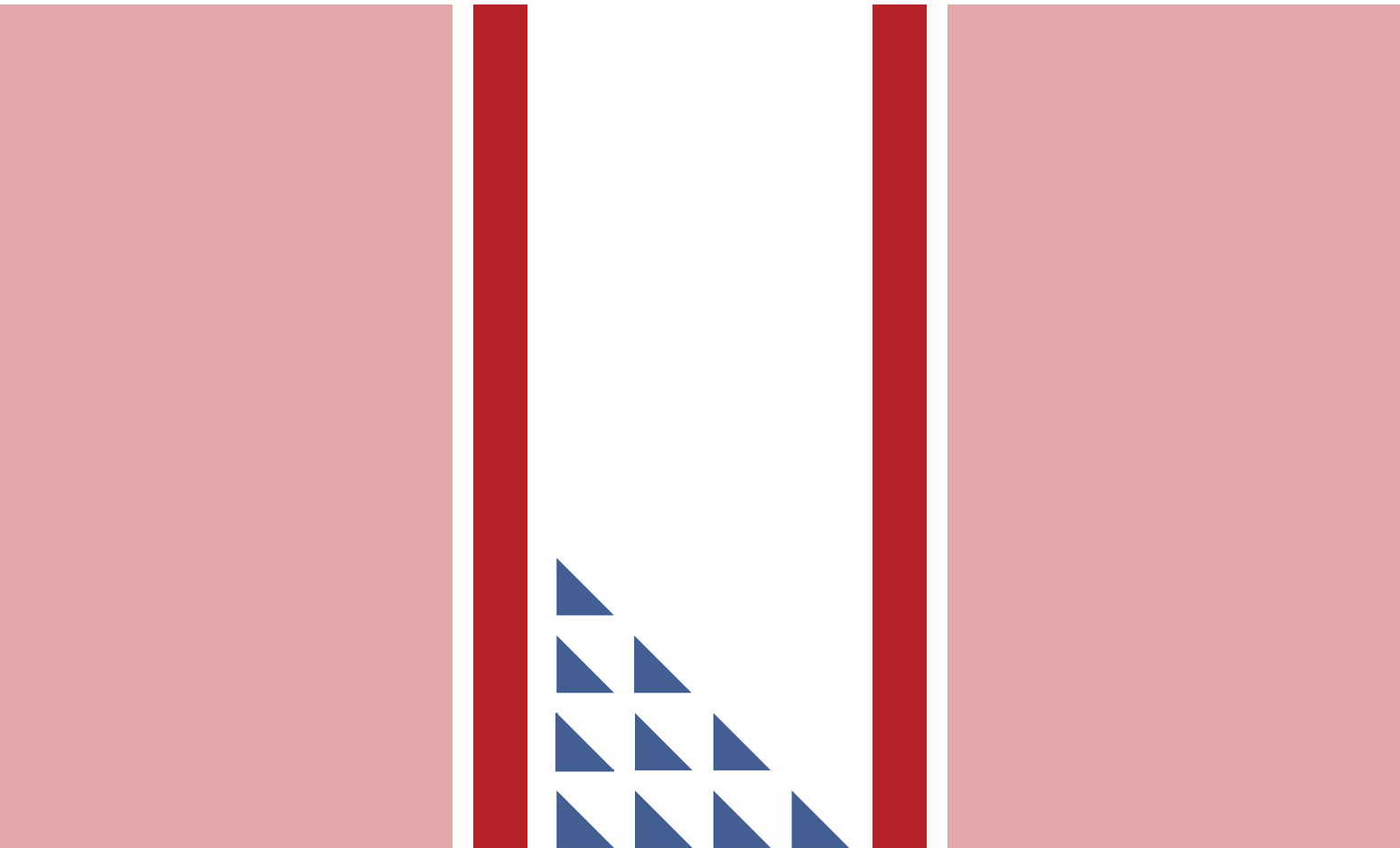


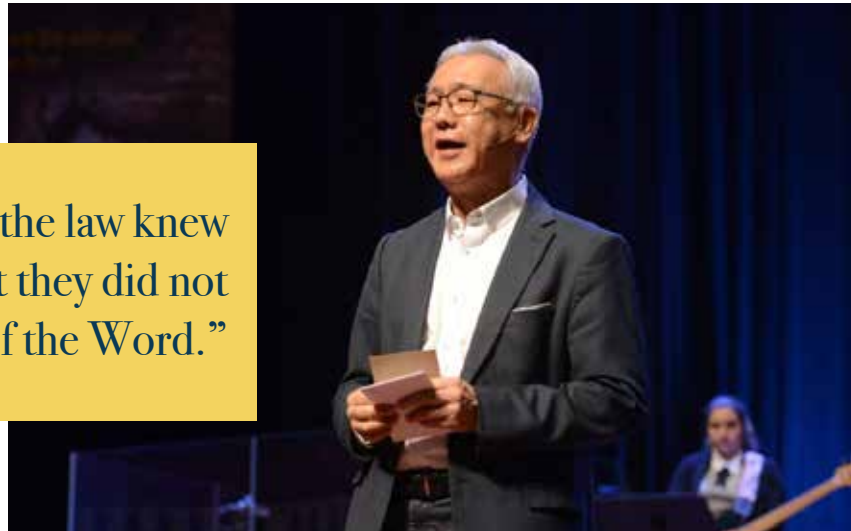
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authority. As far as Jesus was concerned, he was a nobody. Yet when he taught, the crowds were amazed. There are two different expressions in Greek which are translated with the English word “amazed”. One word is “thaumazō”, literally meaning wonder or be amazed. The word used here by Matthew was a more intense word, “exēplēssonto”, literally meaning “struck out” or “overwhelmed”, a strong sudden sense of being astounded. This meant the crowd was overwhelmed not just by what Jesus was teaching, but by how he taught it. Possibly, they were even mesmerized by someone who was just a simple carpenter.

“...the teachers of the law knew the Word of God, but they did not know the God of the Word.”



The religious teachers had the advantage of going through the rigorous training of the religious system of the day on the laws. Jesus grew up being scripturally trained since the age of five or six, to be prepared for His Bar Mitzvah at age thirteen, the adulthood ritual of a boy’s transition to manhood. He was trained in the Pentateuch, starting with the book of Leviticus. By the time He was twelve, thinking He was lost in Jerusalem after a frantic search, Joseph and Mary found Him at the Temple. Here is the record: (Luke 2:46,47) *“⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.”* Notice that word again, “amazed.” Even at a much younger age, He had something that was different.

My take on this is simply that the teachers of the law knew the Word of God, but they did not know the God of the Word. It is one thing to be filled with scriptural knowledge but another thing to be transformed by it. This opens up a whole new discussion on our religious duties, things we do as Christians, from praying, reading the Bible, attending church services, serving in a ministry, to going on a mission trip. Why do we do what we do? It is so easy to be prompted to do what is right and necessary, but miss the spirit of it altogether.

Amusingly, I see this in Christians who love to debate among themselves over doctrinal matters, and often these are disputable

or unresolvable in this lifetime. These are learned theologians, who all claim to have a monopoly in the understanding of the Bible; if they cannot resolve it, what makes us think we can? In the quest to be theologically right, with all the impetus to knock down the rival with an opposing view to prove a point, they forget that the spirit of Christ is one of humility, love, grace, adopting a non-judgmental posture, acceptance and having a clear conscience. The principle of stumbling is simply that the one who is stronger in their faith bears with the one who is weaker and gladly helps the weak by refraining from doing anything that would hurt their faith. (Romans 15:1-3).

“That is why our “marriage” with God, the church as the bride and Christ the bridegroom, every day should be a relational experience. ”

It is therefore that, even as a church, we can continue to be doing things by “cruise control”, going to church week after week, reading our Bible day after day, praying even the right prayers, and yet miss it altogether. Apostle Paul described this as “... having a form of godliness but denying its power.” (2 Timothy 3:5) We only know the Word of God well but barely the God of the Word. We can be seeking the gifts but not the Giver. We seek the healing but not the Healer and when things do not go our way, the way that we want them to go, we drift away from Jesus because we do not really know Him in the first place.

Church, we need to guard against this danger and ask ourselves, do we really know our God? Do we experience His amazing love and grace, not just intellectually, but relationally and emotionally as well? Those of us who are married know that we cannot remain married with merely an intellectual consent. A marriage without the relational connection is a dead one no matter how long you stare at your marriage certificate. That is why in our “marriage” with God, the church as the bride

and Christ the bridegroom, every day should be a relational experience. Like in a marriage, there will be days that are mundane and ordinary, but there also must be days when we come alive with each other. This way, we guard our hearts against mediocrity.

We do not want to merely produce more knowledgeable disciples, but more Christlike disciples. We can know the entire Bible from cover to cover, and be very sound theologically, yet not be transformed by it in our lives. The words by themselves do not change us. The God of the Word does, by our obedience to the Word. Hence, I was not shocked to hear a confession by a seminary professor who confessed in a

talk that while he taught the Bible, he had not read his Bible devotionally for many months, meaning making time to commune with the God of the Bible. Anyone of us can fall into this same trap, including a pastor like me.

My encouragement therefore to you is to know Jesus not just intellectually, but emotionally and relationally. Read your Bible because you see it as a love letter written by a Lover communicating His heart to you. Let me end with this encouraging story from a brother. I have reminded all of us not to “waste” this pandemic but to see it as an opportunity to know God deeper. This brother was going through some really difficult times in his construction business due to the downturn, wrestling through with God in tears and anxiety. He is not out of the woods yet, but it warms my heart that he continues to trust God during his trials. I told him that courage is not the absence of fear but that, in the presence of fear, one continues to trust the Lord. Here is what he testified.

“During the MCO, it was my best time with



the Lord. I got ample time to keep myself in fellowship with Him and this is the first time I felt joy in reading the word of God. Reading the Bible is no longer a chore or an act of discipline, nor because I want more “verses of blessing” in the Bible that I can use to twist His arm to bless me, but the joy of knowing the Love of God has been fully demonstrated in Christ. For the first time, I see Jesus in the Bible. I have heard that phrase for a long time as a believer for twenty years. But this is the first time I saw Jesus and His love in every chapter when I read His Word. Hallelujah!!”

This brother has gone beyond the Word of God to the God of the Word. He will be the one who will live his life with His authority. May we as a Church live with such authority too!



12

MUSINGS FROM GARDENING FOR BUILDING A CG OR SMALL COMMUNITY

By Debbie Loh, PJN3

The pandemic has caused me to be mostly housebound and physically distant from community. As a result, gardening came to be a way I took breaks and did something creative.

The rhythms of gardening slowly seeped into my thought patterns, with gardening as a robust metaphor for life in the Spirit. Theologians who are farmers and gardeners have served to develop this metaphor for me even further, Evan B. Howard being a recent one I read.

Here are some musings from gardening that I could take away for building a community. Plants being the community, gardening being the activities upon the community, and the gardener being the cell leader, who also offers spiritual leadership.

1

You cannot make something (or someone) grow overnight. They cannot make themselves grow overnight either. Like my satin pothos — they are slow creepers. But you can develop caring rhythms of watering and feeding them and putting them in the right amount of light, humidity and aeration. Once in a while stick a finger in the soil and see how they are doing.

2

Feeding them produces more growth. That is a fact. You should see the growth of the same kind of plants that are in my mum's garden and mine. My mum invests in fertiliser and she gives them the right amount regularly. Me, less regularly, and so mine do not have as dramatic growth as hers. Feed your plants. I am taking a page from my mum's book to water them with manure tea. Community-wise, why not have deeper prayers and conversation beyond the regular fun and food? Why not be intentional in having bite-sized spiritual conversations every time you meet?

3

Plants are grouped together to help each other with shade. They also look better together. Of course, those that require shade are in the shady areas, and those that require more sun (usually flowering plants) would be together. They may appear like "cliques" of blooming flowers, or ferns, but as this is a natural process, it is okay, as long as they are hospitable to one another across the cliques. Altogether, they are a symphony of colours, shapes and sizes, and each has needs that are similar to their species, yet unique in themselves.

4

You need to do pest control. I despise mealybugs that hide in nooks and crannies in the stems and leaves. I regularly check that plants vulnerable to them are not infested with new bugs. And they often spread to neighbouring plants. There are no shortcuts — you need to pinch them dead. But I also discovered that a mixture of apple cider vinegar and water would kill these bugs overnight — or make them hide further in the nooks and crannies. You need to do pest control. I once allowed a huge "bug" to bring segregation in my community. Although I have learned my lesson, the damage is hard to undo. Do not give mealybugs a chance.

5

Enjoy their beauty. Sometimes I remind myself that plants are beautiful and are at their best when enjoyed and admired. That is a part of loving plants, not only when you are fussing over them but also when you gasp at the beauty of their leaves, or become amazed at a new flower. People too are beautiful, lovable and meant to be enjoyed. Part of loving is laughing at their jokes, applauding their gifts of service, tasting and delighting in their culinary skills, and being excited about their milestones. I miss that very much.

6

It is okay to stop buying new plants and focusing on what you have. There is plenty to do. Pruning, propagating, repotting, pest control, reading up and getting to know the plant better, guiding its growth with little sticks, looking into a problem area that emerges, giving away a cutting or two to another plant lover. This is enough to keep you occupied. So it is with a cell group. A new plant will come when it is time to come. Meanwhile, just enjoy what you have.

7

Sometimes you get a plant from your mum that you did not ask for, that requires more painstaking effort. Like the roses my mum established for me that I did not ask for and that were finicky to grow. But because she is your mum, you do not turn it down. What is more, 100% of the stems she replanted became successful and as such I needed to repot them to a bigger pot — a lot more work! Sometimes your pastor or a leader you respect entrusts you with a new, exciting but fussy fellow. You just need to make space for them in your garden.

8

Know your plants. What are their species? How do they grow? How fast do they grow? What kind of potting soil, sun, humidity, watering schedule do they need? It is easy to google plant requirements. For humans, you can start by adding them to your social media accounts, and their numbers to your address book. Hear what they have to say about themselves. And if you hear what others are saying, listen to them too and clarify as you move along. Build your plant profile. Keep a mental file.



9

Discern pruning in their lives. Pruning is from the Master Gardener, our Lord. It is not for us to prune, but our Lord. Sit with them and be with them, point them to our God. Comfort them in their pain and point them to the greater goal, which is to participate in the divine nature of God. Do not belittle, overlook or attempt to provide too many painkillers. Pain can be a friend that seals us to God. Feel their pain.

10

Some plants catch a disease and die. That is sad, especially when the plant is a beloved one my mum gave me. It could be because I did not catch the disease in time to deal with it. I should have done more to prevent it, to have given it a longer life. Death can give us regrets. But deaths are inevitable on this side of heaven. Once I had two dead plants, and I just kept them there for weeks because I missed them and could not let them go. I guess that is okay for a season because they were that valuable to me and feeling sad in death is not a bad thing – it points to the value of that person and the ache of the hole they left in my heart. Eventually, as I began to heal, I could let go of the dead plants and cleaned out the pots, ready to have new plants take their place.

11

I love my caladiums but I hate how they die back. Caladiums are beautiful but once in a while they disappear. The waiting for them to grow again is painful. Absence makes the heart grow fonder. Sometimes the seasonal absence of certain cell members who have seasonal schedules (like monthly closing of accounts?) makes our hearts grow irritated or anxious. Where are they? Our hearts long for them, combined with anxiety — will they come back? For caladiums (and only caladiums), they will.

12

When you're ready and your gardening is bustling, get new plants! From cuttings, from the nursery, from plant trades. It is always fun to have more new plants to enjoy God and life together!

Desiring GOD

By Sarah Lye, PJS2

All of us have desires. We may desire to pursue a career in law or medicine, to get married and have children, to go on a holiday, or to eat a certain kind of food to satisfy our hunger pangs or crave a certain drink to quench our thirst.

What is the meaning of 'desire'? According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 'desire' means a strong wish to have or to do something. We are created in the image of God and are created to desire God. Thus, there is a quest within us to want to draw closer to God. We can only be fulfilled by God as He is the One that satisfies us and fills our emptiness. Though everyone's level of thirst and hunger is different, God is the One who puts that desire into each one of us to want to know Him more intimately.

How do we cultivate our desire for God and increase our desire for Him?

There are seven keys to achieve this:

1. Ask

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

Matthew 7:7

When we are hungry after God, we want to ask God for more of Him. We will keep asking and pursuing after Him. We will not be satisfied with our current condition. Instead, we will keep seeking and asking God for more of Him.

We want to know Him more intimately.

2. Read the Bible

We know God more intimately by spending time in daily reading and meditation of His Word. We pore over His Word and study it diligently. We treasure His Word and want to apply His revealed words into our daily life.

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path”

Psalm 119:105

3. Pray

We also know God more when we spend time with him in prayer. The more time we spend in prayer, the more we know God’s heart for His people, for the nation and for ourselves! When we commune with God, we listen to God and we obey what He says.

4. Humble ourselves in repentance

Whenever we have sinned, we humble ourselves and ask God for forgiveness and we turn away from our wickedness. We stop doing the wrong things that break the heart of God. We turn away from idolatry, wickedness, unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment. We allow God to work in our hearts and make a choice to turn from our sin in order for God to make us whole again. Each time we fall, we quickly run to God in humble repentance. And God will heal us and make us whole again and transform our lives.

“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

5. Depend on the Holy Spirit

The more we depend on the Holy Spirit in our everyday life, the more we will be able to discern His voice and direction. The more we give room to the Holy Spirit to invade our private space and private life, the more we can surrender to Him and then He will reveal secret things of the Lord and guide us in our paths.

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”

Deuteronomy 29:29

6. Taste God’s goodness

The more we taste of and experience God’s goodness, the more desire we will have to go after God. It is like when we have tasted some really delicious food at a certain place, we would want to return to that place to savour it again. This is also the same with God. When we have experienced His goodness, we want to know more of His goodness. We want to pursue after His goodness.

“Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.”

Psalm 34:8

7. Fellowship with believers

When we fellowship with like-minded believers, our desire for God will increase. This is because we will be encouraged to continue to meet up and to inspire one another in our faith and in our walk with God. We will encourage one another to hold fast to God and never let him go despite the challenges that we may be facing.

“...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”.

Hebrews 10:25

May we continue to have a deeper and stronger desire for God especially during these unprecedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic. May we grow stronger in God and be steadfast in Him. May He increase our desire for Him as we are created to be fulfilled in Him and Him alone! Only God can satisfy our longings. So, let us run to His loving arms and His embrace for He will never leave us nor forsake us.



SPEAK UP FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

By Eileen Wong, PJN5



What would you do if you discovered that a child was being bullied in school? Or a domestic helper was living and working in inhumane conditions? Or a colleague had been maligned and blamed unfairly? Or someone had been spiritually or sexually or emotionally or verbally abused by someone in church?

Scripture tells us what we need to do as our brother's keeper.

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed.”

Proverbs 31:8, NLT

Scripture is clear that there is no room for abusive or oppressive behaviour and misuse of power. Jesus Himself showed indignant anger towards the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, and for using religion to oppress the vulnerable.

Here are 3 considerations in speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves:

1. We ourselves must have a very clear moral compass. This moral compass is given by God in our hearts and conscience and is guided by His Word and His Spirit. This means we must be able to discern and distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, and acceptable from unacceptable. This also means we must be unafraid to call out what is wrong, what is unacceptable, and what is evil.

Let us be wary that we do not hide behind the pretext of not wanting to sound judgmental or behind false humility that can mask itself in self-deprecation, because this can perpetuate the systems that have allowed abuse to fester.

2. We must first sit and listen to the victims.

This means not just listening with our heads but also with our hearts, with love and with empathy. We must learn to hold their stories, with all their vulnerability and raw emotions, and lament the wrong and evil that they have experienced. Let us also be sensitive that we do not invalidate or dismiss the feelings of the victims with empty platitudes or misuse of bible verses.

3. We must be very clear of the goal.

The text from Proverbs says it is to ensure justice for those being crushed. We speak up because we are committed to fix what injustice has broken or destroyed.

Speaking up for others is DUMC's third mission statement – i.e. to advocate community engagement in our nation, bringing God's love and justice to a needy society. As an example, our Street Ministry, together with a coalition of NGOs, have

proposed to repeal the Destitute Persons Act 1977 where homeless persons are taken off the streets by the Welfare Department and put into institutions against their will. They are currently denied the right to decide for themselves whether their institutionalization is necessary. Those who are in need are not always provided follow-up care.

This is not a humanitarian system of rescue, rehabilitation, and care for destitute persons. Instead, it facilitates policing, harassment and forced removal of homeless persons from public spaces, thereby violating constitutional rights to Freedom of Movement, Equal Protection and Personal Liberty. The road to resolving the issue of homelessness is certainly not an easy one. But criminalising the homeless does not eradicate the issue. Punishment is not the answer. DUMC's Street Ministry, together with the coalition of NGOs, are instead advocating comprehensive consultations between the government and the homeless community, to truly understand their needs and wants, and the root causes of the socio-economic failures that have led to their state of homelessness.

Elie Wiesel, a Nobel Laureate, Professor and a Holocaust survivor from the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps has said “the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference”. In the same context, he also said that “we must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim; silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented”.

There is a saying that goes like this:

“Strong people speak up for themselves, but stronger people speak up for others.”

HOW “Safe” IS SAVING GRACE?

By Alex Tung, PJN1

PART 1

From Amazing Grace to Abusing Grace

In his book “What’s So Amazing About Grace?”, Philip Yancy speaks of a conference at which leaders of the world’s various religions had come together to compare which aspect of each faith made it unique to others. What aspect of Christianity did they think distinguished itself from other faiths? What did they think made Christianity unique? Was it the concept of life after death, or was it God’s appearance in human form, or perhaps it was the covenantal relationship between God and humanity that made Christianity unique? The leaders were at loggerheads and in the end, it was a wandering C. S. Lewis who chanced upon the debate stating conclusively that the answer was simple – it was simply, “grace”.

Grace: The Christian Exclusive

“Grace” is the hallmark of the Christian gospel and is uniquely Christian. No other faith, no other god, and no other grace is like

the grace expounded in Christianity. In order to appreciate Christianity, one would need to understand this concept of grace and to understand how grace is essential and how profound it is. Perhaps the best place to start is to imagine life without it.

As a result of the fall of man, humanity became sinful and each generation thereafter until today is born into sin. Given that the wages of sin is death and humanity would never be able to sufficiently atone for its own sins, humanity would be eternally condemned to death. As such, humanity’s only redemption out of eternal condemnation was if its sin could be atoned for on its behalf by someone who, unlike humanity, was pure and sinless. For Christians, this redemption came in the form of Jesus, the one and only pure and sinless Man who surrendered His life as an atonement for our sins, taking our place in a death meant for us.

But what have we done to deserve Jesus’ sacrifice? What merit have we accrued to barter with God for the life of His Son? None. We are undeniably unworthy and do not deserve this sacrifice, and we most certainly have not earned or entitled ourselves to this gift from God. And yet, God saw it fit to extend His favour and to send His Son as a ransom for our salvation. That favour which God poured out to us, an undeserving sinful humanity, is grace; and it is through this grace that we are saved from death and can today have our relationship with God restored.

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Ephesians 2:6-9

But how far can we stretch God’s grace? Given that God saw it fit to extend His grace to us whilst we were still sinners, does that mean that we can continue to sin and be assured that His grace will continue to be extended to us? If so, can we continue to live our wicked and corrupt lives with the assurance of our salvation because we have received God’s everlasting grace? Or, does sin disqualify us from salvation? And if so, are we then expected to live sinless lives, failing which we risk losing our salvation?

Doctrine of “Hyper-Grace”

This dichotomy of polar opposites has led to the rise of a new wave of teaching dubbed “hyper-grace”. Proponents of the hyper-grace doctrine believe that once we have received God’s grace, our salvation is assured regardless of what we do thereafter. Rather than tutoring us to live repentant lives, teachers of the hyper-grace doctrine focus predominantly on the power of grace as an adequate atonement mechanism that assures us of our salvation – and therefore what we do and how we conduct our lives would have no impact to our salvation. This ideology, which essentially preaches antinomianism (Greek anti, “against”; nomos, “law”) at its core, could not be further from the gospel truth – as clearly expressed by Paul:

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”

Romans 6:1-2

In today's context, the term "hyper-grace" is generally shunned and its antinomian ideologies accepted as unbiblical. That much is clear. Nonetheless, what complicates the matter is many antinomianists do not refer to themselves as supporters of the hyper-grace doctrine. In fact, most who do ascribe to antinomianism would outwardly claim that they oppose hyper-grace. Yet, a scrutiny of their teachings oftentimes hints towards elements of antinomianism and hyper-grace. Hence, the preaching of hyper-grace is not always obvious and we need to exercise caution when considering whether such teachings are biblical or a fallacy.

Many Flavours of Hyper-Grace

One common revealing sign of hyper-grace being preached is when it is hinted that humanity is not directly responsible for their sins. This argument generally postulates humanity as being "holy and blameless" in God's sight (i.e. an out-of-context interpretation of Ephesians 1:4 which reads "... he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight"). This misinterpretation proposes that it is only the physical body which sins whilst the soul remains guilt-free and bound for heaven. In this same vein, these teachers also preach that once a person identifies as a Christian, his life automatically becomes holy as a direct outcome of having received God's grace into his life. Being holy, he can therefore commit no sin regardless of how he lives.

In taking the concept of grace to a further extreme, some have preached that God's grace (in the form of Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary) was so powerful that it has afforded us a sort of blanket up-front forgiveness for the sins that we would commit in the future. This belief claims that Jesus' death had atoned for all our sins, past, present and future, so that once we have accepted Christ, repentance is inconsequential because regardless of how we conduct our lives, all our sins (including our future sins which we may have not yet committed) would have already been atoned for. This again suggests that regardless of how we live our lives after accepting God's grace, our salvation is permanently guaranteed.

Proponents of hyper-grace may also assert that it is not that they do not consider sin evil, but rather they are just "extremely big on Jesus" and consequently choose to focus only on the redemptive aspect of grace. Others bring this concept further and suggest that because we live in a post-Calvary era, the laws and teachings of the Old Testament and Jesus' teachings prior to His crucifixion (such as Jesus' instruction for us to live morally repentant lives according to the law) are no longer applicable. They argue that Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary was the definitive atonement so that all of Jesus' teachings prior to His crucifixion had expired and no longer needed to be adhered to. These extremists believe that Jesus' death had thoroughly fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies and we therefore live a new covenant age wherein there are no laws.

Hyper-Grace = Antinomianism = Unbiblical

Regardless of which tangent the hyper-grace argument takes, its formulae would invariably contain elements of antinomianism. This is because, at the crux of the hyper-grace doctrine, it preaches that as Christians, we do not need to obey any specific moral laws as we have already been saved by grace. Such an extreme misunderstanding of grace takes this biblical concept to an unbiblical end.

Lest we fall into this confusion, let us be reminded of the reason Jesus was sent in the first place. As recorded by Matthew, God had sent the angel Gabriel to explain to Joseph that Jesus' role was to save His people from their sins, rather than in their sins:

"But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.'"

Matthew 1:20-21

Grace is (In)Sufficient

This leaves us in a great dilemma: on one hand, as Christians, Jesus has instructed us to live repentant lives and to avoid sin – but on the other hand, notwithstanding having accepted Christ into our lives, we remain imperfect and trapped in sin. In the light of hyper-grace and antinomianism doctrines being fallacies, does that conversely mean that the sins we commit today could possibly negate, invalidate or strip away our salvation? How then are we to be assured of our salvation? Is our faith alone sufficient to guarantee our salvation, or are we supposed to live our lives up to a prescribed moral standard to earn and retain our salvation?

VS

*"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. **I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.**"*

"It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance."

John 10:27-30

Hebrews 6:4-6a

Has Jesus left us in a Catch-22 situation, or have we misunderstood Jesus' instruction to us altogether? This predicament and dichotomy between whether we are justified by our faith versus whether we are justified by our works, will be considered in Part Two of this article in the next issue.

Musing On The

By Pastor Dato' Dr Daniel Ho
Founding Senior Pastor

The whole world is still reeling from the Covid-19 pandemic in spite of the unbelievably fast development of the vaccines to deal with this scourge. The unprecedented measures that had to be undertaken in the last twelve months has created a certain culture and lifestyle.

Many of us have become quite proficient now in online shopping and internet banking. This has certainly helped to save us time and efforts. Many have also picked up cooking and boldly tried out new menu to the delight, or sometimes dismay, of family members. We have all been eating more thoughtfully and also eating healthier. Our wardrobes might even have changed for both good or ill measures. A new set of clothing might have been brought in due to the delightful gastronomic dishes for some of us.

Covid-19 Pandemic

Less going out has also resulted in us dressing down or dressing simpler. Who cares about brand names when we are hemmed in much of the time at home! Prayerfully in living simpler we have learned to share with others as well.

Our overseas holidays or even out-of-state vacations have almost disappeared completely. This has resulted in massive savings. Some of these savings have been poured into good and healthy lifestyles or hobbies such as cycling, more walks and exercises. There is a boom in bicycle sales throughout the world and even a waiting list for the purchase of expensive bikes in Malaysia to the delight of bicycle dealers. Couples and families are taking up cycling. All these have proven to be positive and contributed towards a great family culture.

Working from home is now commonplace. We can still be in touch with our colleagues from the office and friends and associates from around the world through technology. How the world has changed! Of course this is not a recent phenomenon. The wonderful trade-off is that our children get to see us more at home which is a sheer delight for them. On the other hand, it can be a bit disruptive when they needed our attention time and again.

Also, the line between when work starts and stops at home can sometimes become blurred. We can either overdo or underdo it. Constant juggling may be needed and this can be taxing for some. The savings on time in travelling to and from work has certainly been put into good use at home. The upshot of this is that it has resulted in a cleaner environment contributing positively to plant and animal life. Also, the drastic reduction in air travel has contributed significantly towards this as well. As a result, peaks of the Himalayas could be seen for the first time in decades from the northern part of India and lions have leisurely taken over tarred roads in parts of Africa.

All these are the positive results that have come out of this global pandemic. It has



produced a certain quality of life, comfort and convenience. But there are also the negatives that have come out of this pandemic.

We are social beings who need face-to-face interactions to experience life, wholeness and well-being. The less live interactions we have the more unhealthy we become. This can result in a slow degeneration into passivity and listlessness. Over an extended period of time it might produce alienation and detachment from people and society. As we go high tech we must never lose the "high touch", especially in the Christian context. God did not make us tech beings but human beings who would need the human touch. We have emotions and feelings that would need human interaction.

While we thank God for technology which makes it possible for us to communicate with one another anywhere in the world through zoom, for example, this prolonged use has resulted in zoom fatigue this last year especially. Long hours on social media have similar effects on our human psyche likewise. We have to think of ways to refocus, stretch and relax to overcome this fatigue.

The great concern about personal health and safety has put a dampener upon us in terms of physical movements. While it is right that we should be concerned and should practise all the necessary SOPs to keep safe, these precautions should not be used as an excuse for not attending church for worship. Some of us have legitimate reasons for not wanting to come because we have aged loved ones to

care for or personally unwell or we belong to the high risk group. But beyond these there might not be valid reasons for not attending church.

Faith must take over our life and living and not fear, especially for us as Christians. Otherwise this pandemic or, for that matter, any issue or situation can quite easily rattle if not cripple us. It makes us unnecessarily anxious about so many things in life and this can take the joy out of Christian living. Apostle Paul's words are instructive: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything,*

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"

Philippians 4:6, 7

by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6, 7). We must have the faith to believe and trust God. He is a good God who loves and cares for us more than we realised sometimes.

The concern is not about anxiety or fear that has taken over our lives sometimes but comfort and convenience. And if we are not careful complacency and laziness might have seeped in without our realisation. We are so used to worshipping in the comfort of our homes that we may find it a great effort in joining God's people for worship and are therefore not inclined to attend. Biblically, the church is always understood as the corporate body of Christ and the need to gather whenever possible should be a priority for believers. This coming together is both a command (see Hebrews 10:25) and a privilege and blessing and where God's presence and anointing is unusually present.

Faith requires discipline, diligence and devotion. Perseverance is always biblically countenanced. This calls for clear convictions and wholehearted commitment to our faith. Jesus has never promised us that following Him will be easy. There is no easy or cheap discipleship.

Let us step out in faith and trust with God's people and live life with a sense of joy, zest and zeal.

IMPACT NOW STORIES

From Prayer Walking to Adopting Orphanages

By Lim Beng Kiat, KL Zone

My CG had decided to take up the "Bless a Community" project for IMPACT Now. The two areas that we considered were Taman Melawati and Setapak. We decided to do a "reconnaissance" prayer walk in each area before we delved deeper. We started off with a prayer walk in Taman Melawati on 31 July 2020 followed by another prayer walk in Setapak on 16 August 2020. After both walks, we decided to own the communities in Setapak. During our prayer walk in Setapak, we came across an orphanage and decided to go in to find out more about the place. The orphanage was run by a female pastor with her husband. We were very encouraged by the testimonies shared by the pastor and some of the orphans in the orphanage. We also managed to identify some of their needs as we tried to meet them.

Presently, we are organizing a CG prayer meeting to pray for Setapak. One of my CG members has been tasked to research the history of the Setapak area so that we may be more intentional and aware of the environment when we do the subsequent prayer walks. We intend to do a few more prayer walks over the next 1-2 months before proceeding to the "Neighbourhood Outreach" project.

Besides "Bless a Community", there is an ongoing "Serve the Needy" project that our CG is engaged in. During the lockdown period, I reached out to a Myanmar refugee family, whom we used to adopt, but have since become independent. We also got connected with a Myanmar pastor through this adopted family. Praise God that the Myanmar family whom we used to adopt was doing fine, but the pastor told me of two families with urgent needs due to loss of jobs during the lockdown. I was able to help them out as well as contribute to the church social fund. I am still in touch with the pastor to help out whenever possible.

Making An Impact, One Family At A Time

By Richard Yeo, PJN3

As part of our Cell Group's IMPACTNow initiative, we decided in September 2020 to adopt a Myanmarese refugee family from the Falam Chin tribe.

We decided on this initiative as it makes it more meaningful for us to be able to sow into the marginalized community on a continued basis as compared to just paying a one off visit to the old folks' home. Someone then referred me to this family whom I paid a visit to earlier and saw the great need they had, with my own eyes.

Here is some background information about this family: Mang & Kim are the parents to two young sons, aged three and five. They live in a rented room in an old shop lot in Jalan Tepian, Loke Yew, Kuala Lumpur. As is true of many foreign and local workers under our current economic climate, Mang had lost his job because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thankfully, Mang managed to secure a part time job in a car spare parts shop that pays him RM45 a day. He works for about 20 to 24 days a month. A large portion of his salary goes to paying the room rent of RM350.00 per month. It was heart-wrenching to see his three 3 year old son, Dennis, a dysmorphic suffering from a string of health conditions (including Noonan Syndrome, ASD Secundum, and Bilateral Undescended Testis).

While their five-year old son Ian seems healthy, he is not enrolled in a school currently because of their financial situation. This family transited into Malaysia with a UNHCR card for repatriation to the United States of America. But due to the Rohingya human rights issue in Myanmar, the nation was placed under sanction by the United States; which then affected their repatriation status as their cards were withdrawn. Mang had reapplied several times to be reinstated but their current situation in Malaysia looks bleak and less hopeful.

Our CG was moved to assist and decided to start a monthly cash collection for the family's daily needs. About 20 of us contribute about RM20 a month to help this family out. We are now going into our third month of blessing them with the ration of food packs and allowances. We are grateful for DUMC's Social Concerns & Community Development Department (SCCD) that we could refer this family to as well. SCCD had approved an additional RM350.00 cash subsidy monthly for six months for the family.

Our CG will constantly monitor the family and their situation. If you are reading this, we invite you to join us to be a blessing to this family too or to another family that we can connect you to. Truly there are so many others who can be blessed by our simple act of kindness and generosity.

I am truly grateful to God for the hearts of my CG members who would come around to help this refugee family out, with the little we can do for them at this juncture of their lives.

All glory to God!

Cupcake Fundraiser With Family

By Derek Sum, PJN2

When DUMC launched IMPACT 2020, we had the idea of doing something as a cell group with Orang Asli children. Then, Covid-19 happened and our plans were halted. Later, during the RMCO, my wife had a great idea to do something as a family and involve our two daughters (six and nine years old) during their school holidays. It was good timing because the holidays meant more time to concentrate on our cause. We agreed to get them to plan, bake and deliver cupcakes to their school friends and to the neighbours living around us.

The Cause

The idea was to raise funds for a cause. We did not have a specific one in mind, but days later, God led us to SSMH (Society for the Severely Mentally Handicapped) while we were praying about it, listening and observing. We knew a couple who sent their child there, and found out that the centre was unable to run its usual donation drives due to restrictions. So we thought, why not help them?

Going Out

Once the purpose was clear, we went ahead and got orders. We explained to our daughters why we were doing this and they came up with posters to explain the purpose of their fundraising activity. With the orders coming in, our little family started baking, decorating, packing and delivering the cupcakes. The girls were really excited and committed to the cause. By the time we were finished, we managed to sell more than 200 cupcakes.

The Impact

Even though our fund-raiser was a small one, we saw many positives come out of it. As we were selling the cupcakes, many were made aware of the SSMH and some offered donations. We directed them to give directly to the centre. One neighbour even bought 10 boxes of cupcakes and blessed the security guards working in our area.

When my wife brought the girls to the centre to hand in the money they raised, the administrator was touched by the gesture. The girls even had the privilege to make new friends and observe how they learnt.

Opportunity Almost Lost

When the idea was still in its infancy, an opportunity suddenly came up for my wife to work during her holidays and get extra income. She turned it down. We saw that as a temptation to keep us from the plan. What a lost opportunity it would have been if we had decided otherwise.

Learning through Doing

Perhaps the satisfying thing as a parent is listening to my daughters' answers when they are asked why they did the fund-raiser. "Because we don't want to be in Selfie-mode" was one, quoting Pastor Chris' message not too long ago. They were also learning through their devotional on how to bring glory to God by serving others. My younger daughter said, "Just like helping the SSMH". By doing, they had a tangible experience to link to what they are learning.



Be A Blessing, As God Has Blessed You (Excerpt)

By Wendy Tan, KL Zone

On a sunny August afternoon, a team of 18 comprising people from the English and Bahasa Malaysia congregation, including six children gathered in Dream Centre. Among us were first-timers going for short-term missions, more so to an Orang Asli (OA) settlement. The idea started in December 2019 when Jayne Lau, our group leader joined some friends for a Christmas outreach at Lenggong. There, Jayne reconnected with Pastor Loh whom she met more than 20 years ago. She shared with her cell group based at Bukit Jalil (KL Zone) about Pastor Loh's ministry for the OA in Lenggong and we caught the passion for the ministry. Our spirits undampened by Covid-19 and the country's Restricted Movement Control Order (RMCO), the cell group prayed for the opportunity to visit Lenggong. As soon as outstation travels were allowed, plans were put into place.

Upon arrival, we were greeted by a large pothole and hungry stray dogs. The crowd we anticipated for was nowhere in sight. We started anyway to unload our things containing basic food items, clothes, and goodie bags onto an open-air roofed platform. Several from our team went down to the houses and called out to the villagers.

The villagers eventually trickled in as they each received a packet of chicken rice and water. It was sobering to discover that many of them had gone hungry for the past three days. We were so thankful that someone sponsored the meals for them. After our tummies were filled, we did some activities with the villagers with some icebreakers, praise and worship session and followed by a Gospel message. The villagers were then split into groups. The men discussed possible sustainable plans for the future of the village, while the older women studied an object lesson based on the book of John, and were taught basic hygiene and how to sew face masks. The younger children were kept busy with simple art and craft activities, while the group of teenagers gathered under a tree, where they listened to the story of Jonah and were taught a dance skit that illustrated the story.

We then went to the Lutheran Church Lenggong for their first prayer meeting in months. There were ten attendees with three of them being pre-believers. It was an encouraging night of worship and prayer as it ended with the participants sharing powerful testimonies of God's goodness in their lives. After a long day, we headed back to Kuala Kangsar to have some supper before calling it a day. All in all, most of us, especially the children, expressed that it was a fun trip, but when the dust settles, we have to remember that the trips we make should not be just a 'touch-and-go', been there, done that kind of venture. Some have expressed that they want to help by providing the OA with basic necessities such as access to clean water, and education and skills so that the villagers will be equipped to find better income. My personal takeaway from this trip is, "Be a blessing as God has blessed you".

No Act Is Too Small

By Hannah Tan, NextGen

In line with IMPACT Now and the "Every Good Gift" series that we went through together with Nextgen, my Cell Group decided to pledge a fund to organizations helping individuals who are needy in these challenging times.

As we read the news, we were burdened by stories of refugees suffering in refugee and detention camps. Some of their struggles were food and hygiene related especially to women. We reached out to Refuge for the Refugees (RFTR) and we wanted to participate in their food and hygiene campaign. To our dismay, the deadline for the campaign was rather immediate and we were not able to meet the deadline. We decided to support RFTR financially instead.

With the knowledge of our desire to contribute to their work, a representative of RFTR introduced us to Manna Learning Center, an institution that works with refugee kids. Clothing was one of the ways that we could support them immediately. So I had the idea to get NextGen to gather clothes to give to the kids in the center. I held a clothes drive at my house and we packed and made sure that all the clothes given were in great condition.

On the day we delivered the clothes, the kids came down to help us carry two car loads worth of clothes up to their center. Seeing the smiles and excitement on their faces were all I needed to know how happy and excited they were. One of the correspondents that I contacted, Angelina mentioned that the lessons for the day had to be put on hold as the kids would be going on a 'shopping spree' to pick out the clothes that fit them. I also got word from Angelina that the parents of the children were very happy as well.

In this project, I learned that in these trying times, there are needs all around us, and nothing that we do is too small or insignificant in blessing the community around us.



IMPACT Now PROJECTS

By Cell Groups under PJN1
Compiled by Alex Tung and Kathlyn Lee

TOWARDS the end of 2020, the PJN1 cell groups assembled for their annual year-end post-mortem of the year that had been and to trade stories of God's hand working in and through their respective cells. As we traded stories, testimonies, and prayed for God's plans for us in 2021, one common thought we all had was on the year that had been – whilst the year 2020 started as any year would have, how it progressed and how it ended was furthest from anyone's imagination. And yet, the Lord in His sovereignty knew exactly what

was happening every step of the way - He provided countless avenues and ineffable resources so that the PJN1 cell groups were able to reach out and serve the respective communities God had called them to.

Below are some of the projects undertaken by the PJN1 cell groups as part of their IMPACT Now initiatives; these offer a mere glimpse of God's unending faithfulness as we seek to humbly respond to God's calling in each season.



A West Malaysian Cell, An East Malaysian Calling

A Cell Group's Blessing to Christ Baptist Church in Kuching, Sarawak
Reported by Kenneth Chang and Desmond Choe

Since early 2020, as part of our cell group's IMPACTNow initiative, we felt that God was telling us to be a blessing to our brothers and sisters in Christ from East Malaysia. With that, we connected with a local Iban church – the Christ Baptist Church led by Senior Pastor Greman Ujang in Kuching, Sarawak.

Pastor Greman is a good friend of the father of one of our cell members, who has been supporting him and his ministry for many years. We connected with both Pastor Greman and his daughter, Tabitha Ujang and asked how we could help. Tabitha shared with us her passion for the young adults and invited us to visit their church to be an encouragement to the young adults in her church. Unfortunately, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent

movement control orders, our Sarawak trip had to be put on hold.

In our discussions and sharing, Tabitha also shared with us the needs of the church and requested for Christian literature, training materials, and books for the church. She also shared that donation of clothes would be helpful to the poor in Sarawak. The cell prayed and decided that we were going to meet this need, and as such we proceeded to conduct a charity drive to collect used books, Christian materials, and clothes. We managed to collect about 5 big boxes of donations which were subsequently shipped to Kuching, Sarawak in mid-2020.

There was also a request for Iban Bibles and we likewise took up the challenge to raise

funds to purchase 100 Bup Kudus (Iban bibles) for the church. Typically, our Cell Group's annual charity activity is to have a charity bake-off where everyone in the cell will make time to meet and bake together goods to be sold for charity. This has been a tradition of the cell for the last three years. It is also a tradition of the cell group to absorb the cost of ingredients so that the full proceeds from sales can be given away. By leveraging off this system we had in place, we had a charity bake-off in conjunction with Chinese New Year to raise funds for this need. Through our sales and generous donations from various individuals, we raised approximately RM4,000.00 which was more than what we needed for these Iban bibles! Praise the Lord! We bought all the Iban bibles Christ Baptist Church required and used the remainder to pay for the shipping cost.

Over the Christmas period, we organised another charity bake-off and managed to raise another RM4,000.00. This time, we sent the whole amount collected to Christ Baptist Church and to be used by the Youth Ministry there.

Despite the various movement control orders and interstate travel ban, we remained connected to both Pastor Greman and Tabitha. They have even joined our cell meetings as guest speakers on two occasions and we have been tremendously blessed by their sharing.

We are truly grateful to God for enabling us to be a blessing to others even when we are physically apart. Thank you, God, for using us to bless others and we pray that God will continue to speak and lead us in this partnership with Pastor Greman, Tabitha and Christ Baptist Church.



Pouring Our God's Goodness To The Needy

Urgent Relief to Flood-Hit Pitas in Sabah
Reported by Andrew Chua

Just before Christmas, we received news that heavy rains and floods had hit Pitas, Sabah. As a result of the heavy downpour, the entire vicinity of Pitas was flooded, with countless schools and houses affected. The aftermath of the floods saw seven primary schools in Pitas closed – six of them closed due to their access roads being inundated and one being used as a relief centre for flood victims.

Ringin true to the DUMC saying that goes, “See a need, meet it; see a hurt, heal it”, the PJN1 zone headed by Pastor Adrian Chong, saw the needs of those affected in Pitas and we knew it was God calling us to action. We immediately liaised with our local ground contact in Pitas and were made aware of two immediate needs:

“See a need, meet it; see a hurt, heal it.”

1. There was a severe shortage of food supplies. To resolve this, PJN1 provided approximately RM2,000 worth of rice (about 200 5kg bags of rice) to the distribution point in Pitas. The bags were then distributed to the locals and from the feedback received, it was able to help about 150 families consisting of both believers and non-believers.

2. The flood had also caused damage to the local church, i.e. the Borneo Evangelical Mission Church in Pitas. We were informed that the total repair and rebuilding cost would come up to approximately RM25,000. Praise God that PJN1 was able to immediately allocate some funds for this and managed to donate RM4,000.



Here we see Pastor Maklin Masiau, one of the pastors in Pitas with whom PJN1's Pastor Adrian Chong has been working closely, assisting and coordinating the flood relief assistance. Pastor Maklin has been in the ministry for 20 years and is actively involved in Christian education, translating English books to the local language for distribution to the locals. He also teaches in various schools in surrounding areas of Pitas via Christian Fellowship. He was a former teacher in the local schools in Pitas and hence, with an available network in the education system is able to bless his local community.

In the pictures below we see SK Pitas submerged by the flood and the access roads cut off and damaged due to landslides.



These are some of the homes which had been affected by the floods.



“For He will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in His sight.”

Psalm 72:12-14

What a privilege it is for DUMC to be able to serve those in need.
To God be the Glory! Shalom.

“Unfailing Hope and Perseverance: Tuhan Tolong Kita Selama-nya”

Partnership with Ebenezer Home in Shah Alam, Selangor
Reported by Alex Tung and Kathlyn Lee

Established in 2009 by Kavitha and her husband, Ebenezer Home is dedicated to the underprivileged. From its early days of being a humble shelter for three residents, today the Home houses about 40 and seeks to provide for all their needs. Notwithstanding her husband's passing six years ago, Kavitha continues to serve and manage the Home to this day.

As the size of the home grew, so did their needs – from larger cooking facilities for the preparation of the 40+ residents' daily meals, to medicines and diapers - there were days when there just wasn't enough to sustain the Home. Then came added needs due to complications as a result of the pandemic and the ensuing economic slowdown. When our cell group came to know of these needs, we felt God's leading to reach out to partner with Kavitha and serve those living in the Home.

Throughout 2020, with His enablement and providence, we have been able to raise funds for the Home's various needs. Amongst others, Kavitha had reached out to our cell group with the need for a canopy to shelter their outdoor cooking facility from rain. We were happy to be able to provide canopy tents as an interim measure until they were able to construct a more permanent awning.

In coming to understand better the daily needs of the residents, our cell was also led

to commit to providing a monthly support of diapers and/or daily necessities to subsidise a portion of their monthly expenditure. We started a “Diaper Angel” campaign and have been reaching out to our friends and families in the efforts of raising funds for this commitment.

In the course of time, we have been privileged to be able to visit the Home and build relationships with its residents, particularly during Christmas, when we provided a meal for the residents as part of our Christmas outreach. We were unexpectedly blessed with a Tamil pastor who was able to effectively minister to the predominantly Tamil speaking residents.

It is often said that as we serve, we are blessed manifold in return. This has rung true for us – as we partner with the Home, we have never failed to be inspired by Kavitha's perseverance and faith. Despite the heavy burdens shouldered, her response in times of hardship has always been: “Tuhan tolong kita selama-nya” – her enduring faith in the midst of unending challenges is truly an inspiration to us all.

As a new year approaches and we continue to seek to be His hands and feet to serve His people in this area, we cast our eyes on Him who leads and guides us onward. Truly to God be all honour and glory!

In all these stories, the common theme weaving through is God's hand in working miracle after miracle in multiplying our humble efforts to be a blessing. At every juncture, when we had availed ourselves to help but were short on resources, God always delivered and met us in His divine timing and providence – though sometimes not in the way we had originally planned, but always for His greater purpose. It has truly been a blessing and privilege to serve in the various communities for the furtherance of His kingdom.

*“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”
“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ ”*

Matthew 25:35-40



GOD IS GOOD

AN EXPRIENCE WITH COVID-19

By Lynn Foo, PJN6



On 31 December 2020, SK Lee tested positive for COVID-19. He recalls his experience, together with his wife, Eunice Sin in a recent interview.

Tell us how you found out you had COVID-19 and how it all began.

SK Lee : I attended a party at the office on Christmas Eve. My boss was present as well, and he tested positive for COVID-19 on 29 December. Looking back, during the Christmas party, we did not really observe physical distancing and were interacting with one another without wearing masks. I started having slight symptoms of cough and body ache on 26 December; but brushed it off as normal flu. Only on the 29th when my boss tested positive, did our entire company of about 120 people decide to get tested for COVID-19.

I was concerned as I had been in close contact with my boss. True enough, two days later, the results came back and I was informed that I, along with another colleague, had also tested positive for COVID-19.

Eunice : After SK tested positive, which was on the evening of New Year's Eve, I quickly called nearby clinics to arrange for tests for me and my daughter, and also called all the people with whom SK and I had been in close contact during those few days. As it was New Year's Eve, many clinics were already closed; but thankfully we managed to find one open and arranged for the tests. The next day, the results came back and I was also positive.

How did you feel when you received the COVID-19 test results?

SK Lee : On the morning I expected to receive the test results, I had my regular worship time with the Lord. God then impressed Psalm 23 upon my heart. Verse 4 reminded me that even though I walked through the darkest valley (i.e. sicknesses or any issues in life), He would be with me. That gave me immense peace and the assurance that my life was in God's hands. I also reflected on God's goodness to me as a young Christian about 30 years ago when He healed me of hepatitis. All these allowed me to be at peace, and when I finally received the test results confirming that I had contracted COVID-19, I was able to calmly wait for the necessary arrangements.

Eunice : I was at total rest and had great inner peace when my test results came back. However, my main concern after SK and I tested positive was really for the people we were in contact with. Would they be all right? Had they also been infected? We thank God for His protection on our daughter who was living with us as she tested negative. Of all the other people, only another friend with whom we had breakfast on Christmas morning tested positive.

What happened after that?

SK Lee : I quarantined at home and was told to wait for further arrangements. I had tested positive on Thursday evening. On the fourth day, on Sunday evening, an ambulance was sent to take me from our home. There was quite a bit of waiting before I arrived at the designated quarantine centre in Sungai Buloh. It was already close to midnight when I arrived. Throughout the night, the health-care workers had worked relentlessly.

By then, my symptoms were getting more severe. My tastebuds were badly affected, I had a bad sore throat and body aches, and there was blood in my sputum when I coughed. The pain in my body was getting unbearable. I could not sleep at all. God reminded me of Psalm 30:5 "while weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning". All I could do was to surrender this immense pain into the hands of God. The next day, when my blood test results came back, I was informed that my situation was considered serious and they arranged for me to be transferred to the treatment centre.

By God's divine plan, although I was in much pain, He provided an opportunity for me to share the gospel with a young Indian man who was checked in to share the room with me. May the Holy Spirit continue to work in this young man's life.

Eunice : For me, my symptoms were not as severe as SK's. I only had slight flu symptoms and a cough. I was on home quarantine. During that time, I took supplements and foods that could boost my immunity. The authorities finally called me 10 days after the results to check on how I was feeling and to ask if I would like to go to the designated quarantine centre. I did not feel it was necessary



as I was already recovering well. They also called me again on Day 13 and Day 16 to check how I was doing.

SK, you were transferred to the treatment centre thereafter. Tell us more about that and when you were discharged.

SK : Yes, the treatment centre was more comfortable for me. They started me on nine medications. During my time there, I spent much time with God and asked for His forgiveness and also repented that I had been careless in following SOPs. God's healing is there for us, but we must also be careful as there will be consequences as a result of our actions and carelessness. I know that, during that time, fellow believers were also fervently praying for my recovery. On 9 January, by God's grace, I was given clearance to be discharged.

Praise the Lord! Yes, I believe many were praying for you.

Eunice : Definitely! The moment SK tested positive, we received so many calls and messages. I really thank God for the overflowing concern, love and prayers from His people. I received calls from Pastor Kee and brother Rupert from the Golden Club, both of whom personally prayed for us. They asked for my permission to share our situation with others. I am very grateful and touched as all these brothers and sisters in Christ, including our cell members, quickly and voluntarily organized themselves to pray and intercede for us. Encouragement came from family members, church members, and friends. During this time, we never felt alone. I thank everyone for standing with us. I believe it is because of all the prayers and intercession from all of you that SK and I made such quick recovery. All glory to God for He is a prayer-answering God!

Do you have any thoughts or advice that you would like to share with us on your overall experience?

SK Lee : In terms of my health, I do feel I am about 90% well. Like I mentioned earlier, there are consequences if we do not comply with the SOPs set by the authorities. My advice would be that we do not take things for granted and to follow the necessary guidelines diligently. I pray that my experience will glorify God and serve as a reminder to all to not be complacent.

Eunice : Through this experience, I am reminded that as children of the King, we are not only responsible for ourselves but also the people around us. As Christians, we are not afraid of death but God gave us a body which is His temple and we should take good care of it. We should also remember our frontliners who are very overwhelmed, and we should be responsible, and not add to their burden. I thank God that we, as His children can have certainty in Jesus Christ our Rock when we are faced with challenges. So I too would like to remind everyone to be responsible, and follow the necessary SOPs.

God Through The Pouring Rain

By Natalia David, PJN6





January 2021 marks a rather significant personal timeline for me. It marks an amazing year of being at my job. Before ending up blissfully at Vineyard Services and Resources, I have had a very eventful journey in the years that filled my adult working life. Forgive this writer for not indulging you in the full history since it might either bore you to tears or dissolve me to tears - no one would want that. Just know, fair readers, that it was a roller coaster ride that alternated from being happily closer to the ground, safe, well and happy, and then having moments when I felt myself being tossed in the air by backstabbing, toxic work environments, disappointments, and the list goes on.

“When I was lost, God extended his hand to help me walk safely through the pouring rain.”

Meeting Paul and Emily Sebastian was a godsend, as I was to discover just two months into the job. I cannot think of two better people whom I could have had the opportunity to work with and for. Seriously, God is awesome. He knows what you need and never fails to deliver (never too late and never too early, always on time). My written piece today, fair readers, is written in the hope to encourage and lift up your spirit even in the midst of this very frustrating and confusing time in human history. A series of unfortunate events that had nothing to do with Lemony Snicket led me to a position of uncertainty and anxiety before God led me to Vineyard.

There were moments when I wondered what I was doing with my life. Was I ever going to have job security? Would I be forever in the rut I was in? Where did my passions lie? Why was the road ahead of me so fuzzy, like I was trying to see the road while standing in the

pouring rain without a clue of how to move forward? In December 2019, I had an idea of what I did not want to do with my life and in January 2020 God showed me what I wanted to do with the rest of my life because now I cannot see myself doing anything else. God knew my heart and my passions before I did and turned every day into my ministry.

I work with children navigating through life with various types and degrees of autism. I am a teacher as well as a qualified therapist and my kids are my whole world. Every day is a joy as I watch them grow and overcome their difficulties and hold their hands through

their successes and failures. This ministry comes with its fair share of frustrations at times, and to be brutally honest, a lot of the time the kids make me want to pull my hair out, but I would not trade my everyday with them for anything. They are the reason I want to wake up in the mornings, the reason I look forward to the day ahead, and the reason I can sleep peacefully at night. Although the latter could be because we fight wars every day with the kids and you are just too tired to do anything else but sleep like the dead!

So what I am trying to put across is God knows best as long as you trust him to do so. Many times we think we know what we want but being human we have a tendency to choose the worst possible thing for ourselves. When I was lost, God extended his hand to help me walk safely through the pouring rain. I am still walking through that pouring rain but God's hand is comfortable and warm as long as I keep holding on.

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