sports were invented:

- Basketball was invented at a Massachusetts (USA) YMCA in 1891 by Dr James Naismith. Naismith was tasked with creating an indoor “athletic distraction” for rowdy youths during the winter months. The result was basketball – designed to be physically active, simple to understand, and with minimal physical roughness.
- Volleyball was invented at another Massachusetts YMCA four years later in 1895. Its inventor, William Morgan, wanted to create a slower-paced alternative sport with less physical contact for older YMCA members.
- Futsal (a football-based game played on an indoor hardcourt) was invented by Juan Carlos Ceriani at a YMCA in Uruguay in 1930. As football was so popular, Ceriani sought to create a team game like football that could be played indoors for recreation in YMCAs.

Gymnastics were also widely practiced at YMCAs, although it soon lost popularity to group sports like basketball and volleyball.



YMCA Association Men cover (June 1919), Wikimedia Commons. Note the athletic language used in association with Christianity (cf. Hebrews 12:1)

In the Navy – The Singapore YMCA’s Wartime Legacy

The YMCA of Singapore was founded in 1903 and was granted a site at Dhoby Ghaut, where the YMCA building is located today. The YMCA introduced many sports to youths in Singapore and housed Singapore’s first swimming pool.

During the Japanese Occupation, the YMCA building was seized and turned into an interrogation centre for the Kempeitai (i.e. Japanese secret military police). War heroine Elizabeth Choy (a YMCA member herself) was one of the many prisoners tortured there. After the war, the YMCA building was retained despite the British authorities’ plans to demolish the site. It was eventually torn down in the early 1980s and replaced with the nine-storey building we see today.



The old YMCA building along Stamford Road (c. 1930s). Archives Online.

Readers may not be aware that two YMCAs exist in Singapore – the YMCA of Singapore and the Metropolitan YMCA (MYMCA). The latter was started by Dr Chen Su Lan, a philanthropist and social reformer, who wanted a second YMCA to serve the interests of the Chinese majority. Initially founded as the Chinese YMCA in 1946 after two decades of opposition from the British authorities, it was renamed the MYMCA in 1974 to reflect its aim to serve people of all ethnicities. It is currently headquartered at Stevens Road.

The YMCA's sister organisation, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), is also in Singapore. It was established here in 1875 by Sophia Cooke, the head of the Chinese Girls' School (now known as St Margaret's School). JCC held a church retreat there in 2003 (exactly 20 years ago! My how time flies...).

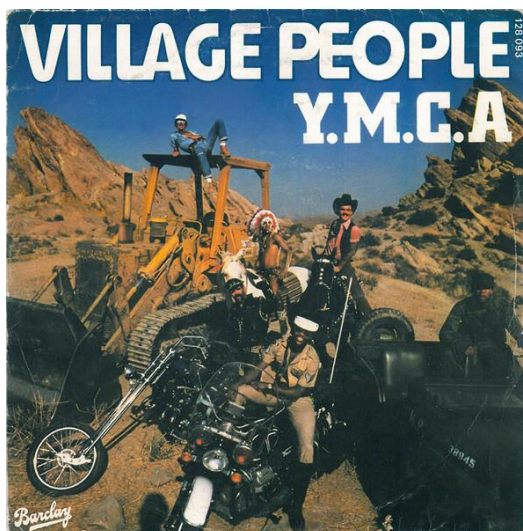


JCC Church Retreat at YWCA Singapore (2003). Courtesy of The Vine (the veritable predecessor of The Winepress). Try spotting JCCians you know (including the author)

“It’s fun to stay at the Y-M-C-A” – The Song

Any discussion on the YMCA would be remiss without mentioning the eponymous 1978 hit song by the Village People. The YMCA in America had built single room occupancy facilities in the 1880s to house people from rural areas who moved into cities to look for work. By the 1970s, the demographics of YMCA tenants had shifted to homeless people and youths facing life issues.

The YMCA's activities for young urban black youth inspired the writing of the song, whose lyrics extol the virtues of the YMCA. However, not many may realise the gay culture from which the image and music of the Village People came; the song's original meaning is implicitly understood as celebrating the YMCA's reputation as a popular meeting spot for homosexuals under the cover of athletic facilities. However, it is now simply a fun and catchy song that everyone can enjoy.



Album cover of "YMCA" (1978)

Can't Stop The Music – Conclusion

The YMCA was founded to address moral and spiritual issues arising from the Industrial Revolution, a period of great economic and social change. Its emphasis on developing a healthy "body, mind and spirit" made it a key vehicle for the spread of "muscular Christianity" (a leading ethos of the period), giving rise to various modern sports in the process. While most people might only know the YMCA through the 1978 song, we can appreciate its veritable Christian legacy which is continued in Singapore and around the world today.

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

Further Reading

[YMCA](#)

[Muscular Christianity](#)

[Y.M.C.A \(Song\)](#)

[YMCA \(NLB Infopedia\)](#)

[MYMCA \(NLB Infopedia\)](#)

[YWCA \(NLB Infopedia\)](#)

Trust in God

Bryan Tay

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. -- Proverbs 3:5,6 (NIV)



Trust God for His personal care and love for you as if you are the only person that matters to Him. Trust God's timing. Trust His ability to act on your behalf. Trust Him to help you navigate your way through life. Let us not put our trust in kings and princes, the rich and gifted or those who are smooth with their words. We can only trust God to keep people trustworthy. With human beings, trust is developed over a period of time. But with God, we can trust Him instantly now and forever.

Only God is worthy of our absolute trust. If we say that we trust Him for our salvation that leads to eternal life, why are we not trusting Him for anything less? In the Bible, we have seen how those who fully trusted in God were richly blessed by Him as long as they remained faithful and obedient to His commands.

What does God say about this?

Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.

Psalm 32:10 (NIV)

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

Isaiah 26:3 (NIV)

Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save.

Psalm 146:3 (NIV)

What does this mean for practical living?

We desire to be loved. We seek to have peace. We want safety. God has promised all these to the one who trusts Him. Trusting is not merely done with lip service. It is shown in the way we speak, think and act. When we trust in His good timing, He will make all things work together for good in our lives.

The world tries to define trust as an equation. It compares **Credibility** (spoken words), **Reliability** (actions) and **Intimacy** (comfort level in entrusting something to a person) against the **Self-Interest** of the trusted person (how much the entrusted person cares for himself). We can see that God scores superbly on **C**, **R** and **SI**.

He is Omnipotent (all-powerful), Omniscient (all-knowing) and Omnipresent (ever-present). He does not have any self-interest but only our interests at heart. His Word is truth, and He has demonstrated His love consistently through His actions. That leaves only one component, **Intimacy**, that determines our level of trust in Him i.e. how secure and safe we feel in entrusting Him with our lives both now and for eternity. That is our part to demonstrate. Our trust in God limits what He can do for us.

Reflect and respond to God's Word

- What are some things that you are afraid or apprehensive to trust God for? Why?
- Think of a person that you trust the most. What made you trust him/her?
- Now consider God who created that "most-trusted person" in your life. How should you reframe your perspective about trusting God?

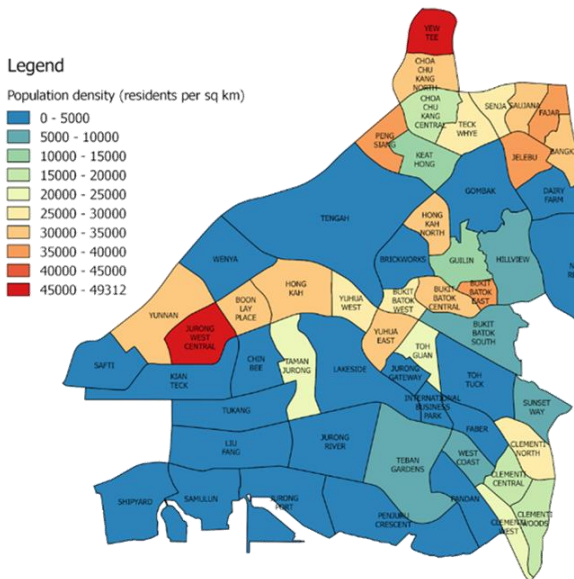
REACHING OUT TO TAMAN JURONG

Martin Cheah

According to a population density map, Taman Jurong have a population of 20,000 to 25,000 people.

If we assume that each family will consist of 4 persons, then there are about 6,250 ($25000 \div 4$) families to reach out to.

If we reach out to 1 family per day, it will take us more than 17 years to complete the task.



“Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest.’” (Matthew 9:37-38)

“I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” (John 4:35b)

The harvest is plentiful indeed. Recently, there was a launch of a Lake Garden Residences condo which I believe will be a stone’s throw from JCC. Then there is a development in progress where we used to have our worship services at 101 Yuan Ching Road. We have members going out distributing bread and we also have members going around to pray. Let us open our eyes to the harvest and pray for the Lord to send out more workers into His harvest.

Source:

Population Density Map - https://geodata-musing.blogspot.com/2015_06_01_archive.html

Photo of Taman Jurong – Google Earth

Community Pastoring (CP) Seminar

Swee Wei

I was very blessed to be able to attend the passionate and inspiring Community Pastoring

Seminar held at Living Sanctuary Brethren Church (LSBC) on 20 May 2023.



It was a great seminar – one of the best I have attended – not simply because of the many gifts and titbits handed out to the participants and the 'blessing draws' organised to bless them, but the wonderful sharing on community pastoring work by Senior Pastor Lawrence Chua.



The seminar was structured, well-organized, and insightful. It presented LSBC's humble beginnings in its community pastoring work, how God helped and led the church to overcome many struggles and grow in this ministry, and the results achieved by the church over the last 26 years.

SOME KEY TAKEAWAYS:

SP Lawrence challenged us to think about whether we have done enough as a church/community that spreads the gospel and love of God to the people in our neighbourhood. To me the answer is NO, for although churches in Singapore have done their part to help communities during normal and extraordinary times (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic), it is evident that few people are talking about what churches have been doing and their presence in communities.

Therefore, churches in Singapore need to step up and improve their outreach and community pastoring work. This is because it is an important part of fulfilling God's command to spread the gospel and love of God to those who have yet to know or come to Christ.

Community pastoring is a lot more than simple outreach to the community. It is a highly systematic process that requires careful planning, execution, waiting and wisdom to build a strong relationship with the residents in the neighbourhood and earn their trust by serving them so that they can see God's love in action and be brought into the family of God one day.

Like many things in the life of a Christian, the work is going to be tough. However, by keeping faith in God, our perseverance will see wonderful results and rewards. SP Lawrence urged us to be willing to do things that may seem counter-intuitive, trusting God to provide us with the ability and means to do the work He wants us to do.

Being 'counter-intuitive' simply means not relying too much on our own wisdom, understanding or usual ways of doing things based on worldly standards but on God. An example he gave was the church's financial situation when it first started community pastoring. Without much money, there was the thought of spending less on the ministry. Instead, God wanted the church to go ahead and spend more doing the work, which to many of us, was something very counter-intuitive. However, following God's leading, the church started to receive the money and resources needed for the

ministry in amazing ways. The church purposefully stewards God's money on gifts for the residents and on activities and events organised to engage them.

Another example was how a simple lady in the church, who after receiving Christ for some time, was asked to take on the role of cell leader. To many of us, a suitable candidate for the position would most likely be reasonably well-educated, has been a Christian for many years and has some applicable leadership experience. This example shows us that God often uses people we would not expect to do His work. We cannot rely on our own wisdom or understanding. We need to be willing to do things that may seem counter-intuitive but that God has called us to do.

Finally, SP Lawrence stressed the need to mobilise the whole church. Community pastoring is a labour-intensive ministry that cannot be left to the church staff or just a few people. He challenged us to educate the whole church on the importance of community pastoring and to involve everyone in the ministry. Involving the entire church in CP will also allow church members to own and share the responsibility of pastoring the neighbourhood community, and this in turn will help the church build a stronger identity.

LSBC has already paved the way for other churches in Singapore to start their own CP work. They have accumulated so much experience and knowledge over the last 26 years and are willing to share them with us. All we must do now is to learn from them, tap on the resources available to us, take that step of faith, obey God and move out into our neighbourhood community to touch those who have yet to know or come to Christ!

Learning Pointers from Community Pastoring (CP) Seminar (20 May 2023)

Reaching Out to Our Community with Love

Learning Pointers from Community Pastoring Seminar on 20 May 2023

Introduction

As church members, it is crucial for us to understand the significance of outreach in our community. Our purpose is not only to attend services within the church walls, but to heed the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ to go out into the world, spreading the gospel and making disciples. This short write-up of what I have learned during the CP seminar aims to inspire and guide us in our outreach efforts, emphasizing the importance of obedience, love, compassion, and faithfulness.

Understanding Our Calling

The foundation of our outreach lies in our calling as believers. Jesus has commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to go into the community, preaching the gospel and making disciples. (Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:19-20) We are reminded that outreach is not a matter of choice but a matter of obedience, as we are called to remain faithful to His teachings.

Stepping Out of Our Comfort Zone

To effectively share the gospel with our community, we must be willing to step out of our comfort zones. This means actively engaging with the people around us, earning their trust, and establishing friendships before sharing the message of salvation. It is only by earning their trust that we gain the privilege to speak into their lives, to pray for them, and to present them the opportunities to hear the gospel.

Moving People from the Community to the Church

As we establish connections within the community, our goal should be to move people from their positions of openness and receptivity in their homes to the sanctuary of our church. This transition is essential in creating an environment where individuals can experience the love of God within a church community.

Shared Responsibility

Outreach and caring for the community should not be left solely to the church staff or a select few members. It is a labor-intensive endeavor that requires the involvement and commitment of every believer. By collectively embracing this responsibility, we fulfill our calling to pastor the poor and needy, just as Jesus exemplified His immense compassion for them.

Acceptance and Humility

It can be challenging for believers to accept and associate with those of lower social status within the community. However, we are urged to be willing to associate with people of low position, and also to live in harmony and not be conceited. (Romans 12:16) As followers of Christ, we must overcome our own biases and extend love and acceptance to all, regardless of their position in society.

Authenticating Christ's Mission

The messianic ministry of Jesus was marked by compassion and reaching out to the poor and marginalized. (Luke 7:22) As representatives of Christ today, we continue to authenticate His mission by caring for those who are in need, demonstrating His love through our actions.

The Good Samaritan Model

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us the essence of being a neighbor — showing compassion and meeting the needs of others. (Luke 10:30-37) By embodying the Good Samaritan's example, we extend the Lord's compassion to the community, loving the poor, accepting them, and lifting them up.

Motivated by Love

Our deeds of kindness should be motivated by genuine love, without any ulterior motives or expectations. By allowing love to guide our actions, we create opportunities for pre-believers to experience God's love and draw closer to Him. Our good deeds should serve as a testament to the Father's presence among us. (Matthew 5:14-16)

Patience and Grace

We must provide the people in our community with the opportunity and time to transition from darkness to light. This requires patience, understanding, and extending God's grace as they journey toward discovering His truth.

Measuring Success

Success in any outreach work is determined by actions that contribute to both the movement of people and the establishment of outreach ministries. Achieving a 1% success rate is considered a significant accomplishment and is celebrated accordingly. This celebration is inspired by Jesus' example of rejoicing over finding a single lost sheep among a flock of 100.

When it comes to measuring the success of our outreach efforts, it is important to shift our focus from the number of people being saved to a different perspective. While God alone can save souls and convict individuals of their need for Jesus, we can gauge the effectiveness of our outreach by evaluating the number and commitment of our church members.

Hence our focus should be on activating and committing church members to engage in outreach activities. By obediently following the Great Commission and Great Commandment, we create an environment where the Holy Spirit can work in the hearts of individuals, ultimately leading them to salvation.

Conclusion

In embracing the Great Commission, we are called to be faithful and committed laborers in the field. Through practical acts of love and kindness, fervent prayer, sharing the gospel, and inviting people into our church community, we participate in God's work of transforming lives. As we step out and extend His love to our community, let us trust in His power and allow Him to work through us, knowing that it is He who saves souls and brings about eternal change.

- **Wen Wei & Jinfay**

A Morsel of Food for Spiritual Nourishment

From the Community Pastoring Seminar on 20th May

Blessed am I and my fellow attendees at the Community Pastoring seminar on 20th May. I know that my fellow attendees will share with you a lot of the takeaway spiritual food. Here, I shall share a little morsel from the Bible story of Jesus feeding the 5000. (Mt 14:13-21)

Jesus was a compassionate man who was always willing to help those in need. One day, he was with a large crowd of people when it started to get dark. The disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

But Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." The disciples looked at each other, confused. They only had five loaves of bread and two fish among them. How could that possibly feed so many people?

But Jesus told them to bring the food to him. He then took the loaves and fish and looked up to heaven. He blessed the food and broke it into pieces, giving it to the disciples to distribute to the crowd. Miraculously, the food multiplied as it was passed around. Everyone ate until they were full, and there were even twelve baskets of leftovers!

This story reminds us that God is always with us, even amid scarcity. In our community outreach, He can do amazing things when we put our faith in him.

WE CAN ALL BE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD'S COMPASSION IN THE WORLD:

- When we share our resources with others, even if they seem small, God can use them to make a big difference.
- We should not be afraid to give what we have, but trust that God will use our gifts to meet the needs of others, just as he did with the five loaves and two fish.

- **Sunshine Ee**

CLEANING THE HOUSE

Martin Cheah

When my wife, Joo See, was still working, I used to vacuum and mop the house on a single day weekly. As age caught up, I had to slow down and split the cleaning process into two sessions: vacuuming on Thursday and mopping on Friday. Joo See thought the house was clean even though the cleaning was infrequent.

Recently, Joo See retired and now that she is home every day, she feels that the house isn't clean enough and wants to increase the frequency of cleaning. To do so, we need a better tool. We decided to buy a cordless Dyson vacuum cleaner which lets us clean the entire house with greater convenience.

The Dyson vacuum comes with a laser light at its cleaning head. With the naked eye, the floor seems very clean but once the laser light comes on, suddenly, the dust on the floor becomes evident. Now I cannot

overlook the dustiness around even if the floor looks clean. Thus, a new regime of house cleaning has been implemented.

The above can be a metaphor for sin. Even though we may appear sinless to others, we are all sinners in the eyes of God. That is what we call hypocrites. Some of us know it while others may think they have kept all the rules and are perfect before their maker.



1 John 1: 5-7

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

When God's light shine on you, will he find darkness? Did you know that you may have secret sins which no one (including yourself) knows about?

Having grudges against people, especially your own family in Christ? Nobody knows about it and sometimes you yourself hide it so deeply that you don't realize you have it. God wants us to forgive everyone, even those who have hurt us badly.

Pride and Jealousy are also very hard to detect. We may seem like humble people, but we secretly hide great pride and when we are not recognized then it turns to jealousy against those who are held in higher esteem.

Fear and Worry are generally part of human nature and so most of us don't regard it as secret sins but when we worry or fear then we are not trusting God and that gives the devil a foothold on us.

All of us fall into sin. Even the apostle Paul did what he didn't want to do because of the sin at work in him. (Romans 7:15) Satan would have us think that there is no possibility that we can be forgiven, he will try to get us to feel unworthy of God's forgiveness. When we sin, the Spirit will convict us of sin such that a godly sorrow will result. *"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."* (2 Corinthians 7:10-11)

Psalms 19:12-13

"How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. Keep your servant also from wilful sins; may they not rule over me."

1 John 1:7

'but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.'

Conclusion

"So clean house! Make a clean sweep of malice and pretense, envy and hurtful talk. You've had a taste of God. Now, like infants at the breast, drink deep of God's pure kindness. Then you'll grow up mature and whole in God." – 1 Pet 2:1-3 (MSG)

Are we all for a new regime of house cleaning spiritually? Then, let the light of God shine on you and the blood of Jesus cleanse you from all sin.

AUGUST 2023



Engaging Spiritual Warfare

(2 Corinthians 10:3-6, Ephesians 6:10-12)

From 1 July until 9 August, we are in the season called 40.Day 2023, a time of focused prayer for Singapore and the church. The goal is to see a revival in the body of Christ and to reignite believers with God's purpose for the nation. The high point of the season will be a gathering of believers at seven designated locations across the island to pray and praise with thanksgiving to God for His blessings.

As we enter this significant spiritual momentum, we must be aware that we will face opposition. This opposition is known as spiritual warfare, and it is not physical in nature. We must use spiritual weapons to fight this battle, not physical ones.

The Description of Our Warfare

Christians, knowingly or unknowingly, are enlisted in a spiritual battle the moment we surrender to Jesus Christ and receive Him as our Lord and personal Savior. This battle will continue until we are called home to glory. (Colossians 1:13)

The Bible compares Christians to soldiers, and for good reason. Just as soldiers must be prepared for battle, so too must Christians be prepared for the spiritual battle that we are all engaged in. This spiritual battle has been described as wrestling against the wiles of the enemy. It's not a physical battle, but it's just as real. We are constantly being bombarded with temptation and deception, and we must be vigilant in our fight against the kingdom of darkness. (Eph 6:10-12)

The enemy, Satan, is always lurking in the shadows, waiting for an opportunity to attack. That's why it's so important for us to be constantly in training and preparation for battle. We must be familiar with the enemy's tactics, and we must be armed with the truth of God's Word.

The Distinction of Our Weapons

Worldly weapons of aggression and violence are useless against the spiritual forces of evil. The only weapons that are effective in destroying the fortresses of Satan, unrighteousness, and false teachings are those that are given to us by God.

It is very important that we are prepared through our relationship with Jesus and living in righteousness, detesting the sinful nature so we can effectively operate the weapons of warfare. As Christians, we should know that we are not fighting for victory, but we are fighting from victory. Jesus has given us the victory over all powers of darkness, we only need to possess it and operate in it.

Winning in Christian warfare involves:

- Pulling down all strongholds. This means identifying and dismantling the lies, deceptions, and false beliefs that the enemy has planted in our minds. We do this by using the Word of God as a sword to cut through the enemy's lies and by filling our minds with the truth of God's Word. (1 Tim 4:1-4)
- Casting down imaginations. The Devil brings a lot of evil imaginations to our mind to challenge our faith and trust in God. We must resist the enemy by our shield of faith.
- Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. This means taking control of our thoughts and making sure that they are in line with God's will. We are encouraged to fill our hearts with pure, godly and righteous thoughts and to set our mind and heart on things in heaven. (Philippians 3:19, 4:8; Colossians 3: 1-3).

Putting on the whole armour of God

We must put on the whole armour of God, not just part of it. If we only put on part of the armour, we will be vulnerable to attack on the unprotected parts. The whole armour of God is described in Eph 6:11-19.

Prayer and intercession are among the key weapons that we can use in winning over all challenges. When we pray and intercede, we are asking God to intervene in the battle and to help us to defeat the enemy.

Summary

- We are always in a battle with the kingdom of darkness. This battle is spiritual, and it is not always visible to us. However, it is real, and it is important that we are aware of it.
- Carnal weapons are inadequate and irrelevant in fighting this spiritual battle. We need to use the spiritual weapons that God has given us.
- It is our responsibility to ensure that we are always battle-ready.

The 40-day spiritual exercise will come and go, but the life of every believer will remain. We can use the spiritual weapons that we have gained during the exercise to stand in the gap for others and to exalt God's name. When we pray and intercede for others, we are asking God to intervene in their lives and to bring about His will. We are also lifting God's name and declaring His greatness.

May God add to the harvest in His kingdom as we stand in the gap with our hands lifted high to exalt His name. Together, we can make a difference in the world and bring glory to God's name.

Rev Anthony Loh

Prayer Focus For August

1) Spiritual Revival:

Pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the churches in Singapore, that they may be filled with a passion for God and His agenda, and be united in their pursuit of His will.

2) Sensitive to the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit:

Pray that all believers would be bold to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit in reaching out to the lost even if it is difficult.

3) Empowering by the Holy Spirit:

May all believers be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome life challenges and be set free from bondages and temptations.

4) People ministry of JCC:

Pray for the children, youth, young adults, and adults of JCC, that they would grow in their relationship with God and be equipped to serve in the ministries of the church with wisdom and a humble heart.

5) Outreach thrust of JCC:

Pray for the outreach ministries of JCC – DGP, Goshen Initiative, Life Shine Community Services, Cell outreach, etc. – that they would be effective in reaching out to the lost and bring glory to God.

Shine Your Light

Comparing two songs

The NDP 2023 Theme Song is titled "[Shine Your Light](#)". In this song, there is a line that says:

*"Shine your light so bright for the world to see
(Through The Rain, Our Hearts remain the same)"*

Some netizens expressed a view that this song sounds like a Christian worship song. I recall the familiar Christian worship song "[Mighty to Save](#)" which also has the words "Shine Your light" in its lyrics:

*"Shine Your light and let the whole world see
We're singing for the glory of the risen King, Jesus"*

There are differences between the two.

The NDP song is more upbeat. It is explained at <https://tinyurl.com/4ptvm8k5> that the song is all about "reaffirming the 'can-do' and 'go-getter' spirit of Singaporeans and encouraging us to continue chasing our goals, overcoming adversities and helping others along the way. In doing so, everyone can shine a light and inspire others to give their best too."

The Christian song is more solemn. It is about finding hope of salvation in Jesus.

In John 8:12, Jesus says of Himself, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." In the Christian song, Jesus is the Hope of nations, and the words "Shine Your light" (with the Y in uppercase) is a supplication to Him to shine His light "and let the whole world see."

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah describes a time when *"the people who walk in darkness will see a great light."* This suggests that God's light can bring hope to those who are living in spiritual darkness.

The NDP song is remarkable for its powerful expression of optimism in a world beset with uncertainties, and Singaporeans of all beliefs can enjoy it. It is good as a cheer for us to be a beacon upon the world by sharing our strengths and inspiration as we celebrate our nation's 58th birthday.

As Christians, we love Singapore like all Singaporeans. However, it is natural for Christians to contemplate blessings beyond the physical and material aspects.

The Spiritual Dimension

We are thankful to God that Singapore is very much a blessed nation able to bless others. However, for all our blessedness, we are still imperfect. Beyond secular wellness, there are heavy-laden souls in need of hearing the Gospel and finding comfort in God's grace and mercy.

In the *LoveSingapore 40.Day 2023* season of prayer (1 July – 9 August 2023), Christians devote 40 days to join hearts in praying for Singapore in the 40 days leading up to National Day. They also take on board the devotional thoughts of 40 church and para-church leaders.

In Psalm 27, the psalmist acknowledges God as his light and his salvation. This suggests that God's light can help us to find our way through the spiritual darkness of life.

Message from Bishop Rennis Ponniah

On the 2nd day of the 40th Day 2023, Bishop Rennis Ponniah (Retired 9th Anglican Bishop of Singapore) shared his devotional thought. (<https://tinyurl.com/4fxr84ny>) Here is an outline of his message:

The passage from Isaiah 49:5-6 is a call to the faithful in Singapore to:

- 1. Be a light that calls the nation to the Living God.*
- 2. Be a light that reaches the nations of the world.*
- 3. Be filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit so that they can be a radiant light that touches and transforms our nation and then reflects salvation and glory to the nations. The power to be such a light is not within us, but in God. We need to come to God, broken and empty and desperate, that He might mend us and fill us with the oil that causes His mighty light to shine through us. May this season of fasting and prayer be a time of calling out to God for the oil of the Holy Spirit, so that the faithful remnant in Singapore can grow and be the bright light that calls our nation Godward and shines on the nations of the world.*

Jesus' Light & Our Light

When we sing the Christian song "Mighty to Save", we supplicate in earnest for Jesus to shine His light (to dispel the spiritual darkness) and let the world see the glory of our risen King.

When we sing the NDP song, we are inspired to shine our light which can be interpreted broadly to mean simply being a positive force in the world, or making a difference in the lives of others.

Be kind and compassionate to others, helping those in need, living a life of integrity, and standing up for what we believe in are some examples of Christian themes that are not in conflict with secular perspectives.

Mt 5:16 says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

This verse suggests that when we live our lives in a way that reflects Jesus' love, compassion, and service to others, we are shining His light into the world. This light can help to dispel the darkness of sin and evil, and it can point people to Jesus as the source of hope and salvation.

John Lee

The JCC Cell Groups Community

Overcoming Challenges and Growing Together

John Lee

A Message from Acts

On 9th July, Rev. Philip Huan delivered a powerful message based on Acts 6:1-7. The title of the sermon was "A GROWING CHURCH BEGINS WITH ME." You can listen to the sermon again at <https://tinyurl.com/3basvsfb> (starting 28:50).

If you are involved in some way in the mission of the church, and are faced with problems, how does the message from Acts 6:1-7 encourage or challenge you?

The message from Acts 6:1-7 connects with the mission and pains of CGLs in several ways.

Challenges & Problems of CG Community

The CG community is often faced with challenges and problems. These problems can be distractions that prevent us from focusing on our mission. However, we try to view these problems as stepping stones to grow our CGs and make more disciples.

For example, one of the pains that CG leaders often face is feeling isolated and alone. This can be a very discouraging feeling, and it can make it difficult to keep going.

However, we view this pain as an opportunity to connect with other CG leaders, to share our common concerns and lend support to each other to build a stronger community. Bryan Tay has floated one thoughtful idea about CGLs encouraging and supporting each other by "cross-ranching." This means that CGLs from different cell groups can come together to pray for each other, share ideas and offer support.

We also draw useful lessons from the Bible to help us cope with our heavy work of ministry:

- *The LORD said to Moses, "Bring Me seventy of the elders of Israel known to you as leaders and officers of the people... They will help you bear the burden of the people, so that you do not have to bear it by yourself."* (Numbers 11:16-17)

This passage reminds us that we are not meant to carry the weight of ministry alone. **God calls us to work together, to support and encourage each other.**

- In Acts 6:1-7, we see the early church facing a similar challenge. The apostles were feeling overwhelmed by the workload of caring for the widows, so they called on the church to help. The result was the appointment of seven men who were full of the Spirit and wisdom.

This shows us that it is okay to ask for help, and that God will provide the people we need to get the job done.

- Rev Anthony encouraged those CGs whose composition are mostly elderly members, to remember the story of Caleb. Caleb was eighty-five years old when he asked for the hill country saying, "I am still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out. As my strength was then, so it is now for war..." (Joshua 14:11)

We are not too old to serve God. **No matter our age or experience, we can all find ways to serve God and His people.**

"A GROWING COMMUNITY BEGINS WITH ME"

Come, let us as a CG community overcome challenges and grow together.

JUST BELIEVE

Martin Cheah

What must I believe to be saved? John Piper was asked this question. His answer can be summarized by saying that we must believe in 4 things:

1. Sin – We must believe that we are sinners. A person who doesn't believe he is a sinner cannot be saved.
2. God – We must believe that there is a Creator God, and we fall short of His expectations.
3. Cross – We must believe that Jesus, the sinless Son of God, died on the Cross and thus paid the price for our sins.
4. Faith - Instead of working for salvation, we must have faith in Jesus and His sacrifice, and trust that He has done what needs to be done for our salvation.

Some Bible verses about believing in Jesus

Mark 16:16

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 6:47

Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life.

John 20:31

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Acts 16:31

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

Romans 1:16

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 10:9-10

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Is it that simple?

Many people cannot accept that salvation is so simple. There must be something more to it than just believing in Jesus. Complaining that it is unfair, they say, "What about your sins?"

In Mark 1:15b, Jesus said, "*Repent and believe the good news!*"

When you come to your senses about your sin, repent and ask for forgiveness. Believe that, as 1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

Unable to stop sinning?

Some Christians feel that they are unable to stop sinning. They therefore struggle with the command "Go and sin no more" (John 8.1b KJV) that Jesus gave to the woman caught in adultery.

Martin Luther says, "Only those sinners belong in the kingdom of Christ who recognize their sin, feel it, and then catch hold of the Word of Christ spoken here: *'I do not condemn you.'* Even if sinners are knaves and criminals, their sins will be forgiven, as long as they feel them, repent of them, and ask God for forgiveness."

Luther's point is that we are all sinners and will always be. But if we recognize our sin, feel its weight, and repent of it, then God will forgive us and not condemn us.

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

"Godly sorrow" is sadness that comes because of hurting God instead of pleasing Him. This kind of sadness leads the person to stop committing that sin and turning to God in repentance. Our repentance is a sign that we are still aware of God's standards and that we still care about what He thinks.

"Worldly sorrow" is sadness over earthly things, for example, financial troubles or loss of a job. It is a sadness related to the pleasures and desires of this life in this world. It does not lead to changing our lifestyle and helping us become morally better people.

Pastor Matt Richard comments thus, "But what happens when we do sin? When we do sin, because we always will in this life, we don't try to do all sorts of good with the intent that the good will atone for the bad. No! This goes the way of works righteousness. When we do sin, we get to confess our sins freely to God. The sinful nature and its deeds get to be continually crucified into Christ." (<https://tinyurl.com/w6dax97h>)

The Bible defines sin as lawlessness. (1 John 3:4) The consequences of sin can be both spiritual and physical. Spiritually, sin separates us from God. Physically, sin can lead to disease, addiction, and other problems. Although guilt and shame can be a step forward in a Christian journey, it can also bring harmful effects of depression, anxiety and other mental health problems.

I do not want to give anyone the impression that they can continue with their sins without facing any consequences. We stop sinning not by trying to stop sinning, but by walking with Jesus and inviting God into the dark places of our life. His light will dispel all our darkness.

Is Believing in Jesus enough?

Billy Graham states it this way:

Just to say "believe in Jesus" can produce a false assurance of salvation because even the devil "believes in Jesus." To believe in Jesus is to turn from a life of sin, receive Him as Savior, and follow Him as Lord by obeying His word. When this happens, a person's desires change as they begin to follow His teachings found in the Bible.

We have no holiness of our own; as the Bible says, *"All our righteous acts are like filthy rags"* (Isaiah 64:6). But when we come to Christ, God takes those rags away, and He clothes us instead with the perfect holiness of Christ.

"The law says, 'Do this!' and it is never done. Grace says, 'Believe in this man!' and immediately everything is done." – Martin Luther.

Alpha to the Omega

Samuel Chong

Z is for...

Zeno

“Very truly I tell you,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’” (John 8:58)

“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” (John 1:14)



Coin depicting Emperor Zeno (c.477-491 AD), Wikimedia Commons.

Who was Zeno?

Zeno was the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Emperor from 474 AD to 491 AD. His reign was marked by political intrigue, military challenges, religious tensions, and the end of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD. Nonetheless, Zeno was credited with stabilising the Eastern Roman Empire, which would last for another millennium. In church history, Zeno is known for the *Henotikon* (“act of union”), which aimed to settle the controversy over the nature of Christ.

Background

The Roman Empire founded by Augustus had within 400 years grown too large to be governed by a single emperor from a single capital. The Empire was then split in half – the West and the East, each with its own Emperor and junior co-Emperor.

Zeno, originally named “Tarasis”, was born around 425 AD in the province of Isauria (in modern day Turkey). The Isaurians were considered barbarians by the Romans despite having been Roman subjects for more than 500 years. Faced with few options for advancement, Tarasis embarked on a military career and gained recognition for his military prowess and leadership skills. He soon caught the attention of the reigning Eastern Roman Emperor Leo I, who gave his daughter in marriage. To make himself more acceptable to the Roman elite, Tarasis adopted the Greek name “Zeno” after an earlier influential general/politician of Isaurian origin.

In 473 AD, Leo I proclaimed Zeno’s son Leo II (his grandson) as co-emperor, but died shortly after. At only 7 years old, Leo II was too young to rule himself and had to appoint his father Zeno as co-emperor. When Leo II died in late 474 AD, Zeno became sole emperor.

The Fall of the West

Weakened by years of barbarian intrusions, economic stagnation and corruption, the Western Roman Empire fell in 476 AD to the Germanic tribes under Chieftain Odoacer. Odoacer was content to rule Italy alone and sent an envoy recognising Zeno’s reign over the entire “reunited” Empire; in return Zeno recognised Odoacer as king of Italy. This peaceful arrangement avoided prolonged conflict with the Germanic tribes and allowed the Eastern Roman Empire to focus its efforts on preserving its remaining territories and ensure its survival until 1453.



Illustration of Romulus Augustulus surrendering his crown to Odoacer (c.1880), Wikimedia Commons.

The *Henotikon*

One of the defining moments of Zeno's rule was his issuance of the "*Henotikon*" ("act of union") in 482 AD, an attempt to resolve the bitter religious dispute tearing apart the Christian East.

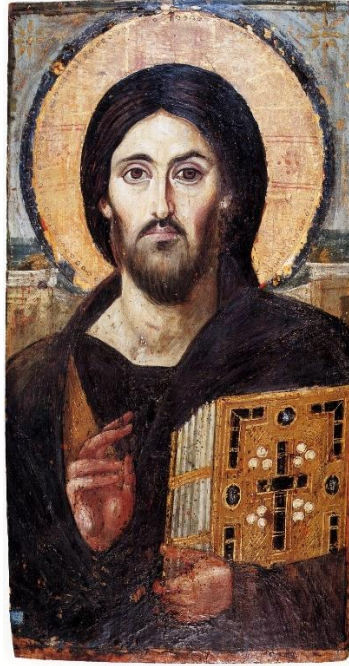
At the heart of the conflict was the Christological controversy between the Chalcedonians and the Miaphysites on the nature of Christ:

Chalcedonians	Miaphysites
Christ has <u>two distinct natures</u> (divine and human) that are united in one person, i.e. the hypostatic union*	Christ has <u>only one nature</u> , a divine-human nature
Adherence to the definition established at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD	Argued that the Chalcedonian definition threatened to undermine the unity of Christ's person and emphasise His divinity.

*Lutherans, along with other mainline Protestant, Catholic and Greek/Russian Orthodox churches adhere to this understanding (i.e. Chalcedonian Christianity), as affirmed in the Athanasian Creed.

Zeno's document aimed to appeal to both sides by avoiding use of controversial terms (e.g. referring to Jesus as just "The Son"). It also attempted to strike a balance by affirming the decisions of the Councils of Nicaea (325 AD – produced the Nicene Creed) and Constantinople (381 AD – confirmed the Nicene Creed) which established the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith, while avoiding any explicit endorsement of the Chalcedonian definition. Ultimately, both sides rejected the compromise – the Chalcedonians saw it as not explicitly upholding their doctrinal position while the Miaphysites felt it fell short of acknowledging their beliefs fully.

The *Henotikon*, although well-intentioned, exacerbated tensions rather than solving the Christological controversy, contributing to further divisions in the Eastern Roman Empire.



Icon of Christ Pantocrator at St Catherine's Monastery on Mt Sinai (c.500s AD), Wikimedia Commons. It has been suggested that the two different facial expressions on either side emphasises Christ's dual nature as both divine (left) and human (right).

Conclusion

Zeno's reign exemplifies the same theme explored in several past articles, namely i) the intersection of politics and the church, and ii) Christianity being a diverse arena of theological views and cultures. Despite its failure to achieve its intended purpose, the *Henotikon* is a significant episode in the history of early Christianity. It highlights the complexities of reconciling differing theological viewpoints and the challenges faced by emperors in attempting to maintain unity in a diverse and religiously divided empire. Christianity is not a monolithic entity, and theological disputes persist to this day.

This article was written partially with the help of ChatGPT, cross-checked for factual accuracy from the respective Wikipedia articles.

Further Reading

[Zeno](#)

[Henotikon](#)

[First Council of Nicaea](#)

Concluding Reflections from the Author

It has been just over two years since I embarked on this project. Its poetic that the series started and ended with a Roman emperor (Augustus and Zeno); the Roman Empire, after all, holds a very crucial role in the development of the Church. I hope that readers appreciate that history is *not* straightforward, and always a lot more complicated, and we can never fully understand what happened. Nonetheless we should not shy away from reading more about church history (and history in general) and theology, even all the nasty and complicated bits. Thank you for journeying with me these past two years and I hope you have enjoyed reading these articles as much as I have enjoyed writing them. As to my next work, well, I think I shall go on indefinite hiatus until I can think of something worthwhile to write about (*if you have suggestions, please let me know*).

ALPHABET SOUP

Utilise God's heavenly resources

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.
-- John 15:16 (NIV)



Our God created the whole universe and everything in it. Heaven's storehouse of riches is always open to those who ask, seek and knock in Jesus' mighty name. As His children, we do not lack anything. God knows that we need resources to do His work. He expects us to ask. He will willingly give abundantly, always in His good time, never too early or late.

Here is where we need to do our part diligently to trigger the release of God's resources: **A**cept His authority over our lives, **B**elieve in His promises, and **C**ry out to Him. God does not only provide physical resources. He also sends His angels who are ministering spirits to protect and serve His children. And when the situation calls for it, God Himself will intervene directly to achieve His

desired purpose. This is our mighty God.

What does God say about this?

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19 (NIV)

And whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

1 John 3:22 (NIV)

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

What does this mean for practical living?

Remember that we live both in the physical realm and the spiritual realm. As Christians, our world is more than "WYSIWYG" (What You See Is What You Get). We cannot see things that happen in the spiritual realm unless God opens our eyes to them or chooses to reveal them to us. In everyday life, we make use of earthly resources to solve problems. But not all problems can be solved with earthly, physical resources.

For each situation in your life, call on the heavenly resources in God's storehouse. Do not rely solely on our material resources and human beings, even kings and princes. Follow the example of holy men in the Bible and Jesus himself by invoking God's action to protect His name, administer justice and bring glory to our Father in heaven. Let God fight the battle for us. We simply need to follow His instructions. Remember how God provided Nehemiah with resources to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days, which was a monumental task at that time! If God has placed a burden on your heart to do something, He will provide the resources to make it happen.

Reflect and respond to God's Word

- Who do you run to for help first when a problem arises? Why?
- What do you need to do to trigger the release of God's heavenly resources?
- Commit to God a current situation that you are facing. Invoke His help. Draw from His heavenly resources and see Him act.

HAPPENINGS

A Photo Record of Recent Events

Various Photographers



2nd Jul - JCC celebrated its 56th Anniversary with songs, flag dances, worship and fellowship. (ref 1 Corinthians 12:12)



18th Jun - Medical Mission to Cambodia. A team comprising of 7 adults and a child was sent forth to Cambodia. (ref Mark 16:15)

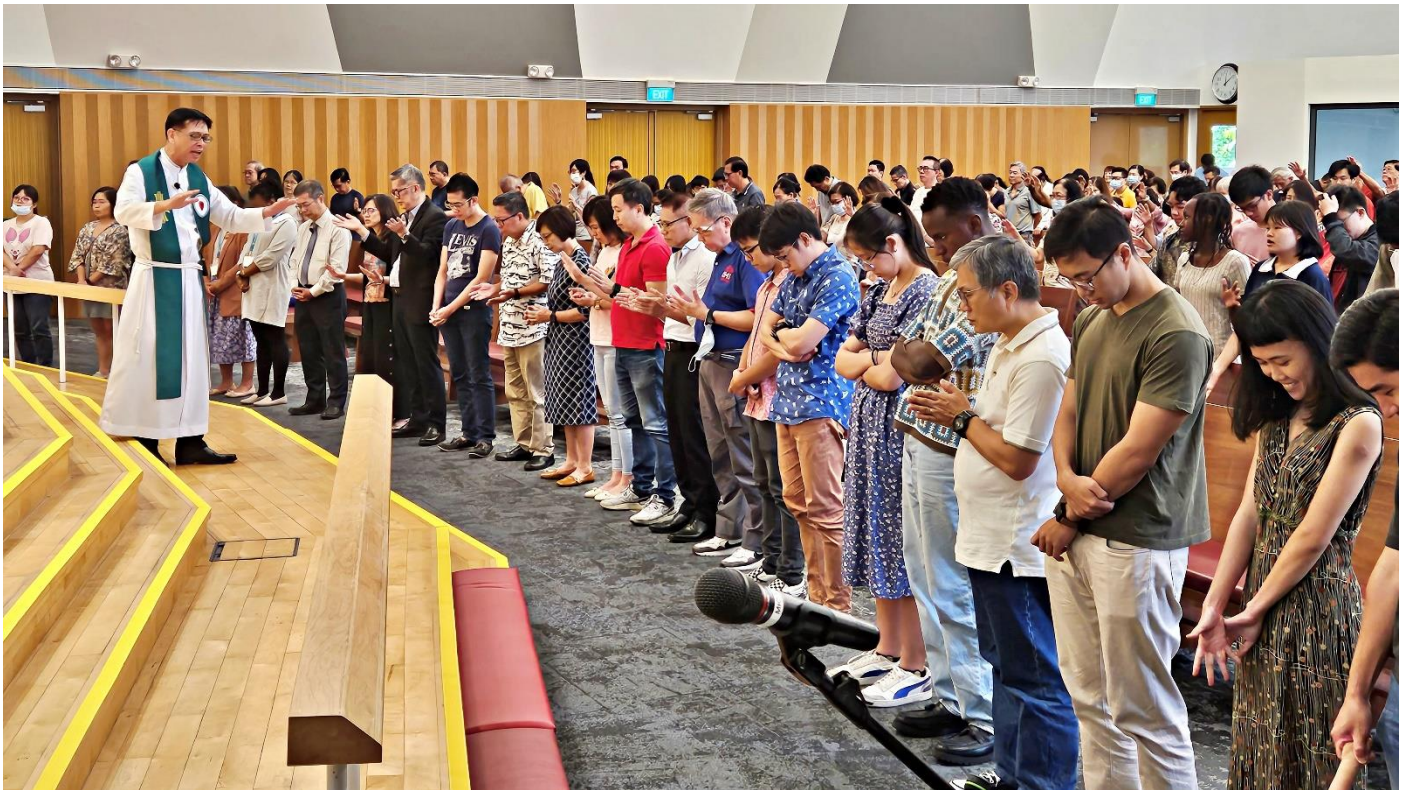


15th July - Adult Cell Group Leaders and Core Team members met to keep each other abreast about the condition of their CGs and share the problems each faced. (ref Isaiah 41:10)
(read "The JCC Cell Groups Community" article)



25th June - Visit to International Lutheran Seafarers Mission at Jurong Port by a group of about 20 JCCians to bring clothes and God's presence to the seafarers who were mostly fishermen. (ref Matthew 25:40)

SEPTEMBER 2023



A Life Transformed By The Renewing Of Our Minds

(Rom 12:2 & Philippians 4:8-9)

We give thanks to God for our recent National Day. The celebration was filled with much energy and colour, showing the progress of our nation despite the challenges we face in the world.

As we move forward as a prosperous nation economically, may we also continue to grow in our hearts toward God, the things of God, and each other.

The key to growing in Christ and having our lives transformed by Him is to renew our minds. **Apostle Paul says in Rom 12:2, “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.”**

What does it mean to renew our minds? It means to change the way we think. We need to focus our thoughts on God and His Word, and we need to replace negative thoughts with positive ones — a God-centred perspective. When we do this, our behaviour will change, and we will become more like Christ.

The Bible gives us some specific instructions on how to renew our minds. **In Philippians 4:8 Paul tells us to think about things that are true, noble & right, pure, lovely & admirable, excellent or praiseworthy.** These are qualities that are found in Christ.

Whatever is true

Dr. Walter Cavert conducted a survey on worry and found that only 8% of the things people worry about are legitimate matters of concern. The other 92% were either imaginary, never happened, or involved matters over which the people had no control.

The Bible teaches us that Satan is the liar (John 8:44) and that he wants to corrupt our minds with his lies (2 Corinthians 11:3). The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, controls our minds through truth (John 17:17; 1 John 5:6). When we believe a lie, Satan takes over.

We can protect ourselves from Satan's lies by meditating on God's Word, praying for discernment, surrounding ourselves with positive people, and challenging negative thoughts.

Whatever is noble and right

Noble means "worthy of respect and honour." Right means "just and fair." Christians should think about things that are noble and right, and avoid things that are not. This does not mean we should ignore reality or pretend that bad things don't exist. But it does mean that we should not focus our attention on dishonourable things or allow them to control our thoughts.

Some examples of things that are noble and right: Love for God and others, peacemaking, forgiveness, helping those in need, standing up for what is right, speaking the truth in love.

Some examples of things that are not noble and right: Hatred, violence, lying, stealing, cheating, taking advantage of others.

Whatever is pure, lovely and admirable

The world is constantly bombarding us with images and messages that promote impurity. We see it on TV, in magazines, and on social media. It can be difficult to resist these temptations, but it is important to remember that God calls us to think on things that are pure, lovely, and admirable.

- Pure means morally clean and undefiled. This includes thoughts, words, and actions.

- Lovely means beautiful and attractive. This includes things that are aesthetically pleasing, as well as things that are morally good.
- Admirable means worthy of respect. This includes things that are noble, courageous, and selfless.

It is not always easy to think about pure, lovely, and admirable things, especially when we are surrounded by impurity. But it is important to remember that our thoughts have a powerful impact on our lives. When we fill our minds with good things, we will become more like God and we will make the world a better place.

Whatever is excellent or praiseworthy

There are many things that are excellent or praiseworthy in the world. Here are a few examples:

- LOVE is the greatest thing in the world. It is selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional.
- KINDNESS is the act of doing something nice for someone else, without expecting anything in return.
- COURAGE is the strength to do what is right, even when it is difficult.
- HONESTY is the quality of being truthful and trustworthy.
- FORGIVENESS is the act of letting go of anger and resentment.
- PEACE is a state of tranquillity and harmony.
- HOPE is the belief that things will get better.
- GRATITUDE is the appreciation for the good things in our lives.
- SERVICE is the act of helping others without expecting anything in return.

When we focus our thoughts on things that are excellent or praiseworthy, we are not only making ourselves happier, but we are also making the world a better place.

Conclusion

After his exhortation on right thinking (Philippians 4:8), Paul asks his listeners to put it into practice: “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:9)

In addition to right thinking, we also need to have right living. The peace of God is one test of whether we are in the will of God. When we live righteously, we experience the peace of God. But if we are living in sin, we will lose that peace.

Right thinking and right living are the conditions for having a secure mind and victory in life. When we have these two things, we are set on a Godly path and we can experience the peace of God.

Rev Anthony Loh

Prayer Focus For September

a) For JCCians to be witnesses for Christ:

- Pray that they would muster an evangelistic lifestyle and be bold to share the gospel at home, marketplace, school and in the neighbourhood community via the Goshen Bridges.

b) For the councilmen:

- Pray for wisdom and discernment for the councilmen as they make decisions for the church and work on their priorities in line with God's will for the good of the church across all language sections.

c) For our ministry leaders (Youth, Young Adults and Adults):

- Pray for the ministry leaders to be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and be effective leaders with a heart for the people they serve so that they would be able to make a difference in their lives.

d) For DGP teachers:

- Pray that the DGP teachers would be empowered with wisdom and skills to teach the children about God's love and also build good relationships with the children's parents.

e) For a suitable candidate to serve as Finance & Admin Manager in JCC:

- Pray that God would raise up a suitable candidate who is qualified and has the heart to serve the church.

f) For Outreach:

- Pray for open doors to build a strong relationship with neighbourhood residents and for opportunities to sow the gospel seeds in the hearts of the residents.

The Importance Of Context For Understanding The Bible

I tell you: *"Pastor Tan has always been gay ..."*

What do you think?

Let me continue my sentence: *"... and sprightly, a very sociable person who never fails to liven up a meeting."*

Were you correct in your thought about Pastor Tan?

The word "gay" can have multiple meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. In this case, it is being used to describe Pastor Tan's lively personality, not his sexual orientation.

Same words used in the Church and outside the Church can also convey different ideas. A minister in a Church ministry is poles apart from a minister as the head of a government ministry.

It is important to be aware of the potential dangers of misinterpreting words. When we take words out of their contexts, we can distort our understanding of the Bible and prevent ourselves from fully grasping its message.

Below are some examples of words from the Bible for illustration.

SLAVE

The Greek word "*doulos*" is translated as "slave" in the NET Bible and as "servant" in NIV:

- *"From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle ..."* (Rom 1:1 NET)
- *"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle ..."* (NIV)

Paul refers to himself as a "*doulos of Christ Jesus*." In this sense, being a "*doulos*" is not an undesirable thing. (Think of the OM ship named "Doulos".)

However, the word "*doulos*" can also be used to refer to a person who is in bondage to another person. The NT does not explicitly condemn slavery, but it does contain some passages that can be interpreted as being critical of it. For example, in Gal 3:28, Paul says that "in Christ there is neither slave nor free." This passage has been interpreted by some as a call for the abolition of slavery.

In the early Christian period, slavery was commonplace. There were different types of slaves. Some were well-treated and became like close family members. Of course, there was also abuse by cruel slave owners. Besides, there was a difference between a bondsman and "one who is made slave."

When we read the word "SLAVE" in the Bible, we should understand its contextual meaning. Even in the sense that assaults our modern sensibilities, an awareness of the complex historical social milieu will be helpful to us in dealing with the question of why God allowed slavery in the first place.

APOSTLE

The title "apostle" refers to Christ Himself. (Heb 3:1)

It applied to the twelve disciples chosen by Christ. (Lk 6:13-16) The list of the Twelve was reconstituted with Matthias replacing Judas. (Acts 15:26) The title was restricted to the Twelve, who were regarded as the Church's foundation. (Rev 21:24)

In Acts 14:14, Barnabas was given the title "apostle"; likewise in Rom 16:7, Andronicus and Junias. For these three, "apostle" is used in a general sense to refer to someone sent as a messenger of Christ; as in

John 13:16 (NIV) – “*Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a **messenger [Greek: *apóstolos*]** greater than the one who sent him.*”

In Rom 1:1, Paul claimed the title “apostle” for himself. Although he was not one of the Twelve, he was nevertheless sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father. (Gal 1:1) The marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles are mentioned in 2 Cor 12:12.

In Acts 19:11, we read that God did extraordinary miracles through Paul. We also read in 2 Cor 12:13-15 how Paul was self-sufficient in his needs and not a burden to the Corinthians.

The Greek word for “apostle” carries conceptual differences in its usages within and without the NT. Even if the term is considered appropriately used today to refer to someone who is called to a special ministry of planting churches and spreading the gospel, it does not imply full conceptual equivalence to all the apostles of the early church.

DISCIPLE

In the NT, the term “disciple” is only used in the Gospels and Acts.

It refers to those chosen by Christ among whom the Twelve were designated as apostles. (Luke 6:13)

Here are three Bible translations of the Lord’s command (Mt 28:19):

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ...” (NIV)

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ...” (KJV 1900)

“So go and make followers of all people in the world ...” (NCV)

It is apt to think of a disciple as a learner (with a teacher) and as a follower of Jesus who abides by His teachings on the right way of life.

Interestingly, being a learner/follower is also borne out by the Hebrew word for disciple in Isa 8:16. The same Hebrew word is rendered as “learned”, “well-instructed” or “taught” in different translations of Isa 50:4 and Isa 54:13.

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11:26) Other translations use the term “followers” or “believers” in place of “disciples”.

Thus, the term “disciples” in common usage in the Church is synonymous with “Christians”. (Acts 6:1) Christians cannot deny their discipleship status with Christ as their Great Teacher.

Conclusion

1 John 5:20 does not say that we must understand everything in order to know Jesus.

The danger is not in a lack of understanding, but in a surplus of misunderstanding.

For example, if we misunderstand the nature of God’s love, we may think that God is distant or uncaring. This misunderstanding could lead us to doubt God’s love and to give up on our faith.

Or, if we misunderstand the meaning of suffering, we may think that it is a punishment from God. This misunderstanding could lead us to despair and to lose hope.

John Lee

Venture out with God

Bryan Tay

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. -- Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)



Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith without works is dead. God rewards those who earnestly seek Him. He has not saved us just so that we can get to heaven when earth's life is over. Eternity and eternal life with God start the moment we repent of our sins and open our hearts to receive Him as our Lord and Saviour. We are joint heirs with Christ. We are seated with Jesus in the heavenly realms. We are God's people, called by His Name.

Each one of us is set apart to live and fulfil a divine purpose according to God's perfect will for our lives. He has assigned specific kingdom work for us. He knows our fear and anxieties. Consider the heroes of faith in the Bible. When God called them, none of them knew how things would pan out. Venture out in faith and cast your net where God tells you to. For He is with us wherever we go. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

What does God say about this?

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28 (NIV)

However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"— the things God has prepared for those who love him—

1 Corinthians 2:9 (NIV)

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

Psalms 32:8 (NIV)

What does this mean for practical living?

Living a life without God is meaningless. Living a Christian life without enjoying the fullness of His presence and fulfilling His will for our lives is worse. As God's children, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing that God has released and showered on us when Jesus died on the cross. We simply need to claim our rights and heritage. Each one of us has a God-given mission that no one else can take over. No exceptions.

To venture out with God is to walk with Him and work with Him, oftentimes out of your comfort zone. You simply need to do three things. Firstly, be willing to submit yourself completely to Him without reservation. Secondly, spend time to pray and study the Word to discover God's specific will for your life. There is no shortcut. You may not see the whole path but you will certainly be guided to take the next step. Lastly, execute fully what He tells you to do and leave the results to Him.

Reflect and respond to God's Word

- Are you willing to submit yourself unreservedly to God? Why?
- What are you doing to seriously discover God's specific will for your life?
- Identify one burden that God's has placed upon your heart. Pray, claim God's promises and start venturing out with Him.



It was Manna Bridge Party time on Saturday, the twelfth of August in JCC!

We give thanks to God for this gathering that we organised for the residents in the neighbourhood of JCC. It was a great fellowship with a pot-blessing meal. Many of us didn't know what foods the participants would bring to share. As it turned out, it was a delightful spread of dishes on the table for everyone to enjoy with some residents happily showcasing their culinary specialities.

It was not just the eating that was enjoyable. Pleasing to us was the fact that more and more residents have come to know us through our Manna Bridge and getting more active in involvement in our activities.

We pray for continuing opportunities to deepen our friendship with them, to pray for them and assist them in their needs in whatever ways we can.

We thank God as well for opening welcoming doors for us to reach out to the spiritual needs of our neighbours. We continue to send forth labourers to share testimonies about God's love and His blessings, for the gospel seeds to be sown into the hearts of people who, with God's leading, have turned from passivity to active listeners.

In the Bible, manna is food that God provided for the Israelites during their journey in the wilderness. Our Manna Bridge is an important link between us and the community in Taman Jurong. Across the Manna Bridge, we distribute manna (food) to meet physical hunger needs. Though we are thankful for the life-sustaining food that we have, to satisfy physical hunger, we are also reminded of God's provision and care for His people who have spiritual hunger. So, we continue to keep both the physical and spiritual needs of the community in our prayer, that God will bless them abundantly.

It was truly an encouragement for us to be able to welcome the large number of our neighbours to the church. This is possible with the keen involvement of JCCians in the Manna Bridge outreach to the community, in which we go first to them, get them and us to know each other better while we are still "strangers", and then grow our friendship with the grace of God in answering our prayers.

We continue to share with our neighbours the love of Jesus Christ that motivates our love for them.

John Lee

P.S.

Our photographer, Zheng Lin, was at the event. He shares the following thoughts about it:

I was grateful that the residents from around the church accepted our invitation to join us for lunch and fellowship. It was a great opportunity for us to get to know one another better.

Each of the residents was invited to bring a dish that they liked, and we could share it with one another. The term “potbless” aptly conveys the feeling that it was such a blessing that we were able to enjoy a feast of shared dishes at one place, flavoured with friendship.

In addition to the yummy food, we also had games and testimony sharing. The testimony sharing by Mani was particularly touching, and it was clear that he has a deep love for God.



Zheng Lin, only guy in

The interactions between the residents and our church members went really well, and it was not just at the same table. Many church members also moved around different tables to build bridges with different residents.

At the end of the session, we were all fully filled, not just with the food but also with hope and joy, knowing that we had made new friends and created good memories.

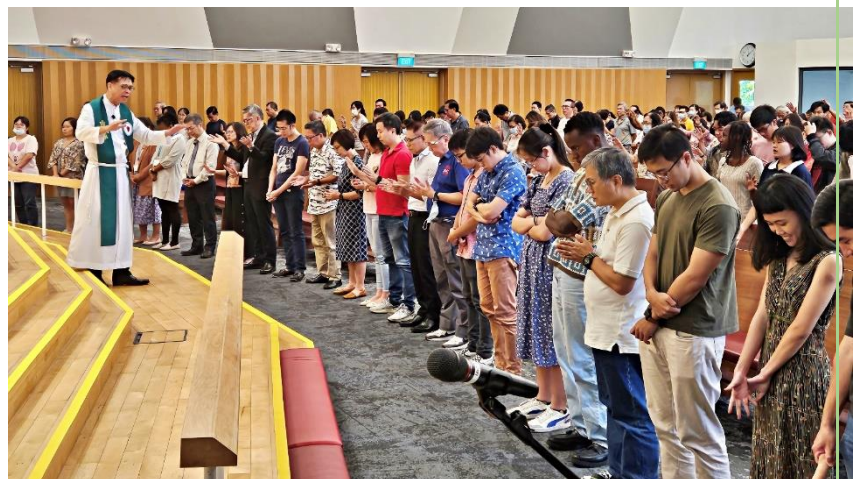
We are looking forward to the next potbless event, which will be held in December (during the

Christmas season). We hope to continue to reach out to the residents and build strong relationships with them.

TEACHERS' DAY

On Sunday 3rd September, JCC celebrated Teachers' Day. All the Sunday School teachers, helpers and Cell Group leaders were called to go forward to receive a prayer and a tote bag in recognition of their service.

I was among that group of youngsters and “young seniors” who served in a teaching role in the church.



The following Bible passages remind us of the importance of teachers in the church.

1 Corinthians 12:27-28

*Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, **third teachers**, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.*

Luke 6:40

*The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their **teacher**.*

Hopefully, next year the lineup will be filled with many more fully-trained teachers committed to teach others about God's love and truth.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD?

In recent weeks, the world has been experiencing an unusual amount of rainfall causing flash floods in major cities, washing away people, cars, bridges and buildings. At the same time, other parts of the world are threatened by spreading wildfires that destroy homes and everything in its path. If that is not enough, there are also many earthquakes in various quake prone areas.



In sunny Singapore there are no floods, wildfires or earthquakes. Our only major news was a Landslide win for Tharman (Shanmugaratnam) in the presidential election.

We thank God for His protection over Singapore.

Psalms 46

1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.

6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

7 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

8 Come and see what the LORD has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth.

9 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

11 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

DOES JESUS KNOW ME?

Martin Cheah with John Lee (Added Input)

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

²² *Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?'*

²³ *Then I will tell them plainly, 'I **never knew you**. Away from me, you evildoers!'*

Is it possible that the omniscient Almighty God does not know you? Could you have somehow slipped under his radar? If so, how would Jesus then know you? In John 10:27, Jesus says, "My sheep listen to my voice; **I know them**, and they follow me." Contrast this with what He says in John 10:26, "...but you do not believe because you are not my sheep."

Believing in Jesus, be His sheep, assures us that we are known by God and that we are truly saved; i.e., have eternal life. (John 10:28)

Some people asked Jesus "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" (John 6:28). By this question, they betrayed their naïve imagination that they needed to perform some meritorious deeds to earn their salvation.

Jesus responded, "This is the work of God, **that you believe** in him whom he has sent." (John 6:29)

The phrase "**that you believe**" means continuous believing, relying for salvation wholly on Christ.

The Father's will is that we believe in Jesus whom He sent and that we place our faith in what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross.

A person might claim to follow Jesus, with great theological insight, serving in the church, but it is only those who do the Father's will are known by Him.

Am I Depending on Works?

Many who stand before the Righteous Judge on that day will cry out to justify themselves based on their own works, but they will have failed to have faith in the only work that counts for eternity—Christ's work on the cross.

These people are counting on their good works to make them righteous, rather than the finished work of Jesus and His imputed righteousness. They have not understood that there isn't any good work that man can do to earn salvation. Salvation is never earned. It is freely given by God to those who are humbled and repent and trust in Christ's good work. The people claiming the merit of their good works are demonstrating pride, not humility, before God.

Does Jesus Know Me?

When Jesus said, "I never knew you," He was referring to fake Christians, false teachers, and those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. (Revelations 22:15) As Christians, we should understand this message as a warning. There are "wolves" who look like sheep. There are non-Christians who

look like Christians because of their words or their works. If these people truly knew Jesus, they would be praising His works, not their own works.

Do you love the world more? If you do, Jesus won't know you." If people hear Jesus' teaching but do not act upon it, they are deceiving themselves and heading for disaster. They are like the False Builder who builds a house that looks solid but has no foundation, and so is destroyed when the storm of testing comes (Matthew 7:24-27).

What Can We Do?

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)

Share the gospel of saving grace with someone today. Be faithful to proclaim the goodness of the Lord. Help people to understand that only by trusting in Jesus' finished work on the cross can anyone enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

In another endtime judgement (Matthew 25:27-40) story, the righteous will say, "Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?"

"And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'"

When you do good to your brothers and sisters, then Jesus will know you since you were doing it to Him.

Now is the time to ask, "Does Jesus know me?" Do not wait till that day.

THE TRIP

Martin Cheah

We planned a trip to Johor Baru on 31st August and to stay there for one night. We would then return to Singapore the next day to vote in the Presidential election.

Around 10:30am we took a bus to my daughter and son-in-law's house. From there we took a bus and the MRT to Kranji station. At Kranji station, we were supposed to take a bus to Woodlands checkpoint and cross the Causeway to JB for lunch.

However, that was only a plan. At the Kranji station, I tripped and fell at the steps leading to the bus bay. As I was falling, I tried to break my fall, but my reflexes were not quick enough. I hit the ground hard, but I did not feel any pain. I thought it was just an embarrassing moment for an old man. However, as I tried to get up, I saw blood spurting all over the ground and my t-shirt.

Shocked, my family tried to stem the bleeding with tissue paper and a kind stranger provided a pack of tissues for that. When the bleeding stopped, someone gave us a plaster to paste over the wound. Then we decided to take a taxi to a doctor at a nearby clinic. When we reached there, the kind doctor decided to take a look at the wound before admitting me because his clinic does not do suturing procedures. When he took off the plaster, his clinical assistant took a few steps backwards in surprise. I have not seen the wound but from her reaction I surmise that it must be nasty.

The kind doctor suggested we go to Urgent Care Clinic at Admiralty MRT for the stitching and didn't charge us a cent.

At the Urgent Care Clinic, the doctor offered me three options for closing the cut on my head: gluing, stapling or stitching. I chose stitching because it was the most secure procedure. As he stitched me, I was lying on the bed with a cover over my face. There was no pain, just some tiny pin pricks from the needle. As he was sewing, I was giving thanks to God for His goodness to me because it happened to me instead of my family. I would have been more grieved if it happened to them.

After changing my t-shirt, we decided to continue on our journey taking the MRT from Admiralty to Woodlands and then a bus to the Immigration. However, this time my daughter and son-in-law took over carrying the luggage. We passed the Customs very smoothly and reached St Giles hotel in Mid Valley at 4pm instead of the planned 1pm, missing lunch but instead had an early dinner.

The next day as we were passing through the Malaysian Customs on our way back, we could see a great number of people queueing to get in but we had a smooth trip back to Singapore and were able to cast our votes in time.

Thank God for the people He placed in our journey to help us along. The kind lady at the steps and the kind doctors. They were God-sent.

...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)



OCTOBER 2023



The mission is still the same after 2000 years

This month, October, is JCC Mission Month 2023. We thank God for the Goshen Initiatives that have allowed JCCians to be connected to our neighbours. This has opened doors for us to sow the gospel seeds in the tangible form of care and love for the community.

In the book of Acts, we read about how the early Christians were passionate about sharing the gospel with others. As a result, the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and then to reach many nations. This is a remarkable story of how God is using ordinary people to accomplish His extraordinary purposes.

Missiologist David Bosch says, "Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God." And, "Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love."

Yes, the word "mission" comes from the Latin word that means "to send." When we talk about the mission of the church, we're talking about God sending us to participate in His mission.

God's mission is to reconcile people with Himself and with one another. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins, so that we could be forgiven and have a new relationship with Him. He also calls us to participate in His mission by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others and by serving those in need.

In Mission Month 2023, we will be focusing on the following three aspects of God's mission:

- Ministry of reconciliation with God — We will be looking at the ways in which God has reconciled us with Himself through Jesus Christ and how we can help others to experience this reconciliation as well.
- Ministry of reconciliation with one another — We will also be looking at the ways in which God has called us to reconcile with one another and to build relationships that are characterized by love, forgiveness, and unity.
- Ministry of restoration of the broken — Finally, we will be looking at the ways in which God is restoring the brokenness of our world and how we can participate in this work.

All three of these ministries are related to the story of Adam and Eve's relationship with God. When Adam and Eve sinned, they broke their relationship with God and with each other. The world became broken and corrupt.

But God loves us and wants to restore our relationship with Himself and with one another. That's why He sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus' death made it possible for us to be reconciled with God and with one another.

We are called to participate in God's mission by sharing the gospel with others, helping people to forgive one another, and helping people to overcome the effects of sin in their lives.

What can you do?

Here are some ways that you can get involved in Mission Month 2023:

- **Pray for missions and missionaries** — Pray for the missionaries that JCC supports, as well as for all missionaries around the world. Pray for their safety, health, and wisdom. Pray that God will bless their work and use them to bring many people to Him.
- **Give financially to missions** — Investing in missions is a way to show that you are serious about God's mission. Consider giving a special gift to missions during Mission Month 2023.
- **Serve in your local community** — There are many ways to serve in your local community. Look for opportunities to meet the needs of those around you and to share the love of God with them.
- **Get hands-on with missions** — Make a direct impact on missions on the ground by joining mission trips (this year end) and helping out with the seafarers' mission.

The mission is still the same after 2,000 years. God is calling us to participate in His mission to reconcile people to Himself and to one another and to restore the brokenness of our world. Will you join us?

Blessings in Christ!

Rev Anthony Loh

Prayer Pointers For October (Mission Month)

- Sunday Service Missions Speakers** — Pray that God will speak to us through the Sunday Service missions speakers this month. Pray that their messages will inspire us to get involved in missions and to share the love of Jesus with others.
- Mission work around the world** — Pray that our eyes will be opened to the mission work that is happening around the world. Pray for the missionaries who are serving in difficult places. Pray that God will use their work to bring people to Him.
- Taking a faith step to go for mission work** — If you have ever felt called to go on a mission trip, pray that God will give you the courage to take that step of faith. He will provide for you and use you in His work.
- JCCians growing in Christ-likeness** — Pray that all JCCians will continue to grow in their relationship with Jesus and become more like Him. Pray that we will be bold witnesses for Christ in our world.
- Missionaries** — Pray for our missionaries, Chih Chiang and Bee (Thailand), Zewen (Cambodia), Hannah (OM), and our involvement in LCS mission works. Pray for their safety, health, and wisdom. Pray that God will bless their work and use them to bring many people to Him.

The Macedonian Call

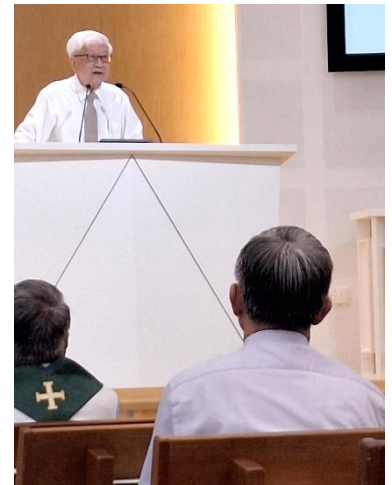
On Sunday 24th Sep, Rev Dr John Tay delivered his sermon on The Macedonian Call based on the book of Acts, chap16. Thereafter, we sang the hymn "Send the Light", reproduced in part here:

Verse 1

*There's a call comes ringing o'er the restless wave,
"Send the light! Send the light!"
There are souls to rescue, there are souls to save,
Send the light! Send The light!*

Verse 2

*We have heard the Macedonian call today,
"Send the light! Send the light!"
And a golden off'ring at the cross we lay,
Send the Light! Send the light!*



The Macedonian Call was a vision that the Apostle Paul received during his second missionary journey. At the time, Paul and his companions were planning to travel to Asia, but they were prevented from doing so by the Holy Spirit. Instead, they were led to Troas, a city on the coast of what is now Turkey. There, Paul had the vision of a man from Macedonia standing before him and pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." (Acts 16:9)

The Macedonian call represents the cry of the lost world for the light of the gospel. The call is urgent, as there are souls to rescue and souls to save. The hymn challenges Christians to respond to this call by sending the light of the gospel to all corners of the globe.

One might think that Paul could have ignored the call since Macedonia was far away. Besides, he and his companions originally wanted to preach the gospel in Asia, but the Holy Spirit forbade them (Acts 16:6). However, he immediately understood that this was a call from God. So, the next morning, he and his companions set sail for Philippi, the first city in Macedonia.

There were daunting challenges in the mission, such as the following:

- Opposition from the Jewish authorities. When Paul and Silas arrived in Philippi, they were followed by a slave girl who was possessed by an evil spirit of divination. The masters of the slave girl were making money from her divination, so they were angry when Paul cast the spirit out of her. (Acts 16:16-19) The masters of the slave girl dragged Paul and Silas before the city magistrates and accused them of being Jews who were disturbing the city and preaching customs that were unlawful for Romans to accept. (Acts 16:20-21)
- Opposition from the Roman authorities. The magistrates in Philippi ordered Paul and Silas to be beaten and imprisoned (Acts 16:22-24). This was a humiliating and painful experience for Paul and Silas, but they endured it because they were committed to preaching the gospel.

Despite the persecutions, Paul was successful in his mission to Macedonia. He established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. He also converted several prominent people, including Lydia (Acts 16:11-15) and the whole household of his jailor (Acts 16:34).

Rev Dr John Tay mentioned the unusual features in the story of Paul and Silas, including the way Paul and Silas were led to Macedonia, the significance of the gospel being spread from Asia to Europe, the way God

brought good out of the disaster of Paul and Silas being beaten and jailed, the fact that Paul and Silas continued to pray and sing hymns in prison, the earthquake that opened the prison doors, and Paul's use of his Roman citizenship to get out of prison.

These unusual features highlight the power of God in the life of Paul and Silas, and they also show how God can use even the most demanding situations to bring about his good purposes. It shows that the gospel could be preached and accepted even in the most pagan and hostile regions.

God provided guidance in Paul's life. Even though Paul was prevented from preaching the gospel in some places, God still led him to the people who needed to hear it. We too can trust God to lead us in our lives, even when we don't understand what He is doing.

In JCC Mission Month (October), we can relate our Mission Call to the Macedonian Call:

- **Both are about obeying God's call to share the gospel.** In the Macedonian Call, Paul and his team obeyed God's call to go to Macedonia. In Mission Month, we are called to obey God's call to share the gospel with our neighbours, our community, and the world.
- **Both are about going beyond our comfort zone.** Paul and his team were comfortable staying in Asia, but God called them to go to Macedonia, a new and unfamiliar place. In Mission Month, we are challenged to go beyond our comfort zone and reach out to people we don't know and places we've never been.
- **Both are about trusting God.** Paul and his team trusted God to lead them and provide for them as they went to Macedonia. In Mission Month, we are called to trust God to lead us and provide for us as we share the gospel and serve others.

The Macedonian Call is a splendid example of how God is using ordinary people to accomplish His extraordinary purposes. It also shows that God is sovereign over our lives. He directs our paths and uses us for His purposes, even when we don't understand where He is taking us.

In Mission Month, Rev Anthony Loh says, ***"The mission is still the same after 2,000 years. God is calling us to participate in His mission to reconcile people to Himself and to one another and to restore the brokenness of our world."***

Having heard the Macedonian Call today, let's do our part to make Mission Month 2023 a success!

John Lee

MISSIONS IN A SCEPTICAL WORLD

(Synopsis of sermon by Rome Chew)

On 1st October, we were blessed to have Rome Chew from Cru Singapore with us and preach on doing missions, facing opposition and overcoming challenges, particularly in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world.

Chew begins by sharing his own experience of facing opposition and persecution while serving in East Asia. He then introduces the concept of BANI people, which an American anthropologist defined as people who are Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, and Incomprehensible. He argues that these types of people are becoming increasingly common in the world today. He then discusses how we can interact with BANI people in a positive way.

Chew concludes by discussing how we can share the gospel in a VUCA and BANI world.

You may listen to the full sermon on [YouTube](#) (starting at 33:05). The following is a synopsis of the key points.

In a VUCA world

We are living in a VUCA world. This VUCA world has the following undesirable characteristics:

- a) Volatile – Things can change quickly and unexpectedly. It is difficult to know what to expect, and there are often multiple factors that affect outcomes. For example, the war in Ukraine and Russia has caused a volatile situation in many parts of the world. The prices of goods are going up, shipping is disrupted, and inflation is rising.
- b) Uncertainty – The pandemic also created a lot of uncertainty. We didn't know what to expect from day to day, and things like shopping mall closures were frustrating.
- c) Complexity – Circumstances of missions are not as straightforward as they used to be. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, and things can often go wrong in unexpected ways.
- d) Ambiguous situations – These are even more difficult to deal with. We don't know what is going to happen, and there are multiple possible outcomes.

Yet, as Christians, we can see hope. The acronym VUCA also reminds us to focus on positivity:

(A) Victory over volatility (2 Cor 2:14)

Volatility can be challenging for missionaries, who often face opposition and persecution.

However, we can trust that God is victorious. Even amid chaos, He is still in control. We can stand firm on Him and still face a volatile world.

(B) Unshakeable despite uncertainty (Heb 12:28; Jer 29:11)

Uncertainty can be scary for missionaries, who often must make difficult decisions with limited information.

However, we can trust that the kingdom of God is unshakable. We have a future and a hope in Christ. We can strive to stay rooted in Him, even though the future is uncertain.

(C) **Compassionate God amidst complex circumstances (Mt 9:36)**

Complexity can be frustrating and discouraging. We often face challenges that are difficult to understand.

However, we can trust that God is compassionate. He understands our struggles and He cares for us. We can rely on His help as we navigate the complexities of missions.

(D) **A for Able (Philippians 1:6; 4:13)**

We don't have clear answers or solutions for ambiguous situations. This can be confusing and disorienting.

However, God is able and enabling. We can trust that God is with us. He will guide us and help us make the right decisions. We can rely on His wisdom and guidance as we face ambiguous situations.

Pray for BANI people

BANI people are becoming increasingly common in the world today. They are emotionally fragile, anxious, unpredictable, and difficult to understand. They may react to situations in unexpected ways, and it can be difficult to know what they are thinking or feeling. We see many examples of BANI people who melt down in public.

However, we can still trust God to help. He can give us the patience, understanding, and wisdom we need to interact with the BANI people in a positive way. As they can be draining and frustrating to deal with, we need to protect our own well-being and be resilient, be able to go with the flow and adapt to changing circumstances. God knows BANI people better than we do, and He can give us the guidance we need to interact with them in a way that is pleasing to Him.

Perseverance in Missions

In Acts 14:1-7 and 19-20, we read about Paul and Barnabas' missionary journey. They went to Iconium and spoke in the synagogue, and many Jews and Greeks believed. However, the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles against them.

Even though Paul and Barnabas faced opposition and physical violence, they continued to preach the gospel. This is an example for us today. We may face scepticism and opposition when we share our faith, but we must never give up. We must continue to speak boldly for the Lord and trust that He will confirm his message through us.

Even though it is challenging to share the gospel in a VUCA and BANI world, God is able to give us the resources we need to be successful. We can trust Him to protect us, give us perseverance, and open doors for us to share the good news.

John Lee

31 October 2023

What is special about the date 31 Oct 2023? The answer depends on who you ask.

Halloween (Can forget about it)

To people who seek the thrill of a “spooky season” and those who see it as a day of great business opportunities, this is a special day called Halloween.

Halloween has its religious origin in All Hallow's Eve, the evening before All Saints' Day (a.k.a. All Hallow's Day). In Catholicism, people used this day to commemorate the saints. Today, however, the meaning of Halloween has been completely twisted out of its original shape. People dress up in costumes, go trick-or-treating and participate in ghoulish activities such as “horror nights.” It has also become heavily commercialized, with businesses increasingly exploiting the day for profit.

The Bible explicitly condemns many of the activities of Halloween that are associated with superstition and the occult; such as divination, witchcraft and sorcery. If there is any element of ghost worship in Halloween celebrations in the West, how different is it from our Eastern 中元节 (Ghost Festival on 15th day of 7th lunar month)?

Personally, I believe it is best to forget about Halloween. I would rather relegate it to the dustbin of my memories and reserve my “memory chip” for something more significant.

The Reformation (Important to remember)

31 Oct 2023 is a significant day because it marks the 506th anniversary of The Reformation.

On this day in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church in Germany. That document challenged the doctrinal position of the Roman Catholic Church that Luther considered unbiblical. It sparked the Protestant Reformation which quickly spread from Germany and involved other reformers like Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin.

The Reformation was a time of momentous change and upheaval, but it was also a time of great courage and conviction. Martin Luther and the other reformers stood up to the power of the Catholic Church, even when it meant risking their lives. They were motivated by their conviction in the five solas, which are the core beliefs of the Protestant faith:

- Sola Scriptura: Scripture alone is the ultimate authority for Christian faith and practice.
- Sola fide: Salvation is by grace through faith alone, not by works.
- Sola gratia: Salvation is a gift of God's grace, not something we earn.
- Solus Christus: Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity.
- Soli Deo gloria: We should glorify God alone, not ourselves or anything else.

The five solas are still important today, and they can help us to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God.

By celebrating Reformation Day, we can remember the courage and conviction of Martin Luther and the other reformers, and we can commit ourselves to the truth that the Bible is the supreme authority for the church.

John Lee

Walk in the Spirit

Bryan Tay

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. -- Galatians 5:16 (NIV)



As God's children, the Holy Spirit lives in us to empower us to do great things for God. While we have the holy nature of God residing in us, the old sinful nature in us continually seeks to assert itself. When we walk in the Spirit, we make ourselves available to experience the fullness of God's power and manifestation in our lives: The power to **save**, the power to **heal** and the power to **deliver**. While these victorious results are manifested in the physical realm, they are outcomes of battles that are won in the spiritual realm.

When we walk in the Spirit, we also develop and manifest the fruit of the Spirit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. As we continue to walk in the Spirit, we ready ourselves to align with God's will by allowing His love and life-giving power to flow out from us as we work alongside Him.

What does God say about this?

These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

1 Corinthians 2: 10-12 (NIV)

And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Romans 8:27 (NIV)

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25 (NIV)

What does this mean for practical living?

We are living in the last days when anything that can be shaken will be shaken. We need to discern God's will. We need to discern good and evil. We need to wage war against the evil one to save the lost. We need to keep in step and move with the Holy Spirit. God's eyes are upon the righteous. He is looking for the man or woman who cares, so that He can reveal His will to His people and accomplish His purpose.

Walking in the Spirit means to be filled with the Spirit, to be sensitive to His voice and bidding. It means not walking by sight, but by faith. It means to pause and be sensitive to what God is saying and where He is leading us to. What we see in the physical realm may lead us to reason and conclude in certain ways. But we should be seeking spiritual wisdom. The wisdom from above, which God gives through the Spirit without reservation to those who ask Him.

Reflect and respond to God's Word

- Do you seek to be filled with the Spirit daily? Why?
- What do you need to do to follow and keep in step with the Spirit's leading?
- How can you differentiate between the Spirit's leading and your own voice?

JCC Dialect Ministry Cell Group

Martin Cheah

The Dialect Ministry Cell Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month in the MPH1. The average attendance is around 17 persons, including the maids who attend to their charges. I recently joined the CG meetings after Joo See retired in May and started to serve in the Dialect CG.



Unlike the English Adult, Young Adult or Youth Cell Groups, the Dialect CG does not comprise many cell groups. It is just one cell group with Deacon Nathan as the CGL. The group gathers in the MPH1 at 2:00 pm and spends about 1½ hours on worship, exercise, games, Bible study and then breaks out into smaller groups of 4 to 5 pax with one DLT member to lead the discussion. Tea break is provided at the end for the group to eat in the MPH1 or bring home for consumption.

The worship songs are usually extracted from the Internet or are pre-recorded Hokkien Christian songs. One or two DLT members lead the singing.

Some suitable exercise routines follow to help the elderly limber up for the games section. Games are usually played while seated to

avoid falls. Once the elders are all fired up, Deacon Nathan gives them a short spiritual lesson, sometimes from the previous Sunday's Hokkien sermon.

The elders are then split up into smaller random groups by counts of 1 to 4. All the 1's forming one group, 2's another group, and so on. The DLT members then lead the small groups in a time of discussion and prayer.

The tea break is then distributed to the groups at the end of their session. Some of the elders eat at the MPH1 and some take the items home.

The tables and chairs are then stacked back into their proper locations by some of the more able-bodied present, usually Jeffrey and Deacon Nathan.

You may want to consider helping out in this ministry. Here are some videos of the CG activities from the latest events for your consideration:

CG Meeting

21st Sep 2023

7th Sep 2023

17th Aug 2023

18th May 2023

12th Oct 2023

YouTube link

<https://youtu.be/TJNHb7ITNfo>

<https://youtu.be/l3zEM7s8ZtA>

https://youtu.be/3aBMW_k9WrA

<https://youtu.be/FeNyd7cRFDE>

<https://youtu.be/kSukCQ-dUOA>

The State of Christianity in Singapore: Causes for Concern

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan research organization that studies public opinion and social trends. They do this by conducting surveys, analysing data, and conducting other research methods.

A research analysis published by the Pew Research Center on Oct 6 (<https://tinyurl.com/yc4jaydd>) suggests that Singapore's religious diversity is "remarkable on a global scale". This is because Singapore is one of the few countries in the world where people of different religions live together in harmony and mutual respect. It is positive to note this as a testament to the country's commitment to religious freedom and tolerance.

You may also read a newspaper report of the research analysis here: <https://tinyurl.com/muknxd>.

"Focusing on the responses specific to Christians in Singapore," [Salt&Light](#) highlights 10 causes of concern for the Church.

The concerns for the Church include observations that a substantial number of Christians in Singapore are not taking their faith seriously, not upholding the core tenets of Christianity (such as the belief in the one true God and the importance of evangelism) and not praying regularly.

The church in Singapore must navigate a complex landscape of challenges, including, inter alia:

- Difficulty for the Church to reach people and share the gospel to a uniquely high number of Singaporeans who are identifying as non-religious. This difficulty is accentuated by poor apologetics and evangelism in the face of competitions for people's attention and allegiance.
- Difficulty for the Church to uphold its moral standards and to be a witness to Christ in a world that is becoming increasingly morally lax.

Being aware of the challenges, what can the church in Singapore do? Well, the church in Singapore refers to the Christians in Singapore who worship together, serve God together in their collaborative callings and build up the body of Christ together.

It is not going to be easy to address the challenges. Admittedly, I do not have an all-encompassing best solution. Here are just a few humble points which I hope will catalyse discussions and yield positive directions.

- **Be intentional about their faith:** Christians need to be intentional about their faith and to grow in their knowledge of the Bible. They should also be prepared to defend their faith and to share the gospel with others.
- **Get involved in the church:** Christians should get involved in their local church and support its ministries. They should also get involved in para-church ministries that are working to reach people with the gospel and to build up the church.
- **Prayer:** Christians should pray for the church in Singapore and for its leaders. They should also pray for God to open doors for the gospel and to bless the work of the church.

IN SUPPORT OF INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS

- **Better teaching:** The church needs to do a better job of teaching its members about the core tenets of Christianity and the Bible.
- **Better sharing:** The church needs to develop better ways to share the gospel in a way that is relevant and engaging, both from the pulpit and through the enabling of individual Christians for their outreach and evangelism.

- **Better environment:** The church needs to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where people feel comfortable asking questions and exploring their faith.
- **Prayer:** The church needs to pray for God's help and guidance. The church cannot overcome these challenges on its own. It needs the power of the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of its members and to reach out to the world around it.

WHAT ELSE?

- **Other ideas from readers:** Share your bold ideas with the church. Good and effective ideas can be distilled out to profit everyone.

GIVE THANKS!

We thank God for the religious tolerance we have in Singapore, which promotes peace and harmony. In a society where people are free to practice their religion without fear of persecution, Christians can build relationships with people of other faiths and share the love of Christ with them in a respectful and loving way, even if our beliefs are not accepted or understood.

John Lee

The Sun Meeting The Cross

This morning (5th Oct), our brother K. P. Teh had the chance moment of noticing the sun meeting the cross at the rooftop of our church building. He felt that it was a beautiful image and was so excited to share a photo of it.

Seeing the picture, I couldn't agree more with him. It was indeed a beautiful sight to behold. More than that, the sun meeting the cross is an apt reminder of the intersection of faith and hope.

Luke 1:78-79 (CEV) says:

- "God's love and kindness will shine upon us like the sun that rises in the sky."
- "On us who live in the dark shadow of death this light will shine to guide us into a life of peace."

Thus, the sun is a symbol of God's light and love, while the cross is a symbol of Jesus' sacrifice and our salvation. Together, they represent the power of God's grace to overcome darkness and despair.

Overall, the photo is a powerful reminder of the love and hope that God offers to us through Jesus Christ. It is a reminder that we are never alone, and that God is always with us.

Finally, the photo could also be seen as a symbol of the unity of all people. The church building is a place where people of all backgrounds come together to worship God. The fact that the sun is shining down on both the cross and the church building suggests that God loves and cares for all people.

Amen!

John Lee



NOVEMBER 2023



Joy and Fulfilment of Whole-Life Stewardship

Introduction

As we approach the end of 2023, it is clear that this has been a year of unprecedented challenges and surprises. The world and governments are still struggling to cope with the waves of shocking events.

In this Stewardship Month (November), it is a good time to take a step back and reflect on our lives in a troubling world and our role as stewards of God's creation.

How can we be good and wise steward?

To be a good and wise steward, we must first understand that everything we have belongs to God. We are simply stewards, or managers, of His resources.

The Bible teaches this clearly:

- "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." – Ps 24:1
- God said, "Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me."
– Job 41:11

As good and wise stewards, we manage our time, money, possessions, talents, and relationships in a way that pleases God and honours Him.

This means being grateful for all His blessings, using our resources wisely, being generous with our time, money, and talents, and using our resources to further God's kingdom and to make a difference in the world.

What is Whole-Life Stewardship?

1) *Whole Life Stewardship is both a mandate and a privilege.*

The mandate for whole life stewardship comes from the creation story. In Genesis 1:28-30, God gives Adam and Eve dominion over the earth and all that is in it. He tells them to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and every living thing that moves on the earth.

This mandate is not simply about procreation and family size. It is also about the responsibility to care for and manage God's creation.

There is also a cultural aspect of the mandate. In the cultural mandate, we are called to live as a blessing to others. We do this by using our God-given gifts and talents to serve others and to glorify God. This can be done through our paid work, volunteer work, and work in the home.

Work is what we do, and stewardship is how we do it in fulfilling His purpose. Our lives have a role in kingdom-building work that does not just occur in the halls of the church on Sunday morning or in ministry, but rather in all aspects of our lives and our work. We are a Christ-Centred Acts 1:8 family, filled with the spirit to be his witnesses in our city, region, and around the world.

2) *Whole-life stewardship refers to all our decision-making.*

It is about how we choose to spend every moment of our lives and every dollar of our money. It is about where we choose to invest our time, energy, and resources.

To do this, we should pray about our decisions and ask God for guidance on how to use our time, talents, and resources in a way that honours Him and serves others. We should also be intentional about our priorities, making time for the things that are most important to us, such as our relationships with God and our loved ones. Additionally, we should be generous with our time, talents, and resources, looking for ways to serve others in our community and around the world. We should also be good stewards of the environment, taking care of God's creation by recycling, conserving water, and using resources wisely. Finally, we should be witnesses for Christ in all that we do, letting our light shine so that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

Here are some ways we can practice whole-life stewardship in our daily lives:

- At work: Be honest and hardworking, and use your skills and talents to serve your colleagues and clients.
- At home: Be a good spouse, parent, and child. Spend time with your loved ones and help out around the house.
- In your community: Volunteer your time and skills to a cause that you care about. Donate to charities that are doing good work.
- At church: Get involved in a ministry or cell group. Use your gifts and talents to serve your church body.

Conclusion

When we live a life of whole-life stewardship, we are not only honouring God, but we are also experiencing the joy and fulfilment that comes from using our resources to make a difference in the world as well as a difference to our personal life.

Rev Anthony Loh

Prayer Pointers For November (Stewardship Month)

1) **Pray for JCCians:**

- To live a life of daily gratitude and thanksgiving for God's blessings.
- To live a life of good stewardship by actively serving in the church.
- To trust God to provide for their needs in all areas of life.
- To be perceptive of God's guidance in areas such as serving and tithing in 2024.

2) **Pray for David & Goliath Preschool (DGP):**

- For new teachers to join this important ministry to lead children to develop educationally, emotionally, physical and spiritually. Pray that through their services to the children and interactions with the parents, they will be a blessing to the community in Jurong.
- For the personal well-being of the teachers, that God will bless them with good health and joy as they serve the Lord in touching lives.
- For the management team, that God will continue to bless them with strength and wisdom as they lead the staff.

3) **Pray for the Leadership and Ministry of JCC:**

- For JCC leaders, that they will hold steady in their calling and find God's peace and rest.
- For God to raise up new leaders, such as council members, HOMs and CGLs.
- For God to help prepare the hearts of those who will become Christ's disciples and disciple-makers in the year ahead.
- For a bountiful harvest as we connect with the neighbourhood residents via all the bridges under the Goshen Initiative.

Gog and Magog

God's Power to Destroy Evil

Ezekiel 38-39: Gog, the leader of the evil forces in the land of Magog, fights a last battle against God.

Rev 20:7-9 says:

*“When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—**Gog and Magog**—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.”*

Associating these two figures from the Bible — Gog and Magog — with the end of the world, some Christians have keenly speculated about who they are, when they will appear, and what they will do. Some believe that they represent the devil and his followers. Others believe that they are specific people or nations that will threaten the world.

Despite the conjectures surrounding the identities of Gog and Magog, one thing is clear: The biblical accounts show us that God is victorious over darkness and that He will always triumph over evil. He will protect His faithful ones from oppression and violence. This is evident in Revelation 20:7-9, which describes how Satan will be released from prison at the end of the thousand years and will gather a vast army of Gog and Magog to battle God's people. However, God will intervene and destroy Gog and Magog with fire from heaven.

Be Not Troubled

Some people believe that the chaos in the world today is evidence that we are living in the end times and that the apocalyptic Gog and Magog battle prophesied in Ezekiel 38-39 is nigh.

Some people believe that we are about to enter the Tribulation mentioned in the Bible, a time of great suffering and persecution for Christians. They believe that this period will end with the second coming of Jesus Christ, who will defeat the Antichrist and establish God's Kingdom on Earth.

We often lack wisdom to see events with full clarity as they unfold. But one thing is for sure: we are living in a time of great uncertainty. As Christians, we should be prepared for whatever may come, but should we fear?

Should we stop going to work and start fasting and praying every day? Should we pack up for some safe place or join the doomsday preppers?

Jesus warned his disciples about the signs of his coming and the end of the world. He told them to watch out for deceptions, wars, and rumours of wars, famine, pestilences, and earthquakes. **He also told them not to be troubled by these things.**

Christians on the watch for the signs put themselves in a whirl. They lap up every explanation of Gog & Magog, every forecast of what is coming next from the global events, every apocalyptic verse from the Bible, every piece of stimulating report, etc. They may miss the important warning from Jesus that we should not be troubled.

Walk By Faith, Not By Sight!

Martin Cheah sent me an interesting YouTube video (https://youtu.be/aF_t3Kl6Ghk) which is only about 18 minutes long. Yet, it provides valuable insights on how to deal with uncertainty and fear.

The video emphasizes the importance of walking by faith and not by sight.

The video highlights three reasons why we can have peace in our hearts even though there is turmoil in the world:

1. God's word has already told us the future. We know that God will redeem us and that everything will be okay.
2. God has a perfect track record of defending and protecting His children.
3. We have the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to be bold and strong in the face of chaos and trouble.

One of the enemies of faith is fear. Fear is about walking by sight – believing circumstances, imaginations, expectations, or statistics instead of God. It is about believing what we see with our natural eyes as opposed to believing what is written in God's word.

Walking by faith means trusting in God even when we don't understand what is happening or what the future holds. We let go of control and surrender to God's plan. When we have faith, we conquer fear. We lean on God for protection, provision, and strength.

Conclusion

Watch the [video](#).

Remember, God is with us. Have no fear. The Bible tells us that God is in control of everything, and that He will defeat Gog and Magog.

John Lee

Should Christians evangelize, given the doctrine of predestination?

Yes, Christians Should Evangelize

Christians should evangelize because it is Jesus' command. He told his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:18-19)

In the Bible, we see many examples of Jesus' followers evangelizing, such as Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:16-18 and 1 Thessalonians 2:4-16.

In 1 Corinthians 9:16-18, Paul sees evangelism as a necessity, with no ground for boasting; and he feels good to be able to offer the gospel free of charge whether he preaches voluntarily or out of a sense of obligation.

In 1 Thess 2:4-16, Paul avers that God entrusts us to preach the gospel to others, and that we should do this with holy, righteous, and blameless lives. We should encourage, comfort, and urge others to live lives worthy of God.

Christians are followers of Jesus Christ, who believe in Him as their Lord and Savior. They have faith in His teachings and His promises, and they strive to obey His commands. They also trust what the Bible as the inspired Word of God tells them.

Does Predestination Make Evangelism Unnecessary?

Predestination is a complex doctrine that can be difficult to understand. This space is not for discussing the various theological views on predestination. Whatever your theological position, I would say, for the reasons below, that predestination does not make evangelism unnecessary.

The Bible teaches that God has chosen certain people to be saved. This is known as predestination. However, the Bible also teaches that we are commanded to evangelize. This means that we are to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others.

So, how can we reconcile predestination with evangelism?

God often accomplishes His plans and purposes through our actions, even when we don't realize it.

For example, in the Old Testament, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. But God used this evil act to bring about His good plan. Joseph eventually became the second most powerful man in Egypt, and he was able to save his family from starvation.

The story of Jonah is another example. Jonah was a prophet who was called by God to go to the city of Nineveh and preach to the people there. But Jonah didn't want to do this, so he ran away. But God pursued him and brought him back on track.

Jonah eventually went to Nineveh and preached to the people. The people repented of their sins, and God forgave them. Jonah was angry that God forgave the Ninevites, because he wanted them to be punished.

But God told Jonah that He is a merciful God, and that He wants everyone to repent and be forgiven. God also told Jonah that He is in control of everything, and that He can use even the unwilling to accomplish His purposes.

The Jonah story is a reminder that God can use us to evangelise in wide-ranging ways (preaching, teaching, knocking on doors, distributing tracts, by lifestyle evangelism, etc.) even when we don't feel like it.

Predestination is a mystery. We don't fully understand how it works or how it can be reconciled with human free will. We can think a lot about the varied theological explanations until the cows come home. But the Bible tells us to trust in God and obey His commands, even when we don't understand everything. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

One of God's commands is to evangelize, to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. We know that God wants everyone to hear the good news, and He has commanded us to share it.

Trust & Obey

Still not sure whether Christians should evangelise, given the doctrine of predestination?

Let's trust and obey, and let God take care of the rest.

Our job is to follow God's commands, even when we don't understand everything – including how the divine factor (predestination) and human factor (evangelism) work together in salvation.

And we can trust that God will use our work under His grace to accomplish His good plans.

John Lee

Jurong Christian Church Receives National COVID-19 Award



Jurong Christian Church (JCC) was awarded the President's Certificate of Commendation (COVID-19) for its contributions to Partners Engaging and Empowering Rough Sleepers (PEERS) Network and Safe Sound Sleeping Place (S3P).

The certificate was presented by Minister Masagos Zulkifli at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel on 26 October 2023.

JCC was one of the accommodating homes for rough sleepers during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing them with a safe place to sleep, meals, snacks, and leisure activities. Volunteers from JCC, New Life Baptist Church, Renewal Christian Church and Hearts Alive Church worked tirelessly to care for the rough sleepers, providing them with friendship, support, and hope.

JCC is truly grateful to all the volunteers who have helped to make the S3P a success. Their dedication and compassion have made a real difference in the lives of the rough sleepers.

God bless all the volunteers!
Peggy Tan

A CALL TO GOOD STEWARDSHIP

Martin Cheah

Money Laundering

I do the laundry in my home. It's simple. I don't sort the clothes by colour, type or material. I just dump the laundry basket into the washing machine, add detergent, and start the wash cycle. When the wash cycle is finished, I take out the clothes and hang them to dry outside, starting with the lightest clothes and ending with the heaviest.

Sometimes, but not often, there is money in the pockets of the clothes. After the wash, I realize that I have accidentally laundered the money. One tip is to check the compartment at the bottom of the washing machine, where most of the coins will be found.

To prevent accidental money laundering, check the pockets of your clothes before putting them in the washing machine.

Joke aside let's get a bit more serious – about working your money!

Make Your Money Work!

What did Jesus say in Matthew 25:27? Did he say to deposit or invest the money with the bankers? As someone who cannot read the original language of the Bible, I must rely on the translations of various versions. Here are three of the translations:

- 1) *"So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest."* (New King James Version)
- 2) *"Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest."* (New International Version)
- 3) *"Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest."* (English Standard Version)

I have looked at some other translations of Matthew 25:27, and I found that older versions of the Bible typically use the word "deposit," while newer translations typically use the word "invest."

The two words "deposit" and "invest" have different connotations. In the past, people would earn a relatively high interest rate on their savings deposits, so simply depositing money with a banker was a wise decision. However, today, interest rates on savings accounts are very low, so the idea of investing takes precedence. Since the man in Matthew 25:27 buried his money and earned nothing out of it, Jesus was likely referring to the practice of depositing money in a bank. Depositing the money would have at least earned him something without any risk.

If you are a risk-averse person like the man in Matthew 25:27, and the Lord entrusts you with a sum of money, would you just hide it under your pillow? Instead, you should explore various risk-free options available today. For example, you could deposit your money in a savings account or a fixed deposit account at the bank. Or, you could invest in capital-guaranteed financial products. Even if the returns are modest, it is still a way to make some gains without taking on the risk of high-risk, fast-action investments.

Stewardship For His Kingdom

Thinking more deeply about Matthew 25:27, we should realize that Jesus was not talking about money, or about growing your personal wealth. He was using the parable about money to teach His followers about good stewardship of what He had entrusted them with.

One commentary mentions that Jesus is showing His followers what they should do while they are waiting for His return. He expects us to use the gifts and resources He has entrusted us with to advance His Kingdom. He expects us to be working for His Kingdom and not to be idle like the third servant who completely neglected to work with what he was entrusted with.

Therefore, if He has given you the ability to speak Hokkien, join the Dialect Ministry. If He has given you the ability to play musical instruments, join the Music Ministry. If He has given you the ability to write, send some articles to The Winepress. Don't be caught with your talent buried in the ground as the day of His return approaches.

Conclusion

There are many ways to use our gifts and resources to advance God's Kingdom. We can use our financial resources to support Christian ministries and missionaries. We can use our time and talents to serve in the church or community.

No matter what our gifts and resources are, we should all be striving to be good stewards of what God has entrusted to us.

Can Christians pray to other gods?

Martin Cheah

Are there any other gods?

The Bible teaches that there is only one God, and that Christians should not worship any other gods. This belief is based on the following biblical passages:

- In Isaiah 45:5-6, God declares: *"I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other."*
- In the New Testament, Paul said, *"So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one."* (1 Corinthians 8:4)

What are idols?

"The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths." (Psalm 135:15-17)

Another definition of an idol is found in Jeremiah 10:5, *"Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good."*

How do we know that there is only one God?

In the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal (a god worshipped by the Canaanites), found in 1 Kings 18:16-40, the 450 prophets of Baal lost the challenge by Elijah. In verse 21, Elijah went before the people and said, *"How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."* In verse 24, the test was to *"call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God."*

The prophets of Baal could not get any response from him. Then Elijah prayed, *"Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."* Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, *"The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!"* (verses 37-39)

The above event convinced the people that the LORD is the one true God.

Should we pray to other gods?

The Bible clearly teaches that we should not pray to other gods.

In the first of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-3), *God spoke all these words:*

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."

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

Conclusion

Since there are no other gods except the LORD, and it is His Commandment that we should have no other gods before Him, then why would Christians pray to other gods?

Instead, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-13)

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.

THE WEDDING OF AMOS & NICOLE



On 11.11.23, while the world outside was bustling with big sales events, a momentous event was happening in the serene sanctuary of a church in Taman Jurong – the wedding of Amos and Nicole.

Young Dr Amos Lee, a dedicated physician, works tirelessly at a polyclinic in Jurong while his beloved wife diligently serves in Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

Their paths intertwined not within the sterile confines of their workplaces, but in the vibrant neighbourhood of Taman Jurong.

Nothing happens by accident, chance, or coincidence. The blessed matrimonial union is a carefully orchestrated part of God's plans.

Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. (Mark 10:9)

May Amos and Nicole enjoy the blessings of countless anniversaries and a lifetime of shared happiness.

Martin Cheah

X-ray your heart

Bryan Tau

Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins. -- Ecclesiastes 7:20 (NIV)



Although God's Holy Spirit has come to live in us, we are still free moral agents with the freedom to choose between good and evil and whether to obey God's Word. We may even think that we can cover up our hidden motives with carefully planned actions and conversations. God will never force us to do something against our will.

Sometimes, He may allow circumstances in our lives to develop in such a way as to turn our hearts back to Him. Thank God for such circumstantial providence. When we choose to sin, we grieve the Holy Spirit. Our sin can prevent God from hearing our prayers and block the channel of blessings

for our own lives and that of others. It is natural for each person to think that his ways are right, but God sees and weighs our hearts.

What does God say about this?

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV)

A person may think their own ways are right, but the Lord weighs the heart.

Proverbs 21:2 (NIV)

As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

Hebrews 3:15 (NIV)

What does this mean for practical living?

This is a discipline that we need to start and maintain. For some people, it can be done like a daily scan in the morning during a personal quiet time with God. For others, it can be done at the end of the day before they go to sleep. It can also be done as a personal reflection before or after an activity that you are planning to undertake.

Just as an X-ray reveals the internal state of our physical body in different shades of grey, we should be prepared for God to expose the different shades of things in our lives that are not pleasing and not right in His sight. Let us not fool ourselves. Nothing can be hidden from God. Be honest to acknowledge and willing to accept what God will show you as He scans your heart and spirit. Be still and listen to what He is saying, confess your wrongdoings, seek forgiveness and ask for wisdom and courage to put things right.

Reflect and respond to God's Word

- How often do you X-ray your heart?
- Would you be willing to let God to scan every nook and corner of your heart? Why?
- If we know that all our thoughts, deeds and words will be publicly exposed one day, how will we conduct ourselves from now on?

BAPTISM, TRANSFER & CONFIRMATION

On 5th November 2023, JCC welcomed 2 new members into its family.

We received Yi Xue through baptism and Aloysius by transfer.



We also received into full membership through confirmation 3 young ladies, Zaneta Rose Chan, Gianella Muze and Neri Soh.

May you all grow in the love and knowledge of God, and may He bless all of you always. May this special day bring you His joy, peace, and love. Welcome to the family of God in JCC.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. - Colossians 3:15

Martin Cheah

Berjalan-Jalan Di Johor Bahru

(A fellowship walk in Johor Bahru)

From Pelangi, Butter Float Kopi breakfast, Musang Durian to AEON Bukit Indah shopping



I had not been to Malaysia in many years, so I was excited to join a group of brothers from the Dialect ministry on a short trip to Johor Bahru on 3rd November. We took a bus from Kranji, Singapore, at 9am and returned in the mid-afternoon, which helped us avoid the heavy traffic that is common on this route.

The atmosphere in Johor Bahru is more laid-back than in Singapore, and the old-time pedestrian infrastructure makes for a different walking experience.

There are also many affordable street food options that reflect the local culinary culture.

We not only enjoyed the fresh air and the walk, but we also smelled the delicious aroma of durian. Of course, we had to stop at a street stall in Taman Pelangi to try this delicious fruit. Without the distractions of Singapore, we were able to spend a lot of time together and have good fellowship.



I delighted in the fellowship. I also relish the video record of the experience that I was able to create using the CapCut video-editing app on my phone.

Teh Kean Peng

JCC Dialect Ministry EXERCISE & PRAYER SATURDAY

Martin Cheah

Saturday, 28th October 2023 - The Dialect Ministry launched a new initiative with the help of JCC Prayer Intercessors to try to reach out to Dialect speaking elders through exercise and prayer for their individual needs. This activity is planned for the last Saturday of each month where possible.



For this first session, we had 8 people who came. Managing this event were 4 persons from the Dialect team (including Deacon Nathan) and 5 Prayer Intercessors.

Everyone joined in to take part in the simple exercises which were executed while seated.

After a few rounds of exercises, the Dialect team and Prayer Intercessors approached individuals to pray for them.



As we do our part to reach out to our Dialect speaking elders, we pray that the Holy Spirit will bring about miraculous healings which will encourage more people to come for this activity.

You may want to consider if this outreach event is your cup of tea and come join us. Watch a recording of this first session on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/4rG-5Pa-Qq8>



DECEMBER 2023



Bridging the Two Advents: A Journey of Hope, Faith, and Transformation

THE VIRTUES THAT ILLUMINATE THE SEASON

This year, the Advent season kicks off on the first Sunday of December. The Advent season beckons us to pause, reflect, and prepare our hearts for the profound significance of Christ's arrival. Amidst the hustle and bustle of Christmas preparations, let us not overlook the spiritual essence of this sacred time.

Within our church, we adorn the sanctuary with symbolic elements, each carrying a deep significance. The Advent wreath, with its circular form, represents God's everlasting love, unbroken and enduring. The holly branches, with their vibrant red berries and evergreen leaves, symbolize our eternal life with Jesus Christ, a life of joy and abundance.

At each Sunday morning service before the Christmas Eve night service, we will also light candles, one each week. The first candle symbolizes hope, the second faith, the third joy, and the fourth peace. These virtues form the foundation of our Christian faith and guide us towards a deeper connection with God.

During our Christmas Eve night service, a central red candle, symbolizing the birth of Christ, will join the luminous ensemble, its flame casting a warm glow upon the sanctuary. As we gather in unity, the candles become beacons of our faith, reminding us of the enduring power of hope, faith, joy, and peace.

HOW DOES ADVENT RESONATE WITH US TODAY?

As we delve into the depths of Advent, let us contemplate the profound significance of Christ's coming through three distinct lenses: His historical arrival, His enduring presence in our lives, and His anticipated second coming. Advent, in its essence, encompasses the past, present, and future, weaving these threads into a tapestry of unwavering faith.

Observed as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, Advent originates from the Latin word 'adventus,' meaning 'coming.'

The First Advent:

This was the moment two millennia ago when the Son of God, fully divine and fully human, was born in Bethlehem as a humble infant. The narrative of the Magi, shepherds, the angelic choir, Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel, and so on, paints a vivid picture of His arrival. This Messiah came to redeem us, despite our undeserving nature.

"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst." (1 Tim 1:15)

Does this realization not move us to express our gratitude to God?

God even used John the Baptist to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. John instructed the people to create a path through the desert for their God, straightening the crooked ways and smoothing out the rough terrain. John's message was metaphorical, referring to the transformation of human hearts. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 3:2). Indeed, the Advent season calls for a preparation of our hearts to receive the Savior through repentance of our sins and fervent prayer for God's forgiveness. Advent demands an acknowledgment of humanity's need for a Savior to deliver us from sin.

Let us invite Christ into our lives and prevent this Christmas gospel from remaining a mere external observance. Is Christ a tangible presence in our lives today?

The second Advent:

Jesus Christ will return to earth in glory, not as a humble infant but as a powerful and victorious King, bringing both judgment and reward. The prospect of His return should motivate us to live lives of purpose and service, reflecting the love and compassion that He embodied.

Between the two Advents:

We are called to live in the present moment, embracing the transformative power of Christ's presence in our lives. Let us not allow the Christmas season to pass without allowing His love to permeate our hearts and guide our actions.

As we eagerly await the joyous celebration of Christ's birth and anticipate His triumphant return, let us embark on a journey of spiritual renewal, allowing hope, faith, and love to illuminate our path. Let us strive to live as beacons of His light, reflecting His love and compassion in all that we do.

Rev Anthony

Prayer Pointers For December

As we approach the end of a year, let us take time to reflect on God's blessings and prepare our hearts for the upcoming season of Advent and the new year.

1. Gratitude for 2023

- Pray for JCCians to pause and reflect on the many ways God has been faithful and present throughout 2023.
- Express gratitude for answered prayers, personal growth, and the opportunity to serve others. May the spirit of thankfulness overflow into our daily lives and interactions!

2. Advent Season

- Pray for JCCians to actively engage in the Advent season, preparing our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth.
- Seek opportunities to share the message of Christ's love and redemption with those around us as we anticipate the Second Coming of Christ with hope and preparedness.

3. Outreach Events

- Pray for the success of upcoming outreach events in December. Empower JCCians to boldly proclaim Christ's birth and love during these outreach opportunities.
- Pray that residents of TJ and friends may receive the gospel message with open hearts.

4. Steps into 2024

- Pray for JCCians to enter the new year guided by Christ's presence and direction as we set goals and make plans.
- Commit to spiritual growth, pursuing a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit.
- Embrace opportunities to continue serving others and sharing the love of Christ in tangible ways.

May this December be a time of heartfelt gratitude, joyful anticipation, and renewed commitment to following Christ into the new year.

Enduring Truths for Advent Reflection

Introduction

We are in the Advent season, a time to wait and look forward to Christmas, which celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. In our celebration, we embrace the enduring truths of the Bible and the Christmas story. These truths remind us of the love of God and the promise of salvation.

Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a town in Judea, to a virgin named Mary. According to the Bible, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The Messiah's birth was announced to shepherds by an angel. Wise men from the East were also guided by a star to Bethlehem, where they paid homage to Jesus.

Jesus spent His childhood in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee. (Luke 4:16)

The Bible also tells us:

- When Jesus began his public ministry, He travelled throughout Galilee and Judea, teaching about the Kingdom of God and performing miracles. The miracles were signs of Jesus' power and authority.
- Jesus' ministry aroused the anger of the Jewish religious leaders, who saw Him as a threat to their authority. They accused Him of blasphemy and had Him arrested by the Roman authorities. He was crucified on a hill called Calvary. He was buried in a tomb but was resurrected on the third day.
- After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples for 40 days before ascending into heaven. He promised to return one day to judge the living and the dead.

What do disbelievers say?

Today, more than 50 years after Apollo 11, there are still claims that the moon landing was a grand hoax.

Despite overwhelming evidence, some people still claim that the Earth is flat, and the Bible is a fake story. (Interestingly, even the Bible alludes to a round Earth in Isa 40:22 and Prov 8:27)

The Bible says, *"The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."* (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will help them to understand the enduring truths.

Archaeological Discoveries

(1) The Town of Nazareth:

In 2008, René Salm published a book titled "THE MYTH OF NAZARETH, THE INVENTED TOWN OF JESUS."

He presented so-called "convincing archaeological evidence" that the town of Nazareth was non-existent in the 1st Century, thus implying that the Jesus story is fake.

One of his critics says, "'Salm's personal evaluation of the pottery ... reveals his lack of expertise in the area as well as his lack of serious research in the sources.'"

Ample archaeological evidence shows that there were already settlements in Nazareth as early as the Middle Bronze Age and through the Iron Age. ([Nazareth - Wikipedia](#))

Here is news that may disappoint atheists who are ecstatic about Salm's book: Israel announced in 2009 the discovery of a small house in Nazareth dating to the First Century.
(<https://tinyurl.com/3eyv7pus>)

(2) The Pool of Siloam:

In John 9 Jesus made some mud with saliva and put it on the eyes of a blind man and told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. As a result, the man was healed of his blindness.

In 2004, archaeologists discovered the stepped remains of the Pool of Siloam near Jerusalem.
(<https://tinyurl.com/fjnypudc>)

This archaeological discovery silenced sceptics who had alleged that the pool was an idea invented by the author of the Gospel of John.

(3) Siloam Tunnel:

In 2 Chron 32:30, we read that Hezekiah "blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channelled the water down to the west side of the City of David."

The artificial Pool of Siloam which received water from the Gihon spring was linked to the development of the S-shaped tunnel described in 2 Kings 20:20 and 2 Chron 32:2-4 in preparation against the threat of invasion by Sennacherib king of Assyria.

The archaeological discoveries of the Siloam Tunnel and the Hebrew inscriptions made by the workmen once again substantiate what the Bible says. (<https://tinyurl.com/2endc359>)

(4) Cyrus Cylinder:

Discovered in 1879, it is a baked-clay Cylinder that is inscribed with evidence of the capture of Babylon by the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, which we read in the Book of Ezra. (<https://tinyurl.com/9m6tmv4t>)

(5) Mesha Stele:

Discovered in 1868, it is a basalt monument from 9 BC with 34 lines of text commemorating a victory over Israel by Mesha, king of Moab, and validating the biblical account in 2 Kings 3:4-27 ([Mesha Stele - Wikipedia](#))

(6) Hittite Tablets:

Cynics questioned the existence of the Hittites (Gen 15:20) until an excavation in 1906 in the Turkish city of Boğazköy uncovered 10 000 clay tablets providing detailed records disclosing the area as the capital of a Hittite nation some 3500 years ago. (<https://tinyurl.com/ypmfd47y>)

The Enduring Truths

Evidence corroborating both OT and NT accounts point to the enduring truth of the Bible. OT prophecies about the Messiah include:

- The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2)
- The Messiah would be a descendant of David. (2 Samuel 7:12-16)
- The Messiah would be a virgin birth. (Isaiah 7:14)
- The Messiah would be a sacrifice for the sins of the world. (Leviticus 17:11)

The fulfillment of these prophecies in the life of Jesus Christ is convincing evidence that He is the Messiah. In the NT, the accounts in the Gospels are consistent in their basic details, such as the place of Jesus' birth (Bethlehem), the time of year (winter), and the people involved (Mary, Joseph, shepherds, wise men). This provides strong evidence that the story is true.

The birth of Jesus Christ is a momentous event that has been celebrated and cherished for centuries. May the enduring truth of the Christmas story – of hope, love, and redemption – continue to inspire people around the world!

John Lee

Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!

Luke 2:14 (NKJV)

As the joyous season of Christmas approaches, the world echoes with the familiar greetings of "peace and goodwill." Yet, amidst the festive cheer, we cannot ignore the harsh realities – wars raging in distant lands, innocent lives lost to senseless violence, and the cries of those suffering in the depths of despair.

The incongruity between the season's proclaimed peace and the world's persistent conflicts often leaves us questioning the very meaning of these heartfelt wishes.

True Peace

Is human hate so strong that true peace is impossible?

True peace is not merely the absence of conflict or danger, but a state of inner well-being and harmony, even in the face of challenging circumstances. This inner peace is not achieved through external means alone, but through a transformation of the heart and mind. This is the peace referred to in Philippians 4:7, *"the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

TLSB says: "When life makes no sense, God's peace sustains and directs us. *peace of God ... will guard.* Peace, not readiness or zeal, acts like a guardian angel for our mental health. This peace resides in Jesus, our refuge."

The pursuit of peace requires us to confront the problem of sin and cultivate a mindset that embraces compassion, forgiveness, and understanding. As Jesus taught, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"* (Matthew 5:9).

A Christmas Carol

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.

Henry W. Longfellow, 1863. *Waltham. L. M.* J. Baptiste Calkin, 1872.

1. I heard the bells on Christmas day Their old fa-mil-iar car-ols play,
2. I thought how, as the day had come, The bel-fries of all Chris-ten-dom
3. And in de-spair I bowed my head: "There is no peace on earth," I said,
4. Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
5. Till, ring-ing, sing-ing on its way, The world revolved from night to day,

And wild and sweet the words repeat Of peace on earth, good-will to men.
Had rolled a-long th' unbroken song Of peace on earth, good-will to men,
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good-will to men,"
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, With peace on earth, good-will to men."
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime, Of peace on earth, good-will to men. A-MEN.

The Christmas carol *"I heard the Bells on Christmas Day"* reminds us that even in times of darkness and despair, there is still hope for peace.

The song was originally written as a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1863 during the American Civil War, a time of great suffering and division. Longfellow himself had experienced personal tragedy in the years leading up to the war, including the death of his wife and two of his children.

The carol begins with Longfellow hearing the bells of Christmas ringing, and the familiar melody carries a message of peace and goodwill. But Longfellow is also aware of the harsh realities of the world around him, and he expresses his doubts and despair in the second verse:

"And in despair I bowed my head; 'There is no peace on earth,' I said, For hate is strong and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good will to men."

This melancholic verse echoes the doubts and fears that grip our hearts when we witness the relentless conflicts and suffering that continue to mar our world. How can we reconcile the ideals of peace and goodwill with the harsh realities that surround us?

From the melancholic verse, the carol takes a turn as the bells peal with renewed vigour, their melody carrying a message of hope and determination:

"Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;

The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail, With peace on earth, good will to men."

Longfellow realizes that despite the darkness, there is still light, and that good will ultimately prevail. He reminds us that even in the darkest of times, hope endures. God's love and presence are unwavering, and the promise of peace and goodwill remains steadfast.

Despite his own personal pain and the suffering he sees around him, Longfellow is able to find hope and inspiration in the Christmas story.

Apostle Paul

The apostle Paul was a man who struggled with sin and doubt. He knew what it was like to feel trapped in a cycle of wrongdoing and despair. Yet, he found hope and peace in Jesus Christ. In Romans 7:24, he cries out, *"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?"* But then, in Romans 7:25, he proclaims, *"Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."*

According to Paul, peace comes when we surrender to God's grace and allow Jesus Christ to take control of our lives. We must confess our sins and turn away from our old ways. Only then can we experience the true peace that comes from knowing that we are forgiven and loved by God.

Christmas Peace and Assurance

Just as Longfellow and Paul found peace in Jesus Christ when surrounded by external storms, so too can all people find true and lasting peace in Him.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

The Messiah would *"give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and guide our feet into the way of peace."* (Luke 1:79)

John Lee

Yield to God's will

Bryan Tay

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. -- Romans 12:1 (NIV)



The best decision that we can make in life is to yield or surrender our lives completely to God. He created us to have fellowship with Him. Then He redeemed us when we were steeped in sin and darkness. We are doubly His. We are made in His image. Therefore, He knows exactly how to shape our lives for us to live purposefully and abundantly, supported by His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. God is the Potter and we are the clay. He knows the way ahead of us. He alone knows how to prepare us to live a life of holiness and abundance in Him. Let us not

become like the Israelites when they left Egypt to go to the Promised Land. It could have taken them just about two weeks to get there. Instead, they spent forty years in the wilderness until the entire unbelieving generation perished.

What does God say about this?

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5,6 (NIV)

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

What does this mean for practical living?

Recall the first chapter, "Accept God & His Word as the Final Authority" in our lives. Once we do that, it will be much easier to yield to God and His will for our lives. In every life situation, He knows the end from the beginning as well as all the meanders, loops and tangents along the way. When we commit our plans to Him, He will guide us to take the straight and narrow path, without turning to left or to the right as we follow Him.

Yielding to him means laying all our plans, goals, ambitions and desires before him. We will not clutch or cling on to all these tightly but rather hold them with an open palm before Him and say: "Lord, these are the things I'd like to do. If they are aligned with your will for my life, help me to achieve them with your wisdom and strength. Otherwise, show me what I ought to do." In your quiet moments, bow down before Him and make a full surrender to Him.

Reflect and respond to God's Word.

- What are you afraid of losing if you were to surrender fully to God? Why?

- What assurance or bargain are you looking for from God in exchange for yielding fully to Him?
- Identify one area of your life that you will surrender fully to God and determine to follow His leading regardless of where He leads you.

With Divine Blessings, JCC Bakers' Hut Rises

Sim Sim and John Lee

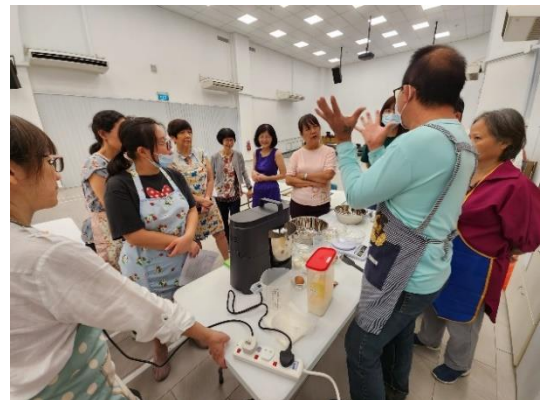
The aroma of freshly baked bread filled the air as **JCC Bakers' Hut**, a project born of love and faith, took its first steps towards becoming a beacon of community spirit. This delightful initiative, spearheaded by the "**We Are BFF**" cell group, sought to connect with and serve the local community through the universal appeal of **manna bread**, in testimony of God's provision and sustenance.

On 26 November 2023, eleven individuals, their hearts filled with shared enthusiasm, kneaded their way into this sweet adventure. Leading the way were **John Wong**, a seasoned baker with experience at Crystal Jade Restaurant; and Gek Luang, a self-taught baker who shared her expertise with a generous heart. For many participants, this initial foray into baking was an exciting adventure, filled with laughter, learning, and the satisfaction of creating something delicious.

JCC Bakers' Hut is not merely a place to learn the art of baking; its mission not only to craft delectable treats but also to build bridges of warmth and connection, and testify of God's blessings through His provisions. It is an embodiment of JCC's ongoing outreach efforts, aligning perfectly with the Manna Bridge under the Goshen Initiative.

If you would like to engage with our neighbours, share the joy of baking, and spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, please do join us in upcoming workshops. It doesn't matter if you are a novice or an experienced baker. Remember, brother John Wong will generously share his knowledge and baking secrets.

Praise the Lord!



Brother John Wong, the chief baker



JCC Dialect Ministry

A DLT Retreat to Medan

Martin Cheah

In early February 2023, a visit to Medan was proposed, marking the beginning of the planning for a DLT retreat. Deacon Nathan, who comes from Medan played a key role in coordinating the trip, leveraging his local connections and knowledge to ensure a memorable experience for the group.

One of us took on most of the planning responsibilities, handling flight reservations, hotel accommodations, and tour arrangements. Another managed the trip's finances, and another collected orders and payments for group purchases.

The group bought an assortment of local delicacies, including peanuts, crackers, kueh lapis, bika ambon (Indonesian cake), and a special flower-shaped carrot cake made by a Medan friend.

We are grateful to those who selflessly shouldered the planning and coordination responsibilities, allowing the rest of the group to simply enjoy the trip.

The journey began with a night flight from Singapore Airport T2, arriving in Medan around 9pm (Medan time) after a half-hour delay at Singapore side. Upon reaching the hotel, we were warmly welcomed by our Medan friends with a complimentary supper of noodles, drinks, and desserts.

The following morning, we visited the Chong Ah Fei museum and the Sun Plaza shopping mall. After lunch, we embarked on a two-and-a-half-hour bus journey to Brastagi, checking into the Sinabung Hills Resort upon arrival. We had dinner at Restaurant Asia, about 20 minutes from the resort.

The next day, we visited a market brimming with fresh produce, including passion fruits, avocados, and many other local delights. After that we took a scenic three-hour drive to Simalem for breathtaking views of Lake Toba. We then returned to the resort for another restful night.

After breakfast the next morning, we headed back down to Medan, where lunch was waiting for us at Mbak Bolek restaurant, hosted by a couple who were long-time friends of Deacon Nathan. After lunch, we indulged in a spot of shopping at Center Point Mall Medan before checking in to the hotel.

When we returned to our hotel that night, sleep was a fleeting luxury as we had an early departure the next morning. By 4:30 am we were on our way to the airport to return to Singapore.

While the trip may seem like a mere vacation, it was in essence a trip planned to serve as a catalyst for bonding and camaraderie within our DLT. It was a success as we achieved greater harmony and fellowship.



With heartfelt gratitude, we acknowledge God's divine protection throughout our journey, particularly along the narrow, winding mountain roads. His guiding hand ensured our safe return to Singapore, leaving us with cherished memories and a strengthened sense of purpose.

The entire trip, including flights, accommodation, and meals, came at a remarkably affordable cost of less than S\$600 per person. It was an exceptionally enjoyable and meaningful 5D-4N retreat.

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! – Psalm 133:1

DOT@Jurong Fishery Port

19 Nov 2023

Bringing God's light to the seafarers

Jacqueline Woo

Mission work has always been close to my heart, particularly with marginalised communities. But, as someone with physical disabilities over the years, it is not always easy to do so. So when I heard there was a divine opportunity to serve the seafarers locally at the Jurong Fishery Port with DOT (Disciples of Christ, my cell group), I jumped at it.

Why do we serve?

Personally, this is one of my first outreach sessions with a cell group, which I'm very thankful for. The Bible clearly tells us to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). We know that seafarers, often coming from other countries, have little voice on our soil for their needs and rights, and often spend many lonely months away from their families. As God's servants, it is our duty and hope that we can walk alongside them and offer practical help, such as providing necessities.

Serving also cultivates a heart of genuine empathy and love for one another. Perhaps the most impactful takeaway from this session for me was learning how the seafarers literally put their lives on the line with every fish they catch due to the rough seas. One wrong move, a slip or a jerk, and they might end up in the deep and scary seas for good - a very high price to pay for the fish they put on our dinner tables.

Do we face such dangers in our everyday lives at work? Probably not for most of us. What, then, does this mean for us to still try to share the Gospel with them? What can we say or do to alleviate their struggles, even if it might seem like just a pin drop in the vast ocean?

Society divides us but we are one in Christ

I believe we always need to look to Jesus, and ask, "What would Jesus do in this situation?" We can also ask God for His help, wisdom and strength to guide us, when we struggle to find words of comfort for others.

Things on earth may not be perfect currently, but we have the full assurance of His second coming when He will wipe away every tear (Revelation 21:4) and make all things beautiful again (Ecclesiastes 3:11). That is the truest hope we can offer not just to the seafarers, but to anyone else.

I sincerely hope that the work by the International Lutheran Seafarers' Mission (ILSM) with these seafarers will continue throughout 2024, and that I may have more opportunities to serve alongside them in future.

A picture of unity: The seafarers, Rev Andreas from ILSM, and Jurong Christian Church members (including DOT cell group; I'm the one in a lilac t-shirt)



Read more about the International Lutheran Seafarers' Mission here: <https://lutheran.org.sg/ilsm/>

JCC's Bicycle and Badminton/Table-Tennis Clubs

Celebrating Christmas: A Prata-Flipping Evening to remember

JCC has a Bicycle Club manned by an enthusiastic group that calls themselves Befrienders of Cyclists. The Befrienders offer free bicycle maintenance service (refurbishment, repair, pumping of tyres, etc.) at Level 1 of the church every Sunday from 3 – 4.30 p.m. to any cyclist who needs it. They are friendly people to meet for chit chats or prayers. If you are more adventurous, you can join the Befrienders for their quarterly cycling expeditions from the church to various places on the island.



JCC also has a vibrant Badminton/Table-Tennis Club that welcomes friends and neighbours to come and join their regular players in a game of badminton or ping pong every Monday and Wednesday from 6.30 – 9.30 p.m. at Level 1 of the church where we have an indoor badminton court and a table-tennis table.

On 4 Dec 2023, the two clubs jointly hosted a roti-prata evening for members, families and friends. A total of 45 people attended the fellowship event, and everyone had a wonderful time enjoying the early celebration of Merry Christmas.

The event began at 6:00 p.m. when the caterer arrived with food and equipment for the setup.



chit chats with one another and get to know new friends.

While waiting for the others to arrive, the early birds had the opportunity to learn how to make prata. They pressed the dough, oiled it, and flipped it back and forth. Despite their best efforts, everyone's prata failed miserably, resulting in a shared laugh.

When it was time to eat, Rev Anthony offered a prayer for the food, and everyone began to tuck in. Apart from the prata, the spread on the table was fantastic, with biryani rice, curry fish, masala chicken, fried ladies' fingers, samosas, papadums, cocktail jelly, teh tarik, and lime juice. Everyone savoured the food and enjoyed the opportunity to have friendly



Around 8:15 p.m., a youthful musical ensemble serenaded the audience with Christmas carols. The performance was captivating, and the audience joined in the singing.

Rev Anthony followed with a testimony about his timid youth and how encountering Jesus transformed his life into one filled with joy. He urged everyone to find joy not just on Christmas but every day of their lives.

After Rev Anthony's testimony, the atmosphere shifted to one of light-hearted fun as three teams (1, 2, and 3) engaged in a friendly competition. The first game involved rolling a tennis ball, with Team 3 emerging victorious. A second game, played with a ping pong ball and table tennis bats, resulted in Team 2 being declared the winner. Prizes were awarded to all team members.

Before the event concluded, there was a blessing draw for everyone. Everyone walked away with a token of appreciation, adding a touch of sweetness to the wish for



a Merry Christmas.

Finally, what did those who practised flipping a P.R.A.T.A. get?

They got an A.T.A.R.P. — i.e., a flip-over of P.R.A.T.A. — with an inspiring message:

- **A** for **Admirer of Jesus**: Striving to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ to love our neighbours.
- **I** for **Treasured Companion**: Being a trusted friend who is always there to offer encouragement and help.
- **A** for **Ambassador of Hope**: Spreading positivity, reminding others of God's love and presence in their lives.
- **R** for **Radiant Beacon**: Shining brightly with God's love and grace, touching the lives of others through kindness and understanding.
- **P** for **Pillar of Strength**: Providing unwavering support and encouragement, reminding others of their worth and God's unwavering love for them.



This interpretation of A.T.A.R.P. as an acronym captures the essence of Christian outreach and friendship, emphasizing the importance of living a life that reflects God's love and building meaningful connections with others.

Peggy Tan

