

ISSUE 100

JANUARY TO MARCH, 2019

IN CHRIST

FORWARD

STEPPING

DUMC 
FLOODGATES

FLOODGATES

January to March 2019

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The church office is closed on Mondays.

From the Editorial Team:

We are living in an era of constant change, and we witness something new every day, to the point that we may be numb to it. Nothing surprises us anymore. With instantaneous information available through social media, and the constant bombardment of “news”, today’s generation can be overwhelmed by what used to be considered “unusual” or “shocking” in times before, and begin to believe that this is “acceptable” and “normal”. But it should not be “acceptable” nor “normal”.

Romans 12:2 tells us **“Do not conform to the pattern of the 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.”**

Floodgates was created to be a vessel, a platform where we can publish articles and testimonies to bless and inspire God’s people towards Godly renewal of the mind mentioned by the apostle Paul, and which will stand out from the daily bombardment of confusing and possibly unhelpful “information”.

In Floodgates, we, as a Church, the Body of Christ, can share stories and bear witness to God’s amazing grace and give Him the glory. Also, we can remind ourselves that we are nothing without Jesus, that we would just be part of a dying world and hopeless.

On the cover, “G” is at the centre of the title, Floodgates, just as we need to place God at the centre of our all. Our name Floodgates originates from Malachi 3:10 **“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.”**

Father God, may we all, children of God, be blessed when the “floodgates of heaven pour out...” and be reminded that the presence of God in our lives is the blessed life.

Step Forward:

Keeping In Step With The Spirit

The world is moving forward at an incredible speed and we need to be in tandem so that we maintain relevance without compromising on the fact that Jesus must remain central in all that we do. What does that relevance mean as we examine the five global shifts that affect our nation?

by Chris Kam, Senior Pastor

The first is in the rise of racism and xenophobia. We take cognisance of a rise in nationalism and right-wing politics. Some get confused between nationalism and patriotism. Nationalism carries a sense of superiority over others whilst patriotism is about a love for the nation. It is clear which one we are called to as Christians. Xenophobia is a fear of foreigners or strangers.

The way I look at it is the presenting of mission opportunities among refugees and foreign workers (2.7 million documented migrants and probably an equally high number of undocumented ones) who will eventually go back or be resettled somewhere else, prayerfully as disciples of Jesus Christ. In DUMC alone, we are now worshipping in eight languages! What a mini taste of heaven!

The second is the rise of urbanization. Kuala Lumpur is touted to become one of the top 20 cities in the world. It is estimated that 70% of Malaysians will live in urban cities. The worldwide movement of young people leaving the rural areas and flocking to the cities is happening right before our eyes, with greater Kuala Lumpur growing from 7.5 million in 2018 to a projected 9 million by 2025. Of that, only 4.3% of them are Christians. The Gospel challenge and opportunities are immense.

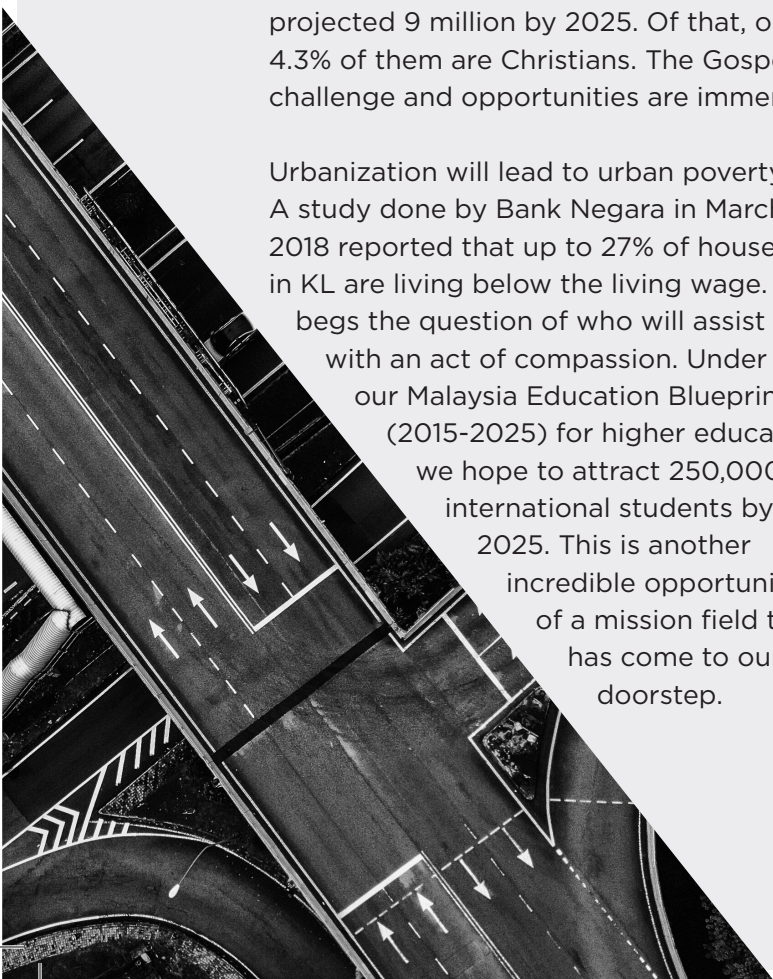
Urbanization will lead to urban poverty. A study done by Bank Negara in March 2018 reported that up to 27% of households in KL are living below the living wage. This begs the question of who will assist them with an act of compassion. Under our Malaysia Education Blueprint (2015-2025) for higher education, we hope to attract 250,000 international students by 2025. This is another incredible opportunity of a mission field that has come to our doorstep.

The third shift is in the area of Climate Change, vis-à-vis environmentally related challenges. It is crucial that Christians understand and act upon biblical teaching on our responsibilities for God's earth. Creation care is a gospel issue, and vital for the credibility of biblical Christian witness. We should exercise good stewardship – save more, waste less, cut down on printing, plastic bottles, packaging waste etc. It can and will change the operations of our church.

The fourth shift is digitization, the ubiquity of smartphones, apps, and social media that is changing the complexion of Church, good and bad. While it can be a powerful tool with its right use of borderless and unlimited outreach, it creates a faceless approach to the Christian faith, or the community at large in an impersonal urban city. There is a need to build relationships and maintain the “humanness” of the Church and Christ incarnate. He did not instruct from heaven but face to face through His people.

The fifth shift is the changing demographics. Malaysia is a relatively young country. Our current median age is 28.5 years. We have put a lot of focus on the young, but our birthrate has been slowing, and people are living longer due to better health care, which means that Malaysia is becoming older. The median age in 2035 is projected to be 37 years. The Church therefore needs to be inclusive. No one group is more important than the other. We need to be mindful of the needs of those growing older, and that they are not sidelined and by-passed.

A large number of them are still healthy and sharp. Look at our new prime minister, a post-octogenarian setting a new benchmark for retirement age! By 2035, those who are above 65 will make up about 13% of the population. This means that ministry to the elderly will be increasingly vital, as this segment of the population grows. We need to be thinking about how



to better minister to this demographic group, no less than what we are thinking about our youths and young adults. We need to think about helping the ageing to live their senior years with purpose and dignity. We can encourage those who have retired to be engaged in nation-building in the new Malaysia and the Church with their wealth of experiences.

With these five global shifts, I am challenging us to the missional opportunities ahead. We are living in one of the most incredible times of history and we need to be stepping forward in preparation for something bigger than ourselves. God has called us to be His agent of influence, as salt of the earth and the light of the world. But we cannot do this by merely an intellectual understanding because our battle is not against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12), but against spiritual forces of the dark world that seek to draw people away from Christ. We are to keep in step with the Holy Spirit as He directs us with the mind of Christ for the world.

As we step forward, let us be reminded to step forward in three ways. **First, by stepping forward with Jesus.** We do not want to go places where Jesus is not there. Joseph the Patriarch (Genesis 37-50) learnt these lessons early, that his life circumstances were not governed by the secular forces of his time, but by God (Gen 50:20). God's Presence in his life is succinctly mentioned to remind us that God is very much in control (Acts 7:9-10; Gen 39:2, 20-21).

In a similar way, the Presence of Christ is manifested through the Holy Spirit, whose role is to glorify Him (John 16:14). J.I. Packer, in his book, "Keep in Step with the Spirit" said, "The essence of the Holy Spirit's ministry is, at this or any time in the Christian era, to mediate the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ." Where Christ is glorified, there will be the Holy Spirit who will manifest His Presence. The Holy Spirit will lead and guide us into all things of God.

Although the fullness of Christ is promised (John 10:10), many Christians do not live in that fullness. Hence my **second call is to step forward with our hearts.** We often stand in the way of God's fullness. "More of You Lord!" is a common cry in prayer but that is a wrong prayer because God has already given His all through His Son. The cry is not to have more of Him but that the Holy Spirit will have more of us! Moving with our hearts means to move in yieldedness and surrender to God. Those of us in Christ have crucified our flesh with its passions and desires (Gal 5:24). The apostle Paul rephrased it as "I die every day." (1 Cor 15:31), or according to the words of John the Baptist "He must become greater; I must become less." (John 3:30) Our lives are like a bottle that can only be filled to its fullness when all stones inside are removed. The stones get in the way, and a life of sanctification and holiness will be a process of removal of these stones from our hearts. The life of total devotion to God is essentially that "Christ is either Lord of all, or is not Lord at all." (Hudson Taylor)

Thirdly, we must step forward with someone. The Christian life is a community life. God has given us a wonderful and powerful spiritual family who will be fellow companions and pilgrims in this journey on earth. No Christian should ever be lonely. We can strive and survive spiritually alone, or we can thrive spiritually with God's community. Make sure we belong to a small Christian community like our cell groups in DUMC. And on top of that, bring along a pre-believer whom you will bring nearer to Christ and as a bonus, a fellow believer who has wandered away from Christ. I pray that some day, five years or 10 years from now, when we look back, we will give a shout: "WOW! God was there!"

Men's Encounter Weekend



JOSEPH TAN, PJN3

Attending the Men's Encounter Weekend (MEW) in July 2018 was my very first MenAlive event. I had wanted to attend a MenAlive meeting for a while but never actually got to doing it. One weekend after celebration on Sunday, I felt convicted to sign up and spend time in solitude with God and other men after watching the promo video. I did so after checking with my wife. The month of July is an extremely busy period in my line of work, which oftentimes includes weekends. I work in a very small firm with a lean headcount. With a very low chance of leave approval due to the MEW dates being neither so far ahead to give ample notice nor close enough to know that my schedule will be free, I paid and signed up in faith that God will ensure I go. God is

indeed faithful and made it happen as I had no issues with getting my leave approved and no clashing work commitments.

During the MEW, I encountered God in the time of solitude and was deeply encouraged by the authenticity of a band of brothers in sharing on their struggles, brokenness and God's faithfulness in His redemptive grace. I saw and heard from other men who reminded me that we are all WIP (work in progress) in our journey towards Christlikeness. Our struggles are real and more common than we think, but God never leaves us alone.

There were two extremely memorable highlights for me during this MEW.

The first one was spending time watching the movie “I Can Only Imagine”. I believe the Holy Spirit spoke to most of the 30 men present that night. Most, if not all of us, were in tears as the Spirit had a unique message for each of us. Throughout and after the movie, the Holy Spirit revealed to me my lack of understanding of the personal relationship I can have with God the Father. My distorted view was largely due to my experience with my absent earthly father.

My biological father passed away when I was 5 years old. Growing up with an “absent” father, I lacked a father figure, lacked discipline and lacked an understanding of how a personal, loving relationship with my father could be. Subconsciously, despite living as a Christian for years, I did not know how to yearn for more of my heavenly Father who is perfect and always reaching out to me. I had a distorted image of a heavenly father who is not so involved in my life. Yet I could feel that night the revelation of the Holy Spirit saying that THERE IS SO MUCH MORE to this intensely personal God. I realized that I need Him to redeem this distorted understanding and have my relationship right with Him, the God who is so much more.

The second highlight for me during the MEW was during our time out session where we learnt to be still and spend quiet moments with God in solitude. We silently walked from our hotel to a very serene park. I enjoyed the fresh air, the different trees and plants, the view of the lake, the mountains in the distance and the ecosystem of where we were. There were different birds, insects, fish, water spiders etc. Observing it all, my spirit began to wonder and marvel at God’s creation. I felt the Holy Spirit calling out to me to enjoy His Presence and His Creation. The verse “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” was clear in my mind. I felt extremely relaxed

and at peace especially after the encounter with God the night before. Then I began to think to myself: “I don’t have to travel all the way to Kampar to do this. There are plenty of places I can do this right where I live.” Shortly after, two questions came to me: “My Son, what are you occupying and busying yourself with?” and “What are you running away from?”

With the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I realised that I had been immersing myself in reading novels and fiction whenever I had the time. It was due to many reasons which involved my hiding and running away from my struggles with responsibilities: in my calling as a husband to my wife, as an only son to my only parent, the complications of an extended family, being purposeful in my responsibilities in God’s ministry and my career in the secular world, amongst others.

God clearly gave me two words after the realisation, and it was to “Man Up”. He was asking me to take responsibility for my life; responsibility in submitting all to Him. I did not know how, but God said, “It’s okay. I will show you.” Then I heard sounds of water rushing and saw them coming from a man-made waterfall as I continued to walk in the park. The Holy Spirit then impressed

**Now when I pray,
“Our Father in Heaven”,
I know in my spirit that
I am calling out to my
Abba Father...**

upon my heart that God will not only show me, but He will be Intensely Personal with me and will refresh me like rushing waters in my journey, if I continue to let him.

I was and am truly refreshed. I believe that it was no coincidence that we were going through the prayer series in church. Now when I pray, “Our Father in Heaven”, I know in my spirit that I am calling out to my Abba Father who is extremely involved in my life and I yearn to enjoy a deeper, more intimate walk with my Father who is so much more.

SHERMAN LAM, KL

Last year's TimeOut in Kampar was indeed a meaningful weekend away, giving me the opportunity to spend time in solitude with the Lord as well as with the brothers of MenAlive. Heading up to Kampar, I was actually feeling both physically tired and spiritually dry. With my wife's encouragement and a desire to seek the Lord's help to unravel some of my struggles, I departed for Kampar with an expectation to encounter the Lord's touch.

Deep inside me, I was still struggling with the loss of my father three years ago. I did not have the chance to say goodbye to him, as he passed away barely two days before I was scheduled to travel back to Ipoh to see him. He was suffering from severe diabetes and had had two strokes that left him bedridden for close to 13 years. It was always an emotional struggle for me, watching him lie in bed each time I saw him during my occasional visits back to Ipoh. And when he was gone, I realised that I would never see him again.

This feeling of loss lingered at the back of my mind, and I struggled with frustration, anger and a sort of cognitive dissonance for a period of time. More often than not, this struggle spilled into my personal life and business dealings as my emotions got the better of me. During one of the sessions, we watched a Christian movie named "I Can Only Imagine", starring

Dennis Quaid, based on the life of Bart Millard (The lead singer of Mercy Me).

I teared uncontrollably throughout the movie and there were many parts of the movie that reflected the relationship between my father and me. I was touched by the Lord and I realised that in whatever that had transpired, whatever brokenness and whatever struggles that I had been going through, the Lord was in control and in His grace and mercy, my earthly father was with my Father in heaven. I felt relief and a significant uplifting in spirit as I had the reassurance that as much I want to imagine what I could have done with my father if he had not been ill and was still around, I should now look forward and imagine what it will be like when we are together in His kingdom one day.

This thought and the lyrics of the same-titled song, really ministered to me during TimeOut and I thank the Lord for His enduring love for me and my family, for the reassurance of salvation for my family and loved ones who have come to accept Him as Lord and Saviour. I thank Him for His love that has overcome our grief, loss and negative feelings. He indeed provides us with all comfort, peace and reassurance, if only we seek Him more. The psalmist wrote In Psalm 119:76, "*May Your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to Your servant*". Thank you, Abba Father.



PRAYER ALTAR - A JOURNEY

by Michelle MY Chan, PJN5
Prayer Co-Ordinator of Forerunners,
the prayer ministry of DUMC

**What is a prayer altar?
A new method?
What happens there?
Why do it?**

Prior to 2015, anyone talking to me about prayer altars would be greeted with a quizzical look followed by a polite brushing off. It was not that I did not know how to pray; nor did I feel anything lacking in my relationship with God... but in my mind, the topic of prayer altars (or anything that remotely sounded that holy) was off limits for me. It belonged to the territory of the “mature aunties and uncles” who loved spending long hours talking to God, but some of whose lives were so other-worldly that it seemed strange and incomprehensible.

I did not understand.

CRISIS POINT

However, 2015 was a tumultuous year for Malaysia. Just a year before, we had lost two planes — one went missing in mid-flight (MH 370), and another was shot down on foreign soil (MH 17). Most Malaysians still feel the loss right to this day. Coupled with other high-profile, unprecedented national events — political and economical — the morale of the country plunged to new depths. Many ordinary citizens took it upon themselves to do something for our nation. We were desperate for a change.

During this time of despair, there was a call for believers to cry out to God in earnest. It was then that we realised that the destiny of our nation did not lie with political maestros, governmental giants or religious masters — it was to be held in the hands of a sovereign God. As our nation dived further into a tailspin of disasters and turmoil, the church began to wake up, and took keen interest in the affairs of the nation. Malaysians were seemingly waking up from a spiritual slumber. The desire to pray was stirring; not just to pray like business as usual,

put our lives on the altar so that God could have His way

but to seek His face and His will for our nation. It was a time to put aside the smallness of praying just for our own needs and desires; and put our lives on the altar so that God could have His way — first in our lives, then in our churches and finally in our nation. Our entire lives had to be re-ordered.

ROAD OF DISCOVERY

My journey had begun. Back then, its significance eluded me, nor did I realise the path it would lead me to. Although I had been a believer for decades, I felt totally inadequate and at a loss on approaching God in prayer in this new season. This was a new journey of prayer, and I was grappling with unlearning presuppositions and re-learning principles.

The first thing God pointed out to me was — *set-apartness*. A serious term with weighty implications. I started to re-examine my entire life — from the work for Him to my inner motivations, even the secret meditations of my heart. More than the outward expressions, my hidden world needed to be re-aligned to His ways, and a period of cleansing was set in motion.

It dawned upon me that this was what the prayer altar was all about — the willingness of a person to come before the Lord and say, “whatever it takes, Lord, qualify me for Your holy purpose”. In the Old Testament, the altar of God had the priests, the fire and the sacrifices. By the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, the altar is now in the heart of every believer. We are the priests, our lives the living sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit fuels it with fire.

NUTS AND BOLTS

I started to carve out time daily for the Lord; the same time every day in worship, saturating in His Word, waiting and wrestling. It was a struggle initially but by God’s grace, it was maintained. Gradually, the entertainment that used to dominate my life ebbed away. I lost the desire to watch a movie at the cinema every week (and saved a few bucks at the same time!). Instead, I began to read God’s Word over and over again, in chunks. The more I read, the more it began to consume me. A daily family altar took root in my home.

I did not fully understand what was happening in my life, but there was a prevailing sense of peace that God was at work. I experienced a revival, a renewed hunger for the things of God, and I was getting to know Him all over again. The bonus was that I had two prayer companions who took the same journey, and that made all the difference in spurring one another to move ahead.

SURPRISE!

The world was gripped by astonishment at the unexpected results of the 14th Malaysian General Election on May 9, 2018. Even the praying believers

were taken aback, albeit in a pleasant way. Our hopes for the nation were realised in one sweeping turn of events that could only have been orchestrated by the hand of God. To be honest, it probably was not the enthusiasm of the praying Malaysians, but the sovereignty of God that brought about the change in our nation. While some have welcomed that change with joy, we still have a long way to go in our continued prayers for our new government.

TAKEAWAY

I began to understand.

I had started out my journey with a great concern and desire for my nation to be saved from the plagues of misfortunes and corruptions that befell us. But God's view was that I needed to be rescued from my apathy and compromises, and be made blameless (not sinless) to stand before Him at the prayer altar. He would then deliver the nation in His own way, in His timing. I wanted deliverance. He was going for holiness. For things to change, I first had to be changed by a holy God.

I began to grasp that God was looking for individuals who would pay the price to erect and maintain their personal prayer altars, come rain or shine. I began to see that He was concerned that families should have strong prayer altars to light up their homes. I began to recognise that believers should never let the fire burn out in their churches' prayer altars. That is the way to transform the nation —and there are no shortcuts.

So, the prayer altar is not a new method, not a new programme. It does require, however, a total change of mindset — from one that is result-oriented to one that is lifestyle-surrendered. And that... is the asking price.

Note: DUMC Forerunners will be having fast and prayer altars throughout the year. The upcoming 5-Day Fast & Prayer will be 1 to 5 July 2019. Do join us on the journey of prayer.



**“whatever it takes,
Lord, qualify me for
Your holy purpose”**



Why Become Part Of A Cell Group ?

by Wendy ML Tan, PJS1

As the year 2018 ended, there were thanksgiving and appreciation gatherings for various DUMC church ministries.

For the PJS1 Zone, the appreciation dinner was held on 4 November. At this dinner, we had leaders and families from all five sub-zones tucked into a cozy restaurant in Subang Jaya. Though there was light rain, everyone made it on time. Over good food and fellowship, there was a time of sharing and gift-giving to the Cell Leaders (CL) and Assistant Cell Leaders (ACL).

THE FIVE SUB-ZONE LEADERS WERE THEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS:

Kelvin, from Klang, thanked his CL and ACL for their constant input and sacrifices. They were the epitome of servants of God. He reminded us that, “to be the greatest, you must be a servant”. We should serve without complaints, be it in rain or sunshine, and should do so with all our hearts. He felt very touched when he saw the teamwork of his CGs (cell groups) gathering up to 22 cartons of shirts which were given out to the homeless during a Christmas party held at the KL Urban Fellowship.

Benny Liew thanked his CL and ACL for their patience, perseverance and care for every member of their cell groups. For example, he mentioned Daniel who would pray for those who were sick, and Peter and Rogini for opening their homes to others. He was also grateful for Brother Lam, who was leading previously.

Elder Peter Cheong also expressed his gratitude towards his CL and ACL for their perseverance, and for putting in extra effort, to do more than what was expected of them. He specially commended two CL; one who continually ministers to the elderly, helping them to mature in Christ, and another who handles a YA (young adult) group, helping the members to grow and mature.

Steven expressed how wonderful it was that the Zone Leaders and CL in DUMC are given a lot of freedom. He gave credit to some of the CL in this team, including Sally, Fu Kok Han, Patrick Soh, and Lana Lin. Working with them was like a partnership — it was never just for themselves. They might go through a journey that was not easy, full of ups and downs. However, all things were possible with the help of the Holy Spirit. He encouraged us to keep talking to God and to have a sense of belonging while serving God and the church. It was God’s CG and it was His calling for us to serve.

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Cor 15:58)

Jerry Teo was one who was younger than the ones he led, but it was of no concern for him. He was thankful for the peace and harmony among his CL — that they had done a good job, and credited their hearts for people, especially in helping out at the Street Ministry.

Pastor Moy How described his fellow sub-zone leaders as real extended family to him, having been on a journey that had spanned more than 20 years with them. He valued their tenacity and perseverance and hoped that they would continue to journey on in years to come, especially at DUMC@Puchong.

I have been a cell leader since February 2018, and though I saw that role coming, I did not expect it to be that soon. So, I burned out almost immediately in March. From there, I have learned to pace myself better, and ask for help from the more experienced leaders, listening to their stories and receiving much needed encouragement and advice to step forward.

In return, let me encourage you to be part of a Cell Group. Why? It is in line with DUMC's mandate to STEP up, STEP out, STEP in and STEP forward. Let me give you four reasons — S.T.E.P.

SERVING — More often than not, I see people cringe when asked to serve in church, but they are okay with helping out in a smaller setting like a cell group. The simplest of tasks is to prepare or buy a meal for supper, or to conduct an icebreaker that warms up the cell group before worship. Cell groups give us the opportunity to try out things on a small scale first.

"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)

TOGETHERNESS — As we congregate and meet week in, week out, we will get to know a group of friends and do life together. We get to share joyfully in each other's triumphs and pray encouragingly when one is down and out. We will spend time together to take part in all kinds of activities, like a visit to an art gallery, or to catch a movie. A personal favourite activity for my CG is going for a hike at the waterfalls. Doing things together draws us closer, and in so doing, we build strong bonds of friendship and become a family.

"Let us consider how 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." (Hebrews 10:24-25)


EVANGELISTIC — One of the primary reasons for having a Cell Group is that we may grow and mature in Christ. It helps prepare us to share with the people around us the gospel and God's love in our lives.

"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)

PURPOSEFUL — For whatever reasons one may have/state about joining a CG, I find that when we commit ourselves to it, we will end up gaining the most. It is a place where I have grown in the past two years, learning from my mentors and older, wiser friends. It is a reservoir of friends whom I have learned to trust, to rely on and to open up about my struggles, pain and vulnerability. It is how I discover and practise my gifts, to lift others up with a word of encouragement or prayer.

It is through being a cell leader that I have learned to have ownership of a group of sheep under my care; to spend time getting to know them, and to walk with them on their journey. There is indescribable joy when I see my CG family overcome the issues in their lives and be on fire for God too.

"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)



Message from Founding Senior Pastor

MALAYSIA in 2019: SOME CHALLENGES & A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

**by Dato' Dr Daniel Ho,
Founding Senior Pastor**



“Malaysia is on the cusp of a new era...”

This was the opening sentence of my article, “Whither GE 14?” written in April 2018 for DUMC. The historic epoch-making polls on 9 May 2018 sealed it for our nation. Indeed the nation and the whole world were astounded that a deeply entrenched government for over six decades could be shown the door overnight.

It was a victory of the people and by the people! The dreams and hopes of a true democracy were finally revived! God is truly merciful towards Malaysia. He heard the prayers and cries of His people. Everybody from whatever social, ethnic and religious backgrounds recognised this turnaround to be a divine miracle. Although there were some tense moments, the transition of power was without chaos and bloodshed. It also goes to show how much God loves this country!

While we rejoice over the fresh breath of air and the “New Malaysia”, the road ahead will be one long tough journey. More than eight months have passed since the new government’s installation. The euphoria and the party are over. It is not the time for rhetoric anymore but firm hands, hard work, clear minds and courageous actions are required at the helm.

AS WE LOOK AT 2019, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FACING OUR NATION?

Firstly, economically 2019 is going to be a tough year and this may possibly stretch into 2020. Our country’s finances are left in dire straits with over a trillion ringgit in debts. The bad news which led to capital flight last year further dented our nation’s economy.

Compounding this is the fact that our oil and commodity prices, which the Malaysian economy depended so much on, are on the decline. The expected global economic slowdown and the unresolved trade war between US and China will also have a dampening effect on our nation’s economy. We need to pray and brace ourselves for the challenging 2019. One area that the government must give more attention to is that of the small and medium-scale industries because these are often the nation’s best engines of support, growth and contribution during challenging times.

Secondly, politically Pakatan Harapan is in a very fragile coalition with occasional unhealthy and competing forces at work

which may just cause a fissure if not a serious tear in the coalition. Already there are rumblings in certain factions. Unseen hands are said to be at work either to restore some semblance of unity and working together or it may cause further friction and distrust. It requires politicians with character and maturity to navigate the minefield of Malaysian politics so that they will truly serve the interests of all peoples and the nation justly, fairly, wisely, sacrificially and sincerely. These politicians must rid themselves of sectarian and personal or private interest altogether. They have been given a mandate to serve the people and country and prayerfully will fulfil that solemn trust. They should unashamedly reach out to ask for help and support. Also, could the unusual number of deaths among the elected representatives in the last eight months be something spiritual I wonder?

Thirdly, socially, it is sad that issues of race and religion continue to rear its ugly head on-and-off to create division if not distrust. Race and religion are always sensitive matters in Malaysia and sometimes push-back factors occur when certain people themselves feel disenfranchised rightly or wrongly. How can resources, wealth and opportunities be shared equitably across the races in the country all over again? This will be a challenge for the government of the new Malaysia. They will have to exercise wisdom, sensitivity and courage. They will need prayers.

Fourthly, educationally we all know that our national schools are in a bad shape, requiring huge commitment, massive efforts and courage to turn it around. It has to be done systematically but quickly. The fact that many parents have moved their children to private schools or are home-schooling them is testament to the state of our national schools. There are expertise and resources available within our nation which can be tapped to begin a turnaround. The many experienced former Malaysian educationists, headmasters

and administrators are more than willing, I believe, to rise up in response to this national duty. In fact, there is no need to resort to foreign education experts in this regard.

Finally, the media and the public square, which is the public space for discussion, debate, reason and persuasion, had been so terribly curtailed and controlled by the previous government that only fear and one-sided news prevailed. The new government must be challenged to open up the media and the public square further for open discussion, debate, reason and persuasion but in a civil manner of course. Only then will this produce a robust democracy, a more respectful and strong community and a wholesome society. Nothing is to be swept under the carpet including, for example, a mature and robust discussion on the ICERD (The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination) issue. Wrong perceptions and fear must be dealt with and the government of the day must not be afraid to tackle the issues and ask for help and feedback.

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSE IN THE LIGHT OF THESE CHALLENGES?

Firstly, the urgent call to contribute towards nation-building rings loud and clear. Praise God that there is a sense of optimism and hope in the new Malaysia. Some have returned from overseas to play their part and others are considering likewise. We must challenge many more to return. We must all reach out and offer help in whatever area of our talents, gifts, expertise and experience towards nation-building. These could be in both the public and the private sectors. Some should seriously consider offering themselves for public service and in public policy matters and its proper implementation. The latter continues to be crucial in getting a nation and especially the basic institutions of the nation on its right footing.

Secondly, it involves adopting one or more of these politicians and the elected representatives in our area to see how we can help and support them in their work. How we can also pray for them, their work and their families and loved ones. They need to remain in touch with the people. We can make ourselves available to them for whatever help and support they need. This will enhance their work but will contribute towards the betterment of our respective communities and areas. These politicians and elected representatives may come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds but it really should not matter for us. They will value our help, support and prayers.

Thirdly, Christians need to get out of our Christian ghettos and be engaged and involved with all communities. We must get involved in NGOs and civil society groups that champion freedom, democracy, transparency, accountability, rule of law, human rights, the environment and sustainable development. We can also engage with the B40 (bottom 40% of income earners) group of people and issues regarding their plight. Christians must act as bridge-builders, peace-makers and reconciling and healing agents among our various social, ethnic and religious groups. We need to participate in joint activities to build understanding, trust, friendship and social cohesion. That is our calling as salt and light in society.

Fourthly, we must sow much into the original peoples of the land, the natives of Sabah and Sarawak and the Orang Aslis in peninsular Malaysia. We must educate these people and our brothers and sisters about their rights, ownership of the land and their freedoms in this country. Often they have been marginalised, oppressed and penalised unjustly and even mercilessly. They must continue to be an important focus of our work, support, ministry, evangelism and discipleship. These are the true *bumiputeras* of the land and we must truly teach, train and disciple them well. My prayer is that one day when a

delegation of top Christian leaders meet with the federal government of Malaysia it will be led by one of our *bumiputera* brothers and many in the delegation will be our *bumiputera* brothers and sisters. This will then truly be reflective of the Church in Malaysia where the majority are really made up of the *bumiputeras* and to show how *bumiputera* is the Malaysian Church!

Finally, prayers must continue with great focus, fervency and urgency. We must continue to pray faithfully and daily for our government, the nation and the peoples of the land. Pray that the government will be wise and courageous to do that which is right and good for the nation and all the peoples of the land. Pray that they will not misuse their position and power. That they will not be corrupted by money but will always remain humble, simple and always be servants of the people and the nation. Some of us may be led to conduct prayerwalks and undertake prophetic acts as guided by our Lord to bring healing to our land and transformation of the nation. Prayerwalks and prophetic acts were conducted ten years ago at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers in the heart of Kuala Lumpur for the Lord to bring life to the river, heal and transform the land. Today we read the amazing report about KL's "River of Life" being listed as among the world's top 10 waterfront districts! (See <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2019/01/08/river-of-life-listed-in-worlds-top-10-waterfront-districts/#lyeWH58qbgodXPHK.41>)

"Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment?" as Prophet Isaiah intoned (Isa. 66:8b). Yes, it can and we have been privileged to witness this in Malaysia on 9 May 2018! May God who has wrought this miracle turn the tide, redeem and restore our nation so that Malaysia can stand tall again and be a shining light in our continent in our day and time.

A FERTILE GROUND *of* DISCONTENT

Can Couples Longing for Children Have Their Happily-Ever-After?

First in a two-part series on couples struggling with infertility, this article features the lives of couples who did not give up the hope of becoming parents. Look out for Part 2 in next issue of Floodgates.

by Karen Lam, PJN5

part 1

A global study shows one in eight couples suffers from infertility while one in ten has secondary infertility – the inability to have a second child. The incidence of infertility has risen so sharply that countries in Southeast Asia, like Malaysia and Thailand have positioned themselves as fertility hubs of the region. The Tourism Authority of Thailand, for instance, estimates 90 million couples will visit the country for medical tourism, particularly fertility clinic services.

The numbers are good news for providers but sobering for couples pining for a child. The anticipation and the subsequent dismay are replayed in a despondent loop every month. Yet, giving up is hardly ever an option for these couples – at least for as long as there is a physiological open door. Hope is the elixir of our existence.

It keeps us going, it pushes us to endure countless attempts and it motivates us to look around the next corner, even after being stonewalled at every turn. With such grim statistics, is hope only the preserve of the courageous? Or the foolish?

Our psyche is shaped by narratives that have a beginning and an end. For couples struggling with infertility or other health issues however, there is no end, for as long as they are determined to have a biological child, they keep going, even if their efforts thus far have come to naught. Somehow, these couples feel “incomplete” without children.

And this feeling is as real for childless couples as it is for couples suffering from secondary infertility. For two years, Desmond, 41, and Susan, 40, (not their real names) have been trying for a second child. Lisa, their only child, is four and was conceived relatively easily -- after ten months. Their second attempt has left them stumped. They have spent about

RM30,000 on western and traditional Chinese medicines, and suffered two miscarriages. With the emotional and financial toll, they have decided to take a break from the treatments and rely on essential oils to balance Susan's hormone levels.

Says Susan, “If you ask me if I'm willing to not do anything and just let it be, I would feel it's a waste, because there're only 12 chances a year you can do it! I don't know how to let it go.”

At 40, the likelihood of conceiving within a year is about 44% while the risk of miscarriage is 50%. As dour as these figures may be, as long as the possibility presents itself, the spectre of hope looms large before Susan and her restlessness prevents her from finding an emotional equilibrium.

“I don't think I've found the balance yet,” she conceded. “I'm still trying to seek it.” Moments later, she revealed, “The more you want it, the harder it is to let go, especially if it slipped through your fingers twice.” With hope deferred, can couples ever find their happily-ever-after without the baby they so long for?

OVER A DOZEN CHILDREN, YET CHILDLESS

The emotional roller coaster is a common ride for couples with difficulty conceiving. Like most, Paul and Beth's (not their real names) early marital bliss included high hopes for a child. They were in their twenties when they got married and they tried actively for 10 years to conceive. After some tests, it was revealed Paul had a low sperm count.

“We did not seek treatment because of the demands of ministry and also the cost factor. We just wanted to trust God for our best,” recalled Paul, 52. Summing up his feelings in the early years: “It was not so



much frustration – more like a mixture of sadness, disappointment and sporadic self-pity.”

The pastor and leadership coach went on to explain, “Maybe because we were so involved in ministry and the lives of people, we did not really have time to moan over it,” he reflected, before quickly adding, “We did enjoy the freedom and mobility (of not having children). More so now!”

Evidently, Paul is an optimist. Even as he related setbacks, he would often attach postscripts recounting the bright side. It was likely this positivity that attracted many of the youth Paul and Beth used to work among. As those relationships developed so did their family – their titles evolved from *Pastor* to *Dad* and *Mom*.

“We have 13 sons and daughters and 10 grandkids,” announced Paul, proudly. “The oldest of them is 36 while the youngest of the grandchildren, 3 months.” Paul effusively described his parenting journey as “awesome!”

Paul and Beth have a special place in the hearts of those who lack the positive influence of a father. The children they have unofficially adopted have absent fathers because of death, divorce or estrangement. Some parents, particularly the mothers, knowing they are one man down, have personally entrusted their children to the couple.

It has been twenty years now since they started becoming substitute parents. Some of the children were as young as ten and

others as old as eighteen when they took them on. The transition for the younger ones was particularly awkward. “They didn’t feel worthy to call me Dad at first,” Paul related. “It took them a very long time and usually it was during crises that they would realise that we were for real. Then they would ask if it’s okay to call me Dad.”

The response of the parents was similarly touching. “Some of the parents even went back to their village and declared to the entire *kampong* that we were the spiritual parents of their children,” said Paul. As for others, the handing over of the mantle of fatherhood could not be more momentous: “With some of my children, I had promised their fathers before they died that I would play that role for their children.”

Paul and Beth’s responsibilities to the children, when they were younger, extended to paying for their education, providing monthly allowances and taking some on holidays. All these while the young ones lived with their biological mothers. Others would find temporary refuge in the couple’s home when crises arose in their own.

With the costs come the benefits as Paul and Beth experience celebratory milestones typically reserved for parents. They have had the privilege of attending convocations and Paul has walked the girls up the aisle at their weddings. The thought of having a large extended family around them as they age is gratifying. “We’ve already planned for our retirement with them,” joked Paul. “Now, it’s payback time!”

As satisfying as these relationships have been, however, the hope of conceiving has always lingered. “There are still days we wish we had our own biological kids but those days are fewer as we age,” Paul confessed. The sense of a shared future with the next generation keeps the couple moving forward with their full plates.

As those relationships developed so did their family – their titles evolved from *Pastor* to *Dad* and *Mom*.

INTO THE WOODS

A poem on the beginnings of the inner journey of transformation in God, one that deals with and battles the darkness within with the sure light of Christ.

My path led me to the mouth of a thick shroud of woods
It was a dark glade of green so sinister
I trembled at its sheen
As the path twisted on around the woods,
I knew I had a choice
To enter into danger or walk merrily away

Instinctively I backed away from the enchantment to go about my safe way
I'd be a fool to put myself in so dangerous an endeavour
As I turned my back on the darkness,
my heart implored me to stay
There is something in that jungle for you to fight and win

Inside that jungle are the hidden,
unspoken things of the heart
Things no one knew and no one could ever understand
The jungle is the overgrowth of the tears you have cried
It is the garden that grew as a thousand deaths you died

It's time to put right the things that have gone wrong
It's time to kill the demons that have tortured your soul
It's time to climb in to do what you must
For you will never walk in peace until you have this done

I knew within me that my heart is right
It knew its own deceit,
and it wanted to be made right

Alas as I went in, I was bringing in too much –
I couldn't climb between the thick
With the pile of things I had
And so I purged my belongings of inconsequential things

What was left was the sword,
the belt, the helmet
Breastplate and sandals
A torch, a bottle of living water
And a loaf of the living bread

With a quivering heart,
I stepped into the thick
And although I entered the dead silence, somehow
A light filled my heart.

by Debbie YM Loh, PJN3



Winter Time Wonders of God *in* **NEPAL**

compiled by Vera Tay, Nepal Field Co-Ordinator

In early December of 2018, six of us got onto a flight and headed off to Tribhuvan Airport, Kathmandu, Nepal. We had a Mission. We were on a Mission Trip.

VERA TAY, PJS2

This was my third mission trip to Nepal. When I was last there three years ago, nine months after a major earthquake, there had been devastation, the air was filled with smoke, and there was a lack of fuel and medicine everywhere. This time there was some development. China had brought in some progress, especially in transportation but the Nepali powers still dominated the country. There were many strongholds in Nepal and it was sad to see the people trapped in spiritual blindness.

We visited Ree, her mother and grandmother in their one-bedroom house near the brick factory. When Ree was 12 or 13 years old, she was already working carrying bricks. She has a brother who is a drug addict and the whole family has been caught in the web of his addiction. It was the love of Christ in Ree and her sister that was the undergirding foundation holding the family together. This, however, was not sufficient to break the family out of the brother's addiction and the family's poverty. Yet I saw the joy and peace on their faces; but I also saw the pain in Ree's eyes. I can only pray for Jesus to help her brother and family to break out of his destructive addiction.

HII NGIIK YAN, PJN2

It was Saturday Sangati and the worship had just started. I sang along “Thank you, Thank you Jesus” and a few other songs in Nepali that I had learnt before the trip. More and more people were coming. Sitting behind me were a few girls from the orphanage. They sang passionately, as if all the songs were in their hearts. I did not understand the lyrics but I heard “Yesu” (Jesus) frequently. We were praising the same Lord Jesus, with the same spirit. It dawned upon me that I was worshipping Jesus with my brothers and sisters from one of the unreached people groups in Nepal, and this moved my heart suddenly and my tears flowed freely.

Now I am back in Malaysia and I am still mesmerised by that moment. During our preparation for our trip to Nepal, we prayed for God to fill us with love for the people and the country, however I felt that I did not go with that love for the people. I told God that I cannot comprehend those feelings of love. Recently He answered me, “Sometimes we care because we love but there are times that we can only love, after we have learnt how to care.”

QIAN YU, KL

Maidi was a tiny village up in the hills where we stayed for two nights. It was in a rural area but it was in Maidi that God showed me His faithfulness. After we had spent half a day hiking around this little hill, visiting homes, praying and sharing with the children and villagers, we finally headed back to the church at 4.30 pm for the Children Ministry. As evening drew near, and while I was helping to pump balloons, I saw the snow-capped mountains being unveiled clearly before my eyes. It was absolutely breath-taking, an extremely beautiful creation from God. All too soon it was sunset and the sky changed from blue to a deep purple, hiding the magnificent Himalayan range. I told myself: “Oh no my team mates missed the magnificent view”. As we continued with our Children

ministry, I could only describe to Ngiiik Yan the beauty that I witnessed.

The next morning as we trekked to a villager’s home for breakfast fellowship, God once again showed us the snow-capped Himalayan Range, even more astounding than the evening before. I told her that God is faithful. No one missed the spectacular view of our creative God. As long as we remain faithful to God, He is faithful evermore to us.

EUNICE WONG, PJS2

Our group was made up of six individuals who came from totally different backgrounds and I praise God for getting us to work together and to complete this amazing mission trip with joy. It was our common love for God that enabled us to have strength to finish this race. I was also encouraged by both of our missionaries who are serving there, blending in with the local culture and with their zeal and love for the Nepalese.



About 30% of the Nepalese population leave their families behind to work in a foreign country. We heard of cases where this situation caused broken families or resulted in fathers being strangers to their children. We visited some of the businesses set up under the “Business for Transformation” umbrella. I saw that it was a good way to help the people find worthwhile work and create more job opportunities for the Nepalese in the local market, and to contribute towards their economy.

JOYIE SOH, PJN4

While in Maidi, we went with Daniel (Pastor Gypcha’s 15-year-old son) to visit the “Mother, Father” cult church. Together with Wai Wai, my husband, we made the one hour hike. We prayed to God to tear down the stronghold of the cult church and to restore Maidi to be the light on the hill for Jesus. During this hike, we had a lovely time praying and getting to know Daniel better. He shared his desire to work in Malaysia when he grew up. We also prayed for God to send him a good mentor and for him to be a God-fearing young man, putting Jesus at the centre of his life.

As I trekked around the Maidi hill, observing the culture, staying amongst them, praying for people and sharing the good news, I related to a verse in the Bible – Matthew 9:35-38, “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

JING WAI, PJN4

During home visitation, we met a couple. The wife was not responsive but the husband was hungry for Christ. I found out later that the wife wanted to divorce her husband but the church leaders requested for her to be patient and to trust in Jesus.

The next day we had a Christmas carolling event. At the end of the message and testimony sharing, my team leader asked for a recommitment to Jesus. I was overjoyed to see the wife raise her hand and we led her in prayer. The following day after the Church Celebration, as we were praying for the people, the wife manifested by screaming loudly and went into a trance. We prayed, casting out the evil spirit and I felt God’s loving hand upon her and by the blood of Jesus Christ she was finally set free. My heart was filled with happiness when I saw this young couple leaving the Church together and I believe that they have reconciled.

THE CALL

Many a time God will call us to go on mission trips as we hold His Message, and the needs out there are numerous. It is only when we obey God and step out that we will be able to see the wonders and miracles of God. There is so much to do, and in your doing, God will bless you. God is calling. Yes He is calling you. Will you answer Him?

Pursuing the Presence

by Sarah Lye, PJS2

Imagine yourself being in an immaculately designed villa complete with all the state-of-art facilities such as spa in your room, a private swimming pool, with a cosy, comfortable king size bed and sumptuous food galore! Your room is strategically located with a great view of the sea and the distant horizon. You can enjoy the beautiful sunrise and be mesmerized by the view of sunset in the evening! But what if the presence of the Lord is not there? Does it matter if God's presence is not there with you?

In the first place, how do we know if God's presence is there? What is the presence of God? God's presence is not mystique or mysterious. God's presence is very tangible and we can feel or sense it. Only God can fill the deepest spiritual hunger of our hearts. Only His presence alone can satisfy the deepest spiritual longings in us. Due to Adam & Eve's sin in the beginning, they lost the sense of God's presence. But thank God for the cross, the resurrection power of Christ and the Holy Spirit paved the way for God's presence to be manifested.

First, we need to have a desire for God in order to have the presence of God in our life. This means that we need to have a hunger for God and His presence. James 4:8 says in the Bible, *"Come near to God and He will come near to you"*. God promises in the Word of God that when we draw close to God, He will draw Himself nearer to us. So when we have that earnest desire to seek God's presence, God will reveal Himself to us. And we will have that divine exchange with the Lord.

Psalm 27:4 says "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

At the same time, we need to ensure that our hearts are pure and our hands are clean. How can we do this? We simply come before the Lord with a humble heart asking God to cleanse our heart from all impurities, unforgiveness, sin or anything that may hinder us from being close to God. God can show His presence to us in whatever circumstances that we are going through. Do not put God in a box by



presence of God

our limited thinking! We need to open our hearts to what God is showing us and working through our life. The more we spend time with God in His presence, the more His light will penetrate our hearts and the more God will reveal our secret sins!

Why is God's presence important? Because we are merely a tiny creature of God's creation and the void in our hearts is designed to be filled by God. Moreover, we need Him in our lives! And if God's presence does not go with us, we would rather not be there! Just like Moses in the book of Exodus, when he was given the task to lead the Israelites, he asked God how he could accomplish this huge mission. Exodus 3:12 "And God said, *"I will be with you. And this will be a sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."* Moses treasured God's presence and was constantly asking God to be with him

But thank God for the cross, the resurrection power of Christ and the Holy Spirit paved the way for God's presence to be manifested.

wherever he went. Exodus 33:15 says "Then Moses said to him, *"If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."*

Another example in the Bible that indicates the importance of the presence of God was the life of Joseph. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and he ended up working for Potiphar. Exodus described for us that *"The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favour in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned."* (Genesis 39:2-4). Joseph prospered because God's presence was with him all the time!

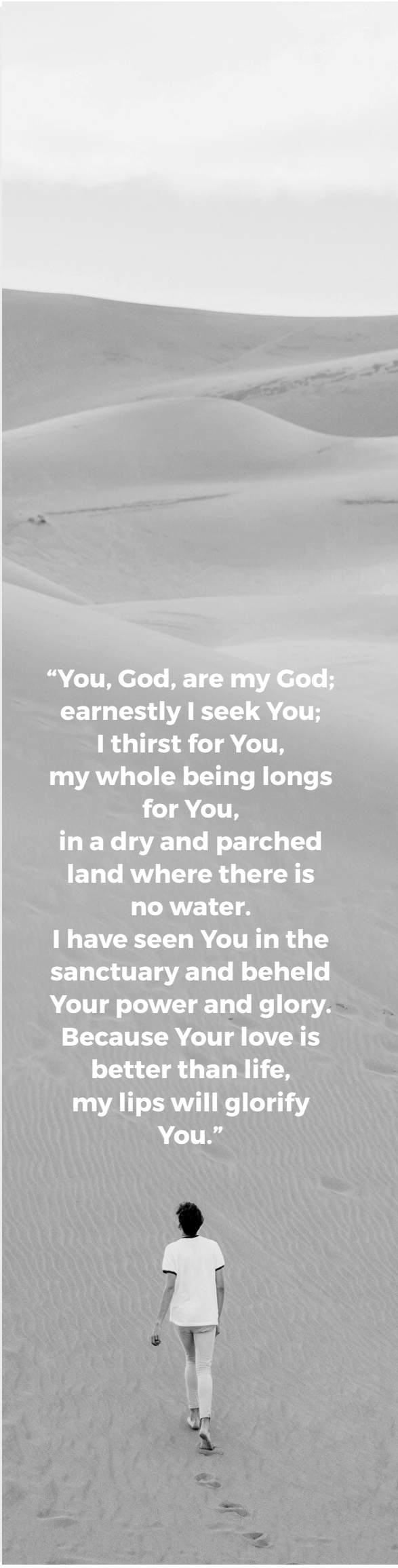
Daniel, too, orientated his life around God. Daniel chose not to defile himself with the royal food and wine. Instead, he chose to honour God and God honoured him back by granting him favour and understanding of all different kinds of dreams and visions. (Daniel 1: 17b)

Last but not least, the Lord Jesus Himself set an example for all of us to follow. Being the Son of God, Jesus still needed to be alone with God to pray. There are two accounts of Jesus spending private time with God. In Matthew 14:13a *“When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.”* And in verse 23 *“After He had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.”*

How then do we pursue God’s presence? By spending time with God daily in His presence – praying, worshipping, singing adoration and praises to the Lord. Our adoration for God is from our heart and not from our mind. We gaze upon the infinite beauty of the Lord and drink from His ever-flowing River of Life. We focus on His presence and choose not to be distracted by anything around us. We surrender every part of our being to the Lord – our sins, concerns, fears, anxieties, burdens, frustrations, anger, etc. We just bask in His presence and be awed by His magnificent presence. Let the love of the Lord overwhelm us and let us allow the Holy Spirit to touch the inner parts of our life as He reveals Himself to us in a personal way.

We must never take for granted the presence of God. Instead, we must revere and respect His presence, for God is holy and awesome.

There isn’t any specific time frame we need to follow in order to feel God’s presence. As long as our heart is genuine and hungry, God Himself will show up! He will quench your thirst. The more time we spend in His presence, the more we know God and feel His presence, and the more we will be transformed into Christlikeness! Just like what David says in Psalm 63:1-3, let us too earnestly pursue the presence of God in our lifetime!

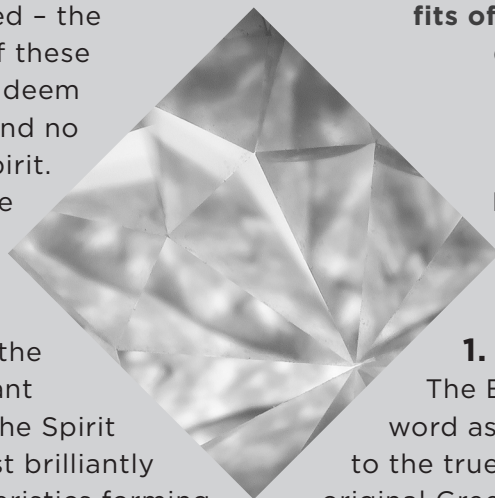


**“You, God, are my God;
earnestly I seek You;
I thirst for You,
my whole being longs
for You,
in a dry and parched
land where there is
no water.
I have seen You in the
sanctuary and beheld
Your power and glory.
Because Your love is
better than life,
my lips will glorify
You.”**

As we Step Forward into 2019, the scripture that was chosen to set the theme for the year ahead comes to us from Galatians 5:22-26. It is from this portion of scripture that Paul teaches the early Christian communities in Galatia that as Christians, they are set apart from non-believers as, unlike non-believers, Christians have the Holy Spirit within them. Paul writes that it is through this Holy Spirit that these believers are set free from the carnality of their fleshly desires. As followers of Christ with the Holy Spirit poured out into them, these Christian Galatians should live their lives in such a way that reflects the Holy Spirit's presence within them. The outworking of the Holy Spirit, according to Paul, would produce the Fruit of the Spirit in them.

In this letter, Paul itemises nine specific characteristics that together make up the Fruit of the Spirit. It is interesting to note that Paul refers to the Fruit as singular, suggesting that it is through the combination of all nine characteristics that the Fruit is formed – the absence of any one of these characteristics would deem the fruit incomplete and no longer to be of the Spirit. In very much the same way, a polished diamond has many facets and it is as a collective whole that the diamond has its brilliant sparkle. The Fruit of the Spirit similarly sparkles most brilliantly when all nine characteristics forming it, are polished to brilliance. Paul lists these nine characteristics in Galatians 5:22a, which reads:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22a (NIV 1984)



Fruit *of the* Spirit

by Alex Tung, PJN1

Before we consider these nine characteristics, let us take a step back and consider the preceding verses, in particular, verses 19-21. Paul contrasts fruit from work. Fruit, according to Paul, is the product of the Spirit and work (which Paul describes as toil and drudgery) is the product of the flesh. Verses 19-21a reads as below:

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. Galatians 5:19-21a

Let us examine the nine characteristics of Galatians 5:22.

1. LOVE

The English translation of this word as “love” hardly does justice to the true depth of its meaning in the original Greek. The English “love” is used as a broad brush to cover many levels of emotions. In Greek, specific words are used to describe varying levels of emotion – for example, *philia* (which refers to the type of affection between family and friends), *storge* (which is typically used to describe a parent’s love for its offspring) and *eros* (which refers

to a sensual, passionate love with a deep longing). Instead of *philia*, *storge* and *eros*, the love which is used here in Galatians 5:22 is expressed in Greek as *agape*. *Agape* love is a love that is benevolent, self-denying and self-sacrificing, an unconditional and sacrificial love that is of the highest order, and is freely given without seeking reciprocity. This expression of *agape* love is used to express the love God has for us.

2. JOY

Rather unique to the Christian faith, and unique even from other Abrahamic faiths, is the emphasis Christianity has on, and the need for, joy. This peculiar joy that is an attribute of Christians, however, must be differentiated from worldly joy which is fleeting and superficial. The joy that the world offers such as the joy from being promoted at work or the joy from overcoming a health scare, although perfectly legitimate delights, can be forgotten in the years to come under the burden of increased workloads or overshadowed by an even more dire or malignant ailment. Contrastingly, this joy that Paul refers to is independent of the world and is instead rooted in our relationship with Jesus.

3. PEACE

The importance of peace cannot be overstated. Even in the Old Testament era, the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom* became accepted as a pleasantry and a greeting when people met each other. As a result of The Fall, the world in which we live is a fallen one and as such, peace is in short supply. Periods of peace and tranquility are sparse and unending. Simply put, the world cannot offer us everlasting peace because it cannot give what it does not have. Enduring peace, then, can only come from the One who had conquered the world so that regardless of what worldly circumstances dominate our times, we are able to enjoy eternal peace through our communion with the Holy Spirit.



4. PATIENCE

The King James Version of this term is significantly weightier as the term used is “longsuffering”. “Longsuffering” denotes more than an ability or capacity to wait; it refers to someone who has the gift of persistence and perseverance, a state of being able to withstand pain, prosecution and provocation whilst being content and without complaint. As with peace, patience too is in severely short supply with the world’s trend geared towards everyone being fast-paced, quick-witted and swiftly-irritable. But because Jesus had given us a model of patience and had instructed us outright to be slow to anger, we had better take heed and learn to be guided by the Holy Spirit within us to be the patient people of Christ.

5. KINDNESS

True, biblical, Jesus-type kindness, is of a rare class that fuels us to extend kindness to others for their own good and for their own sake, forsaking ourselves and (certainly) without the expectation of any reciprocation or gratitude. Let us be honest, how many of us were put off because the person we had extended kindness to did not express gratitude or failed to thank us? Undoubtedly the recipient of our favour

should express gratitude but their failure to do so is not our bone to pick – leave that to God and pray that God works a transformation in their hearts. This quality of kindness is one that goes hand-in-hand with love and once the Holy Spirit begins to spread its love into us, it will then be a natural progression for this Jesus-type of kindness to start flowing out of us in our deeds, words, thoughts and even prayer.

6. GOODNESS

Our salvation from eternal condemnation is a direct result of God's goodness to us. In that sense, goodness and kindness are very closely related. But a key difference that distinguishes them is goodness tends to be more of an all-embracing quality. This quality can come in two forms, as the Greek *kalos* which means beautiful and noble, and as the Greek *agathos* which refers to a person's positive attribute which goes beyond aesthetics and can be used to describe a person's excellence of character. Together, *kalos agathos* can refer to, as used by ancient Greek authors, to refer to the ideal and chivalrous conduct of a gentleman. Now, is that not something to aim for?

7. FAITHFULNESS

The Greek word for faith is *pitis* and this quality refers to a sense of reliability, trustworthiness and a confident commitment to someone. In the same way that we are called to be faithful as Christians to the Trinity, we are also called to be faithful to our spouse and friends. Yet, how many marriages have been broken because of disloyalty and how many more friendships severed because of back-stabbing? Broken vows and broken promises seem to be all in a day's work in this day and age but as Christians we are called to be different. We are called to display faithfulness of the highest order regardless of the persecutions we face for our faith, the lure of adultery and the temptation of gossip.

8. GENTLENESS

The term "gentleness" here is interchangeable with "meekness". Both words suggest a posture of humility and servanthood. But to be gentle and meek, to be humble and to serve, is more commonly viewed today as a weakness and an inadequacy of a person's courage and guts. How far this is from the truth! Still, many men (and women too) would retract from displaying this gift and instead choose the simpler option of brandishing strength and authority (read: ego and pride). Let us remember that the Messiah could have paid earth a visit as the Saviour King the Jews were expecting – triumphant and mighty, bringing deadly swift judgement upon all who opposed Him. Instead He came as a humble lowly shepherd, born into poverty and hardship, and allowed Himself to be tortured and killed. True strength is to take the route Jesus took in choosing to lower himself as a servant to others as an outward expression of the internal workings of the Holy Spirit.

9. SELF-CONTROL

This final quality that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22 points us back to the preceding verses 19-21 when he spoke about the works of the flesh. The original Greek here is the word *enkrateia* referring to the restraint of a person's emotion, impulses and desires. In recognising that there would inevitably be a battle within us to either give in to our earthly desires or take a stance to uphold godliness, Paul concludes by reminding us that with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us, we are able to say "no" to the works of our flesh which bring about certain condemnation and to say "yes" to the Spirit which blooms a bountiful harvest of Fruit.

After having contrasted the works of the flesh against the Fruit of the Spirit, in the final verses of Galatians 5, Paul sums up the big idea and the principle on this whole chapter:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Galatians 5:24-26

What a harsh choice of word to say that once we belong to Jesus, we have *crucified* the sinful nature within us! Yet, the truth of the matter is exactly that – that through our having the Holy Spirit within us, we have destroyed the stronghold that the world has on us. He uses this harsh word, *crucify*, again at the very end of this letter where he says:

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14

Our journey in keeping in step with the Spirit is exactly that – *a journey*. By no means is keeping in step with the Holy Spirit an easy task – it is a daily struggle and a lifelong pursuit. Regardless of our upbringing and the worldly circumstances which have shaped us to be the person we are today, the simple fact is that as Christians we have the transformative powers of the Holy Spirit within us.

Once we understand this reality and appreciate that the Holy Spirit has provided us all that we need to produce the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives, we can no longer use the excuse that cultivating these nine characteristics is too tall an order because the world had conspired against us and had not provided an environment to facilitate these qualities.

The advantage we have as Christians and as DUMC members is, unlike the Galatian community Paul wrote to, we do not require an apostle to remind us that we have the Holy Spirit within us (see Galatians 3:2-5). Instead, as the good people of DUMC (*and all good DUMC people say...*), we have been instilled with the habit of saying “Good morning, Holy Spirit” every morning when we rise. Let us be reminded, then, at the start of each day that we can call on the Holy Spirit within us for the strength to live out these nine qualities so that we may bear the Fruit of the Spirit daily.



My Personal Lord and Saviour

by Zach Chia, PJN2

Before knowing Christ, I was a person who was filled with anger and rage. I recognised my own imperfections, but I did not feel I needed to change. After taking the SPM, I was sent to a college in Sepang for A-level studies. It was there that I was first exposed to Christianity. I was introduced to a Christian Fellowship (CF) by my seniors. With the intention of making new friends, I decided to go. However, God had His plans.

I was curious to know why these Christians seemed so passionate about this God, whom they call 'Abba Father', who was willing to call His believers 'sons and daughters', and who was willing to sacrifice His Son to save even those who do not know Him.

I joined their praise and worship, and was touched by the Holy Spirit. I was curious to know why these Christians seemed so passionate about this God, whom they call 'Abba Father', who was willing to call His believers 'sons and daughters', and who was willing to sacrifice His Son to save even those who do not know Him. I started asking myself questions such as 'What is the purpose of my life?' etc. Then I realized something in my life needed to change. As I continued to join them for a few months, the CF members readily shared with me about Jesus and the Bible.

Finally on 4 August 2010, I took the leap of faith and accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour. I expected life to be smooth sailing after I accepted Christ. Little did I know there would be so many challenges ahead. When my parents found out I had accepted the Lord, they were so furious and upset that they almost disowned me. This broke my heart, for I did not know why they would disapprove of such a wonderful thing as finding truth and love from the One True God. Many times I cried to God and asked Him why He allowed me to go through all those difficulties. Then God revealed to me Jeremiah 29:11, "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."

The Lord reminds me that everything is under His control. Whenever I face challenges, I would meditate on this verse because I know my God understands what I am going through and He is constantly watching over me.

I have since completed my studies overseas, and have returned. I came back to DUMC, the first church my friend took me to after I accepted Christ, and became part of a cell group. With a God-sent dedicated and supportive cell group, I continue to grow stronger and become deeply rooted in the Word. I am very grateful to have found a family here in church to belong to and to be given an opportunity to serve Him by serving in the cell.

Throughout these eight years, God has been good, and looking back, accepting Him into my life was the best decision I have ever made. I still have a lot to learn, but I thank God for loving me, and I want to be faithfully serving Him and doing what He has called me to do. If there is one important lesson that I have learnt since I accepted Christ, it would be that accepting Christ does not mean a life without suffering. It is when I suffer, I learn to rely on Him and become more Christlike.



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LOVE GOD.
SERVE PEOPLE.
MAKE DISCIPLES.

We are DUMC.
A church for all generations
—an exciting community
of families, senior citizens,
young adults, teenagers,
and young children, doing
life together.

Our primary purpose is not
to make nice religious Christians.
Our purpose is to build passionate
disciples of Jesus Christ.