

Feb

SALTSHAKER

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TRINITY
Methodist Church

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Remember

'supercalifragilisticexpialidocious'?

Try

'februatalupercaliaclaudiusvalentinus'!

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Shaking Salt

Throughout the world, Feb 14 is often celebrated as Valentine's Day, a day to declare your affection for that someone special.

Retailers and business owners dance to the cacophony of cash registers when it comes to celebrating Valentine's Day. About 15 million e-valentines were sent in 2010 and about 1 billion Valentine's Day cards are exchanged each year. Interestingly, men spend twice the amount of money celebrating Valentine's Day than women.

When God says that He wants us to live life to its fullness (John 10:10), does that include celebrating a seemingly harmless "festival of love"?

But what does Valentine's Day have to do with love notes and affection? And isn't Valentine's Day a Christian festival named after a Christian saint?

When we consider the matter more closely, we do not find a strong relationship between Christian saints and romance. Much as we will never be able to disentangle all of the cultural and religious threads in order to reconstruct a complete and coherent story, the pagan connections to the date are much stronger than the Christian ones.

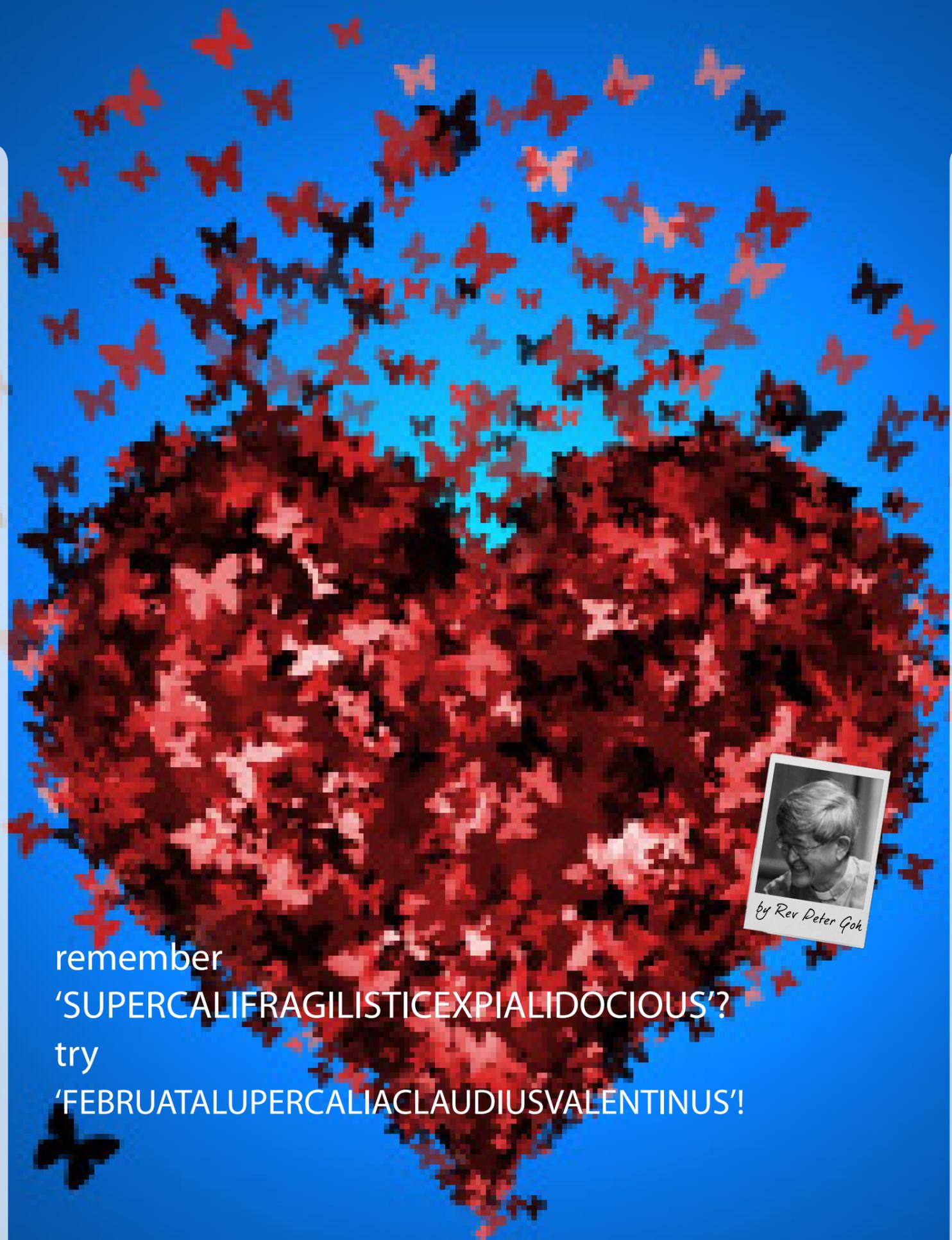
Is Valentine's Day another attempt to "whitewash" the customs and observances of pagan gods and idols by 'christianising' them?

As innocent and harmless as Valentine's Day may appear to be, its traditions and customs originate from two of the most sexually perverted pagan festivals of ancient history: the feast day of Juno Februata and Lupercalia.

It is traditionally believed that the feast of Februata - the queen of the Roman gods as well as the goddess of love, women and marriage - was celebrated on Feb 14 to ward off evil spirits and increase fertility.

In one of the rituals during the feast of Februata, female teens would place their names in a container and each male teen would each draw one name at random. These "couples" would then have "fun" during the festival and remain as sexual partners for the rest of the year. This custom was observed in the Roman Empire for centuries. The pairing led to sexual immorality. This is where the phrase "be my valentine" originates.

Lupercalia or the festival of sexual licence was celebrated on Feb 15 by the Romans in honour of Lupercus, the god of fertility, the protector of herds and crops and a great hunter of wolves.



On the day of celebration, the Luperici (male priests) would run around striking women with februa (thongs made from skins of sacrificed goats) to guarantee their fertility and ease of childbirth. This is the origin of the word derived from "februa" or "means of purification."

In another story, the Roman emperor Claudius II imposed a ban on marriages because too many young men got married to excuse themselves from being enlisted into the Roman army. A priest by the name of Valentinus was caught performing secret marriages and was sentenced to death. While awaiting execution, young lovers would visit him with notes of love and this became the first valentine cards. The priest was executed on 14 Feb, 269 AD.

Two hundred years after the death of Valentinus, Emperor Gelasius declared Feb 14 a holy day in his honour instead of the pagan hunter god Lupercus. This allowed Christianity to take over some of the pagan celebrations of love and fertility. And so instead of drawing the names of young dames from the boxes, names of the martyred saints were drawn for their lives to be emulated by those living.

Today, Valentine's Day is no longer part of the liturgical calendar of any Christian church. Neither is it a feast, a celebration nor a memorial of any martyrs. What does the Bible say about embracing pagan customs and traditions?

In Leviticus 18:24-30, the Israelites are reminded: "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the foreigners residing among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. Everyone who does any of these detestable things - such persons must be cut off from their people. Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the Lord your God."

But the Israelites had their bellies full and lives well-protected. They pursued other gods. The Israelites were severely punished because they lusted after pagan gods, rituals, traditions and practices.

Does it matter that an ancient festival used to worship pagan gods and promote fertility was adopted by the Church and used to worship the God of the Bible? Does God really care what customs are used to worship and honour Him or what festivals we celebrate?



by Rev Peter Goh

remember
'SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS'?
try
'FEBRUATALUPERCALIACLAUDIUSVALENTINUS'!

God once said to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 12:29-32: "The Lord your God will cut off before you the nations you are about to invade and dispossess. But when you have driven them out and settled in their land, and after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.' You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods. See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it."

Though the practices of Lupercalia have been repackaged and dressed up in the form of Valentine's Day, these verses indicate that the practices and symbols remain just as detestable as they have always been in the eyes of Christ. The Word of God has clearly warned us against adopting the customs and rituals used to worship or honour other gods while worshipping and serving the true Christ.

世界各地许多人在2月14日向自己心仪的人表示情意。他们视这天为“情人节”。

情人节是零售商和业主赚钱的好时刻。在2010年约1千5百万的电子情人节祝贺被发出，约10亿的情人节卡被交换。有趣的是，男生这时的花费比女生高出一倍。

当上帝说，他希望我们得生命、并且得的更丰盛（约翰福音10:10）时，这包不包括庆祝看似无伤大雅的情人节呢？

瓦伦丁日（情人节的音译）到底跟情书和爱有什么关联？可情人节不是一个以基督教圣人 - 瓦伦丁（姓氏） - 命名的基督教节日吗？

当我们细想，基督教圣人和浪漫根本没什么关联啊！就算我们努力地解开所有文化、宗教的线索，尽量以一个完整、有连贯性的故事来解释，也还是无法将这日子很有力地与基督教连接在一起。它和异教的联系似乎还强些。

命名“瓦伦丁日”是否是人们企图掩盖情人节与异教关系，而加以基督化的结果呢？

看似既无辜、又无害的情人节，其实它的由来源于古代历史上最性变态的异教传统和习俗：Juno Februa 菲布鲁塔和Lupercalia（古罗马）牧神节。

历来，菲布鲁塔（罗马神话里众神的皇后，妇女、爱与婚姻的女神）的盛宴是在2月14日为着避邪及增加生育而庆祝的。

节庆中，仪式之一是少女将她们的名字放置在一个容器内，然后每个少男以抽签方式与女生配对。这些“情侣”就地“取乐”，随后一年继续维持此性关系。这习俗在罗马帝国盛

行了几个世纪。如此配对导致淫乱行为。这就是那句“当我的情人吧”的起源。

2月15日牧神节，也被认为是一个许可“性”的节日，是罗马人纪念Lupercus（生育神，作物、牲畜的保护者和伟大的猎狼人）的日子。

这天，Luperci（男祭司）用februa（羔羊皮制成的皮带）鞭打妇女，以保证她们的生育能力和缓解分娩的痛楚。February二月就是由“februa”，净化的意思，而来的。

另一个传说中，罗马皇帝克劳迪亚斯二世实行了对婚姻的禁令，因为太多的年轻男子以结婚为借口逃避当兵。神父瓦伦丁那因秘密主持婚礼被抓并被处死。在等待死刑时，年轻恋人探访他并送上爱的笔记，这成为第一张情人节卡。神父在公元269年2月14日被处决了。

然后在公元469年，皇帝格拉西宣布2月14日为神圣的日子，为纪念瓦伦丁那，来取代异教的畜牧神。这给了基督教一个控制这些“爱”和“生育”庆祝活动的机会。容器内不再放置女子的名字，取而代之的是殉道圣人的名字，活人要仿效他们的生命。

今天，情人节不再是基督教会日历的任何一部分，也不是一个盛宴、庆典，更不是纪念任何烈士。圣经对异教徒的习俗和传统有何看法？

利未记18章24-30节，神的话语提醒以色列人：“在这一切的事上、你们都不可玷污自己、因为我在你们面前所逐出的列邦、在这一切的事上、玷污了自己。连地也玷污了、所以我追讨那地的罪孽、那地也吐出他的居民。故此、你们要

守我的律例、典章。这一切可憎恶的事、无论是本地人、是寄居在你们中间的外人、都不可行。（在你们以先居住那地的人、行了这一切可憎恶的事、地就玷污了。）免得你们玷污那地的时候、地就把你们吐出、像吐出在你们以先的国民一样。无论甚么人、行了其中可憎的一件事、必从民中剪除。所以你们要守我所吩咐的、免得你们随从那些可憎的恶俗、就是在你们以先的人所常行的、以致玷污了自己。我是耶和华你们的神。”

但以色列人一旦肚子饱了、有安全感就追求别的神。以色列人被重重地处罚，因为他们欲望异教的神、礼仪、传统和习俗。

教会采用一个古老异教促进生育的崇拜方式来敬拜上帝，有什么关系吗？上帝是否真的在乎我们凭着哪个习俗敬拜祂吗？又或者我们庆祝那些节日？

神曾在申命记12章29-32节对以色列人说：“耶和华你神将你要去赶出的国民、从你面前剪除、你得了他们的地居住。那时就要谨慎、不可在他们除灭之后、随从他们的恶俗、陷入网罗、也不可访问他们的神、说、这些国民怎样事奉他们的神、我也要照样行。你不可向耶和华你的神这样行、因为他们向他们的神、行了耶和华所憎嫌所恨恶的一切事、甚至将自己的儿女用火焚烧、献与他们的神。凡我所吩咐的、你们都要谨守遵行、不可加添、也不可删减。”

虽然牧神节被重新包装，以情人节为掩饰，这段经文表明了这些习俗和象征在基督眼中仍是可恨的。神的话语清楚地告诫我们在敬拜基督时，不可采取其他神的崇拜习俗和仪式。



菲布鲁塔畜牧神克劳迪亚斯瓦伦丁那！

A Christian Spring

一个基督徒的春天



by Rev Dianna Khoo

I am amazed that people are still asking me “What is Lent?” and “What are we supposed to do during Lent?”

I believe that for many of us, Lent brings about some thoughts of penance and mortification. For instance, giving up your favourite food or Facebook, depriving yourself of many of the nicer and more pleasant things in life and punishing your body.

There are of course places where people even go to the extent of receiving lashes and wearing crowns of thorns as a penance for their sin. Somebody said the whole idea of Lent can be summarised in this phrase: “It is like a man who was hitting himself against a brick wall. When somebody asked him why he was he doing that, he said, “It is just so nice when I stop it!”

Let me say in no uncertain terms that Lent is not about making your life ghastly or miserable for a short period of time just so that you can feel good about it when you go back to your regular life. Even though penance is part of Lent, it is not the whole of it.

Lent is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word lengthen or lencten meaning “spring.” That is why Lent is also sometimes called the Spring season of the Christian calendar.

The season of Lent usually coincides with the celebration of the Lunar New Year or Spring Festival. Spring brings about all things new. When I was growing up as a child, it was the time of year when one would get new clothes, new shoes, new towels and so on.

Spring is a time of change. In the northern hemisphere, it is the time of year when days begin lengthening and nights get shorter. This is because the axis of the earth is starting to tilt towards the sun. The earth begins to change its orientation towards the sun as life changes. There is more of light and less of darkness!

For us as Christians, Lent is a reminder to orientate our lives towards Christ, the resurrected Christ - at Easter - so that he may have a more central place in our daily lives.

This understanding of Lent should remind us to change our orientation towards Christ, to allow more of him into our lives so that even the darkest corners in our lives will be filled with his light. This is truly the meaning of Lent.

It is also a season to remind us that in our Christian life there must be a time of renewal. Even as the trees wither, the leaves fall, we too sometimes get very tired

and weathered in our lives such that we require a time of renewal in Christ. Like the trees and plants which renew themselves from year to year, we need to have a time for renewal and a new beginning.

Don't just be burdened by your failures in the year past but instead, take this season of Lent as a time to start life afresh in Christ.

So my friends, Lent is a time for action. A time for us to come to the Cross of Christ and ask him to teach us to live as he has asked us to.

It is said that it takes about six weeks to form a habit or to abandon it. Lent lasts for six weeks. Let us take that time for God to shape us afresh into His likeness.

A miracle awaits you at the end of these 40 days. Embrace this Lenten adventure of moving from the darkness of sin into God's marvellous light—and thus to the miracle of rediscovering God's love for you. This sacred season celebrates the victory of Spirit over matter, life over death, of God's creative and renewing love over the worst that human hate and blindness can do.

You will grow to realize that Lent doesn't begin on Ash Wednesday and end on Easter. It begins when Christ enters your heart—and continues every day.

我很惊讶人们仍然问我，“什么是大斋期？”和“我们应该怎么做？”

我相信许多人把忏悔、耻辱和大斋期联想在一起。例如放弃你最喜欢的食物或Facebook，剥夺自己许多生活中较好、较令人高兴的东西和惩治自己的身体。

当然有些地方，人们甚至接受鞭打、戴荆棘冠冕作以他们罪恶的忏悔。有人说大斋期的整体概念可被总结成 - “这就像一个人跑去撞墙。有人问他为什么这样做，他答：‘当我停止撞墙时，那感觉真好！’”

依我说，大斋期不是短暂地令你的生命悲惨或辛酸，好让你在恢复正常生活时，感觉良好。虽然苦修是大斋期的一部分，但不是它的全部。

大斋期来自盎格鲁撒克逊文字“lengthen”或“lencten”，意思是“春天”。这就是为什么大斋期在基督教的日历上也被称为春季。

大斋期通常与农历新年或又被称为春节，不谋而合。春天带来新事物。我成长阶段的时候，这是一年里会收到新衣、新鞋、新毛巾、等等的时刻。

春天是个转变期。在北半球，这时候白天开始延长，夜变短。这是因为地球的轴开始倾斜朝向太阳。地球开始改变它的方向，朝着太阳，生活开始变化。有更多的光，少点黑暗！

身为基督徒，大斋期提醒我们将生命朝向基督，复活的基督（在复活节），使祂在我们日常生活成为中心。

对大斋期有了理解，朝向基督，生命里时时刻刻将有祂的存在。就算是生命黑暗角落也会充满祂的光。这才是大斋期真正的意义。

这季节也提醒我们，是时候更新我们的基督徒生命了。如树木枯萎、叶子掉落，我们有时也会感到疲惫、历尽风霜，我们需要在基督里更新。树木、植物每年都会自然更新，我们

同样需要有一个更新的时间和一个新的开始。

不要让过去一年的失败成为你的负担，趁这大斋期在基督里重新开始。

所以朋友啊！大斋期是个行动的时候。是时候来到十字架前，祈求基督教我们如何按照祂的旨意生活。

有人说，形成或放弃一个习惯需要大约6个星期。大斋期持续6周。就让神用这段时间来重新塑造我们成祂的形像吧。

在这40天的尾声将有个奇迹等着你。大胆接受这大斋期的经历，从罪恶的黑暗中走入神奇的光 - 从而重新发现上帝对你的爱的奇迹。这神圣的季节庆祝着属灵战胜物质、生命战胜死亡，神富创造性和革新的爱战胜人类仇恨和盲目所带来的最坏状况。

你将意识到大斋期其实不是从圣灰日开始至复活节结束。而是从基督进入你心的那一天起开始的 - 并每天持续。

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)



by Terri Koh

The hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" is today considered to be one of Isaac Watts's finest compositions and contributions to the body of Christian worship. Charles Wesley, the other great hymn composer reportedly remarked that "he would give up all his other hymns to have written this one".

Yet, during the time of its creation, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross", was considered to be highly controversial and radical, as it departed greatly from the usual ponderous repetitions of the Psalms which congregational singing had been reduced to. Frustrated at the degeneration of church worship, Watts commented that "the singing of God's praise is the part of worship most closely related to heaven; but its performance among us is the worst on earth".

It was therefore in such a context that Watts wrote "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross", the first hymn to be written in a first person perspective so as to introduce personal expression into the worship of God, a concept not known to 18th century churchgoers at that time.

The lyrics not only explain the amazing love of God for His people and His demonstration of love through the sacrifice of His beloved Son but they also cause us, as worshippers, to personally appropriate this knowledge in our lives and respond accordingly. The hymn exhorts us, in view of Christ's sacrifice for our sin, to count our gains as losses, to pour contempt on our pride, to sacrifice the vain things that charm us, and to consider the whole realm of nature as insignificant. It entreats us to recalibrate

our lives completely – to live as living sacrifices, wholly given over to the Lord

In this season of Lent, will we survey the Cross with a heart filled with as much gratitude as Watts?

Let us examine ourselves critically and ask ourselves if there are still things of this world which we cling to tightly for security or personal acclaim. Let us choose to forsake these and sacrifice them to His blood. Let us survey the wondrous Cross only with thanksgiving and joy.

This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD
Jeremiah 9:23-24

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.
Galatian 6:14



by Samuel Wong

Baking Unleavened Bread

Simple steps of domesticity in remembering God's great gifts

Man may not live by bread alone but that food item considered a staple in many cultures and parts of the world has been with us for a long time.

Bread baking and consumption predates even human writing. And there is written and pictorial record of the baking of both leavened and unleavened bread, or bread that is made without rising agents like yeast and baking soda.

What is even more significant are the references to unleavened bread in the holy texts of major world religions. In two of them, Christianity and Judaism, unleavened bread is used in rituals and reverent celebrations of faith, namely Holy Communion and Passover meals, respectively.

The Jews even celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread immediately after the Passover, which dates back to Moses and God's help in the Jews' flight to freedom from Egypt. For a week, observant Jews go without leavened bread as a reminder of their freedom from bondage.

By the same token, in consuming unleavened bread, Christians and Jews remember God's sacrifices and what He has done on behalf of man. The most well-known biblical reference concerns the exodus of the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery. In this reference, Hebrews are instructed by God to eat unleavened bread. Most theologians agree that in addition to the many symbolic aspects, this command also had practical considerations, as the Hebrews had little time to prepare food during their flight out of Egypt.

The season of Lent, which begins 40 days ahead of the crucifixion of Christ on Good Friday - on April 6 this year - might be a good time to try making your own unleavened bread. It can be done as a joint effort with a gathering of family and friends as it is a simple uncomplicated recipe with very few ingredients.

Naturally an oven is essential for the baking but the rest is a walk in the park as the recipe below shows. Baking unleavened bread takes much less time than the leavened version because there is no need to wait for the dough to rise.

Ingredients:
1 cup whole-wheat flour
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Half cup water
Pinch of salt to taste (optional)

Combine the flour (and a little extra for dusting) olive oil, salt and water.
Put the dough onto a floured surface.
Knead the dough for five minutes.
Roll out until the dough is about one-eighth-inch thick.
Lay the dough on either parchment paper or a greased cookie sheet
Bake in a preheated oven for 20 minutes.
Take out and let it cool before consumption.

Unleavened bread makes a very satisfying meal served with dips, stewed meats and vegetables.

Life

Skating



It had been a while since I had gone ice-skating, and I had to test my limbs to see if they remembered how they should behave on ice. While there were some marvellous skaters in my small group, there were others for whom the outing to an ice-skating rink last December was their first experience on ice.

It is normal to see beginners hugging the wall closely and taking very tentative steps on the ice. As beginners get a better grip on the ice, they begin to slowly let go of the wall, and take bolder steps to attempt to slide. By and large, beginners stay close to the wall, ready to reach out and lean on the wall when things get a little too slippery. Falling and having a wet bottom are part of the learning journey for new skaters.

In some ways, ice skating has some spiritual lessons for us. "Let go and let God" certainly came to mind as one can never learn how to skate properly without letting go of the wall. The arms need to be free to help the body and legs to balance and skate. Holding on to the wall to prevent one from falling actually hinders one from experiencing the joy of zipping around the rink.

As I reflected more on the ice-skating experience, some other questions came to mind:

Is there any man-made wall that we are holding onto, which prevents us from experiencing God in His fullness and glory?

From one perspective, the wall that we hold onto tightly can be our past baggage, hurts, anger, and suffering, which hold us back from casting down everything at the foot of the Cross, and "[having life] to the full" (John 10:10). Or might we be holding tightly to our achievements, accolades and positions in life such that we are hindered from knowing Christ? Paul said that he considers his heritage and achievements rubbish that he may gain Christ, be found in Him, and become like Him (Philippians 3:7-11).

When we run into "balancing" problems, which or who is the nearest wall we run to for support?

Do we only run to a wall in times of trouble, or do we live life close to the wall knowing that it marks the bounds within which our lives have been freed and keeps us safe?

From another perspective, the wall represents the place from which we draw our strength, encouragement and support in life. When we try to balance life with our human efforts with calendars and reminders, we seem to be able to manage back-to-back meetings, appointments, and errands. But something unplanned usually comes along and may derail our "balanced calendar-ed" life. Do we feel lost when that happens? Do we feel troubled when our lives become unbalanced? Which is the wall to which we run? Or perhaps the question ought to be "Who is the wall to which we run?"

Just as an anchor steadies a ship, Hebrews 6:19 tells us how the hope we have firmly and securely anchors our soul. Is our faith in God, who has given us this hope, one that can withstand the storms life throws at us? Or will we wither like the seeds sown on rocky places when the sun (trouble or persecution) comes up (Matthew 13:6, 20-21)?

With God's help, I hope to be like the seeds that fell on good soil, hearing and understanding the Word, and become a faithful disciple of Christ. As disciples, our faith is sure, and our lives must bear the fruit of our obedience in doing what God has taught us in His Word. In so doing, may we then produce a crop which yields many times what was sown (Matthew 13:8,23).

Have you been touched by this sharing of a quiet time with God? Please consider telling us how God has been speaking to you! Drop us a message at tmccomms@gmail.com with the excerpt from your quiet time journal - you never know how your walk with God may touch the lives of others.



When Calamity Strikes



Many have benefitted from God's work through TMC's healing ministry on Fridays. Here is a testimony from Mrs Priscilla Lam.

"My family and I have reaped many blessings and miracles over the years and I have to attribute these to God's work through the healing ministry. I cannot recall how I heard about the Friday meetings, but in 1995, I was desperately seeking God when my dad was diagnosed with the mostly incurable myelodysplastic syndrome, an impending leukemia. As I went on my knees praying for my dad, God spoke through His servant Brother Yan. He had a vision and he saw God touching my dad behind his ear where there was a mole. When I later checked with my dad, I found the mole that I never knew was even there. As Brother Yan had not met my dad then, I believed that it had to be God at work.

Despite the doctor's prognosis that my dad had only six months left, after the prayers and healing, he

continued to live a good life of more than five years. Those were a good five years as he was spared a lot of unnecessary chemotherapy, enjoying his days and even enjoyed eating out in restaurants amid frequent blood transfusions. We all count it as a miracle. Meanwhile, my sister Lee Ang who had migrated to California was back in Singapore to visit our dad. Lee Ang was the only member in the family who was not saved. When she returned to the US, my parents continued to pray for her.

Then calamity struck and she was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Through our prayers here, she went through an operation that lasted only an hour. The tumour had shrunk substantially and she was spared a life-long dependency on oral hormones that would have been the case had the pituitary glands close to the brain been affected.

Lee Ang had also dabbled in the occult in her pursuit of alternative healing for her son Brandon, who

was born with a serious liver disorder called biliary atresia. As we continued to pray in Singapore, Lee discovered evil spirits had entered and possessed her. Again through God's revelations, she discovered the Truth and accepted the Lord as she decided to attend a church. She was literally troubled by the spirits while in church but they were cast out. That changed her life.

In August last year, she was ordained after graduating with a Masters of Divinity from Fuller Seminary. She also wrote a book Set Free from Demonic Possession and was back in Singapore to launch it.

As for Brandon, who went for the kasai procedure -- a major operation that involved many abdominal and intestinal parts when he was just eight weeks' old -- he survived his various ailments and the minor operations over the years. Now 21 years old, he is a university undergraduate.

I too was healed after I had a serious fall at a golf course in Johor in September 2004. My son Eugene was driving and as the buggy made an abrupt turn, I fell off and hit a concrete path resulting in profuse bleeding from my head. My husband Joseph and sons rushed to my aid but I was unconscious and was taken to hospital where a scan detected a fracture line in my skull. It was traumatising for Joseph and our two young sons, then aged six and 14. Family members and church friends were informed and my sisters-in-Christ also administered holy communion in the hospital. Joseph went to the healing ministry

on Fridays to pray for my recovery. When a scan was done a few days later at the hospital that I had been transferred to in Singapore, the hairline crack had amazingly disappeared. To me, my being alive from the fall was already a miracle but how I was spared major surgery was indeed another miracle."

Finally, Eugene was also spared surgery because of God's healing grace. In late 2010, he had secured a place at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia and was scheduled to start in mid-February last year. At the same time he had a violin exam on Feb 8. As the dates drew nearer, he woke up one morning with diarrhea and passed out after coming out from the toilet. Only his younger brother Isaac was home. He found Eugene bleeding from a deep cut in his jaw. He was taken to hospital where he was put through an x-ray and given five stitches.

My heart sank and I cried out to God. He was all ready for university and had this short window left to brush up for his violin exams. We sought the Lord's help and through prayer, Eugene's jaw was healed in the next few weeks. While it still hurt when he placed the violin on his recovering jaw and his fingers were also affected in the fall, we believed that in God all things are possible. Indeed God not only saw Eugene through the whole ordeal, he passed with merit despite the difficulties and intricacies of the music. It turned out to be a double celebration as he eventually performed well for his violin exam and there was no need to delay his university entry! Hallelujah !

TMC's Healing Ministry
Every Friday from 2000hrs at TMC Prayer Chapel,
B1 (access from TMC main entry driveway)



Let's Hear It Again!

LIVING STONES

The sermon was preached from the pulpit on 1 January 2012 for the 8.45 am and 11.15 am English services. The sermon has been edited for the purposes of this newsletter.



by Rev Dianna Khoo

connect with God

connect with God

The World We Live In

We are searching, time and again, for our identity as a Christian and a church. As we make that search, the world around us tells us to "Work! Work! Work!" in order to "Buy! Buy! Buy!" The devotion to the god of acquiring more is failing us. Can you think of something that you have purchased in 2011 that has left a lasting impact in your life? Whatever you buy is only good for a period of time.

We have been brought up in the "me" generation. Max Lucado said, "Aren't we all born with a default drive, set on 'Selfishness'?" What chaos does this kind of philosophy create? Think about an orchestra with players with an attitude that it is "all about me". People playing the tuba will play non-stop. The trumpeter will stand in front of the conductor stand and toot his horn. Sheet music is totally ignored. Do you get music? You get noise, don't you? If it is all about me, then this world is a very sad place. Yet we are often tempted by society to buy into this kind of dream. We always want bigger, better, and more. As followers of Christ, let us come back to what His Word is, to see what the apostle Peter has to teach us as a church.

Living Stones

The letter of 1 Peter was written to the young churches in Asia Minor, which were struggling to establish their identity as a faith community. Peter acknowledges that while these young churches are like infants requiring spiritual milk, they are like living stones. This is quite amazing because we think that only mature Christians can be called living stones. But Peter said that young Christians are also living stones, cemented to the cornerstone of Jesus Christ by their faith in Him. The church of Jesus Christ, in its infancy, was planted in a culture that was very anti-Christian. A culture that involved the worship of many idols as gods, where wealth was valued and not much stress was placed on how fairly or honestly you acquired your wealth. This culture stressed the building of large, showy temples and buildings so that other people would be envious of you. It was a culture that is not too different from the world we live in today. Therefore the Word of God transcends the generations and is still valid for us today.

As we begin this first day of the new year, I want us to ask ourselves one very important question: "What is our church for?" The answer is not as obvious as what you and I might think. Some people will think of the church as a religious club. Others will think of the church as a place for people who really need religion. And some others will think of the church as a place to spread the moral message which is mainly "Thou shall be good". And partly, it is also our fault - we do not share with them what the church is about. Yet to others, the function of the church is to sing hymns and say prayers, which really, we should. We often confuse good tradition and liturgy with the Gospel. I want us to focus afresh, what we are here for, and what is the focus of the church.

The Church - Foundation of Christ, Building of Living Faith and A Royal Priesthood

1. The church is called to be the people built on the foundation that is Jesus Christ.

We are called living stones because we are connected to God. Because of that, the church of Christ is the company of people from every nation and race called to follow Him. In other words, the church of Christ must transcend all social, racial and cultural barriers. Sadly, we have to be often reminded of this. The church is not for people who are all the same. We do not dress the same, talk the same or like the same food. We are different and that is okay with God because He has made us different. Let us celebrate that diversity as a church of God.

2. This church is a people who are fashioned into a building

Each one of us is like a stone to be fashioned into a building that Christ wants to build, which is His church. The mark of a church or the work of the church is not done when a person is baptised and confirmed into membership. The work is not done when people take up office in the church. It is far from finished when we are ordained as deacons or elders. The true mark of God's handiwork is characterised by true integrity and transparency of life. It is characterised by that sacrificial and glad offering of what God has given us, and to put up with hardship for His sake.

What is my greatest fear for us as Christians, as a church in Singapore? It is my greatest fear that my children, my grandchildren, my great grandchildren will inherit a faith built on traditionalism, instead of that great living tradition.

Tradition is the living faith of the dead. Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.

Traditionalism is when we refuse to move a flower pot because my great grandmother, some eighty years ago, placed flowers in that pot. Tradition is when we keep God's customs alive because they are as real to us, just as they were to your great grandmother.

What are we keeping here in Trinity Methodist Church that would promote a living faith?

3. We are a people called a royal priesthood

We are royalty because of what God has given us. You are His royal priesthood. That should dictate how you live and how you relate to people. *You are God's child. Behave like one.*

Peter is not telling the church to do something but to BE something - to be a royal priesthood, a people set apart by God, a people called from darkness into His wonderful light. I hope you will bring this with you into this entire year.

How then are we going to be a royal priesthood today? There are a million ways in which we can declare the marvellous work of God. For example, we can be regular in coming together to worship God. It is also in the singing, the preaching, the liturgy of our services that we glorify and declare the marvellous work of God. We should also build on the foundation of Bible study, of small groups, of fellowship groups, so that we learn to relate and connect with one another. Finally, as a church it is also very important for us to find new ways with our young people, to experiment with them, to explore how God can lead them into worship. Our Youth Ministry is growing and we need to pay attention to our youth.

When we seek to be a church that God wants us to be, we will face opposition. Every time you see someone step up to serve, they will receive attacks by the one who is always lurking around. We have to put on the armour of God, each day of our lives. Let us be reminded that our God is sovereign over all situations.

Remember who you are - a royal priesthood, a holy people, set apart as living stones to be fashioned into God's building for His kingdom to come on earth.



BIBLIOTHEQUE by SKS

We are called to be "Living Stones" for God by our faith in Him, and to lead lives characterised by spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, including putting up with hardship for His sake. The books reviewed showcase the lives of those who are shining examples of God's royal priesthood.

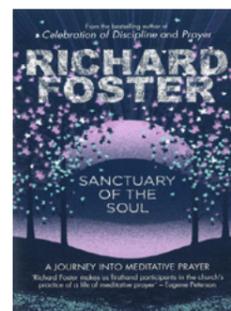
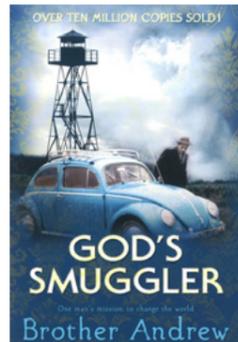


Title : Chasing The Dragon
Author : Jackie Pullinger with Andrew Quicke
Price : Usual: \$20.00 / Special Offer: \$16.00

This amazing testimony tells how as a 15-year-old, Jackie Pullinger heeded God's calling to be a missionary and ended up boarding a ship bound for Hong Kong, with no idea what God had in store for her there. She lived in a place where strangers were not welcomed while drug smuggling, heroin addiction and prostitution flourished. But Pullinger's determination to spread the gospel to the lost helped to change the lives of the residents in the Walled City.

Title : God's Smuggler
Author : Brother Andrew
Price : \$18.00

Trained as a commando in the Dutch army, Andrew Van Der Bijl, otherwise known as Brother Andrew, was not someone his peers considered to be prime missionary material. But while recovering from his combat injuries, he started reading the Bible and became a Christian soon after. Each chapter of the book is a real life account of Brother Andrew's travels and journey as a Christian as he does not gloss over his own shortcomings or his fears about his work. He simply tells the miracles as they happened, and gives God complete credit while showing us that anything is possible if we trust God.

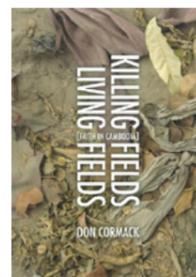


Title : Sanctuary Of The Soul
Author : Richard Foster
Price : Usual: \$27.50 / Special Offer: \$20.50

This new book by Richard Foster, the bestselling author of "Celebration of Discipline", talks about God's deep desire to be in a loving fellowship with us. Foster gently guides readers along the path of meditative prayer, so that we too can enjoy a deeper fellowship with God. Weaving together quotes and stories from the lives of people of the faith as well as powerful encounters with God from his own life, Foster describes the riches of quieting our mind and heart in order to listen to and obey God more closely.

Title : Living Fields Killing Fields
Author : Don Cormack
Price : \$22.00

While the history of the Cambodian church might be filled with heartbreaking events, the ever visible hand of God at work within its members can be clearly seen through the testimonies of surviving Cambodian Christians, making "Killing Fields Living Fields", one of the most compelling testimonies you will ever read.



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What's New on the TMC Website?

www.tmc.org.sg



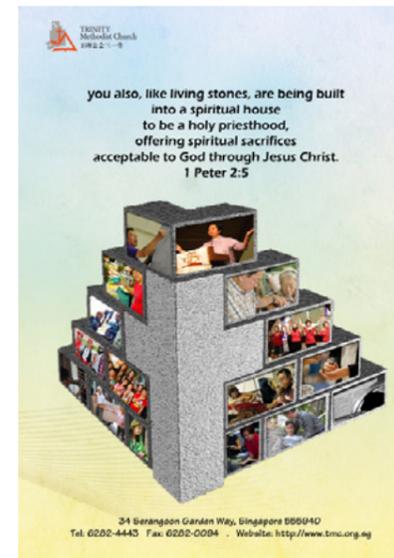
by Vinita Jayaram

QUICK LINKS

- CHURCH BULLETIN
- TMC KINDERGARTEN
- PHOTO ALBUM
- FACEBOOK
- ONLINE ROOM BOOKING

The **QUICK LINKS** section is on the right hand side of the main page. The church bulletin link allows you to download and view the most recent church bulletin (uploaded every Thursday evening). The photo album and facebook links also make it easy for you to find out what you missed if you have been away.

If you are wondering about the significance of this image, read on to find out more. To gain a better understanding of the chosen verse from 1 Peter 2:5, do read Pastor Dianna's message in Let's Hear It Again on page 14 of this issue of the Saltshaker.



The basis of this image is a cornerstone in the form of a cross, signifying Christ as our strong foundation and our Rock. As the cornerstone is the first stone from which other stones extend, it is the most important stone of all. Like Christ, the chosen and precious living stone that 1 Peter 2:4 speaks about, we like living stones are part of and are being built into the growing spiritual house of God.

As the left side of the image illustrates, the people of God are engaged in activities such as connecting with visitors from St Luke's Eldercare Centre, connecting with one another and others at the Youth Ministry's EPIC party, the Children's Ministry holiday camp and the Glowing Years Ministry's Christmas potluck event, just to name a few.

The right side of the image shows the people of God preaching God's Word, engaging in bible study, worship and music, Holy Communion, prayer and baptism.

Through these, the community of living stones centred on the foundational cornerstone is nurtured and supports the growth and extension of the spiritual house of God.

IN & ABOUT TMC

check out pictures from the latest happenings!



**CHILDREN'S
MINISTRY
HOLIDAY
CAMP!**



**G123
YISHUN
SAFRA
OUTING!**



**FAREWELL
TO
REV
BERNARD
CHAO!**



**CELEBRATING
CHRISTMAS!**



A Photo Story

华语崇拜小组大汇集-一日游2011年10月26日

Mandarin Service Small Group Gathering - One Day Trip to Labrador Park and Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall on 26 October 2011.

相片的故事 This is a photo story.

Brother Norman, our part-time tour guide, briefing us on our itinerary. 延熙弟兄，也是我们华语崇拜的导游，为我们介绍一日游的景点。



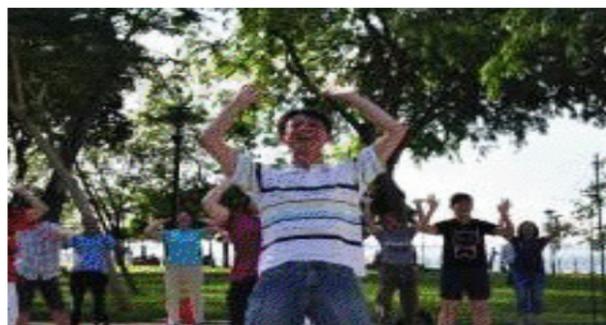
Praise Dance led by Rebekah at Labrador Park. 伍传道娘带领我们在拉柏多公园做赞美操。



Praise Dance ... I want to praise the Lord... 赞美操。。。我要歌颂我的主。。。



Praise Dance! we are serious about doing the praise dance well. 赞美操。。。我们都很专心的做赞美操。



Ha ha ha... the joy of the Lord is my strength. 哈哈。。。主的喜乐是我的力量。



Games time... Scissors, paper, stone. 游戏时间。。。剪刀，石头，布。



Games time ... See how far I can throw two hula hoops at the same time. 游戏时间。。。看我能把两个呼拉圈丢得多远。

Games time... Clap, clap, 'Ang Mo Kio', clap, clap 'Bishan', clap clap 'Clementi', clap, clap, 'Pasir Ris'... name the places in Singapore. 游戏时间。。。请说出新加坡的地方名。。。 宏茂桥，碧山，金文泰，巴西力。。。



Let's go for a walk at Labrador Park. 让我们在拉柏多公园走走。



After lunch, we proceed to Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall. 午餐后，我们到晚晴园—孙中山南洋纪念馆参观。



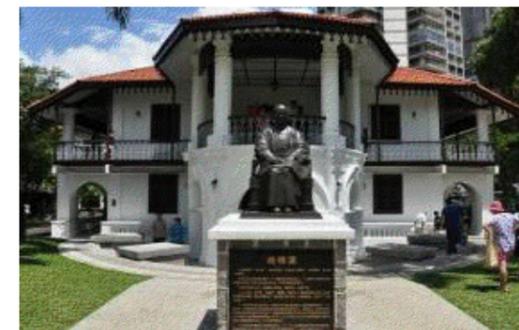
Hey, this is a photo of Sun Yat Sen when he was young. 你看，这是孙中山先生年轻时的照片。



The Mandarin Ministry meets 11am every Sunday in the Sanctuary.



Group photo - Lunch at Kia Hiang Restaurant. 团体照 - 在嘉香餐馆享用午餐。



Hi, we are here. 嗨，我们在这里。



Oh, it is so crowded inside, let's take a rest here. 我们还是在这里坐吧，里边好多人啊！

Let's take a picture in front of the chinese calligraphy by Dr Sun Yat Sen. 来让我们在孙中山先生提笔写的'博爱'前拍张照。



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

What You Miss As An Adult

by
Grace Lim

Camp was excellent!

It was fun, entertaining, interesting, everything a camp should be. Best of all, we were able to learn more about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was my first time attending the TMC children's ministry camp in December, and I decided to invite my classmates, Megan Lew, Hongyi, and Chae Young along. But poor Hongyi fell ill and was not able to come.

We were taught many interesting and valuable lessons at this church camp, but I think this message stood out the most:

Life is unfair. You can be reprimanded for a mistake you did not make. Nevertheless, even under such circumstances, you must learn to be able to praise and thank God. If in doubt, you can ask God for help. Of course, if you ask for help, God will most certainly deliver help, but it may not be in the way you expect.

In the camp, we were divided into six tribes: Judah, Joseph, Gad, Dan, Levi and Micah, Chae Young and I were in tribe Judah while Megan was in Gad, I was the Junior Helper of my tribe. There were also awards for The Best Tribe. Although we did not win, we had a fantastic time participating in all the games and activities.

We played "tug-of-war", "pebble toss", and "hopscotch" at the village playground. We had a whale of a time playing, screaming and cheering each other on. We also had the opportunity to create lovely gift boxes (like the ones that were presented to Baby Jesus by the three wise men) and our own flags! I am keeping mine as a souvenir.

Apart from the village playground, we also had a drama section. We acted out the story of Mary Joseph and Baby Jesus. As a joke, my tribe leader Kelvin decided that I should be Joseph and our assistant leader Jeffrey should be Mary! It was hilarious.

Most of the girls slept in the Hallelujah Room. I slept there too with Chae Young and Megan. At 7pm, Megan and I went to shower. As all the shower cubicles in the girl's toilet were occupied, we had no choice but to use the boy's toilet. It was a bit of a joke really, because the lights in the toilet were motion sensitive, and could only be activated when someone stood in front of the door. Every 5-10 minutes the lights would automatically switch off. We didn't know this, so when the lights went off the first time, both of us screamed ourselves silly. Nicole, who was standing guard outside the door, had to enter to reactivate the lights. How embarrassing!

The only thing I didn't really enjoy as much was the sleeping arrangement. Most of the girls were too excited to sleep, and they were loud, very loud. However, Megan, Chae Young and I wanted our rest desperately as we were dead tired! At 12am, everyone finally quietened down and we were finally able to sleep in peace until 6.30am when everyone woke up and it was just as noisy, if not noisier, than the night!

(We were supposed to wake up at 8am.) Never mind, it was still fun in its own way, I suppose.

Next year, I'm quite sure I will be too old for this camp. That is a pity, seeing as I had so much fun in this year's camp. However, there is still the youth camp to look forward to!



The children and teachers meet with God every Sunday at 8.45am and 11.15am at the following locations in church:
 Infants (Abraham Lounge, L1)
 Pre-school (Kindergarten, L1)
 Primary (Hallelujah, L3).

For more information on our activities and how you can help out in the CM, kindly contact Chew Kim Ling, chair person (91903998) or Alice Lim, lay ministry staff (90921589) or visit www.tmc.org.sg/cm.html.



© Jason Tang

youth ministry

CODE: RED YOUTH CAMP!

The Youth Ministry held its annual youth camp on 1-4 Dec last year at the Boys' Brigade-Girls' Brigade Sembawang Campsite. By God's grace, we saw a record number of 98 campers, as well as a record number of guests coming for the camp. Forty-six of them were first-timers or friends of our youths, all ready for four days of fellowship with friends and with God.

Besides being encouraged by the sharing and preaching of our invited speaker Rev Reuben Ng and guest speaker Glenn Seah, both from Paya Lebar Methodist Church, they were ministered to by the Holy Spirit every day in intimate and personal ways. Many youths came forward to testify to the work and existence of the Living God.

Here are some excerpts of their testimonies:

I (had) started to question my ability to lead (a camp group). (I had) only started going to church two years ago, so who (was) I to lead (other youths) who had been Christians for so long? I was so worried I might fail as a group leader. So I started praying and hoped for the best in the camp. During worship, the lyrics of a song read "You use the weak to lead the strong" and I felt that applied to me being a group leader and in life in general.
-Daryl Lee



Every time someone prayed for me, I would always encounter the same feeling. I would feel very warm inside and all I could do was cry. What happened then made me realise that no matter what you have done, it is forgiven. And that God and the people around me care about me and love me.
-Isaac See



At that very moment, kneeling on the floor, I felt that God was trying to speak to me. He said, "No matter what you do, no matter how you have sinned against me or forsaken me, I will never leave nor forsake you". I cannot express in words how I felt at that moment. It was as if a burden I had been carrying on my shoulders for months just disappeared. I felt refreshed. Even right now, as I'm writing this reflection, I am still smiling with joy and in awe of our amazing and unfailing God.
-Lionel Tan

God revealed Himself to me. I felt His love. So strong, so intense, so powerful. A few people came and ministered to me. One prayed for the same issue I was telling God about at that exact point in time. All the different individuals who prayed for me spoke right to my heart (through their prayers). It was really amazing! God knew everything about me, even stuff that I didn't exactly tell Him. Pastor Reuben said he saw a waterfall and that God wanted me to know that the love He has for me is like a liquid love, a liquid flowing love. And this would be something I will remember for the rest of my life.
-Emily Tan



It was the first time I heard a friend speaking in tongues and it was pretty scary. But I was also excited at the same time because that made me realise that God was definitely in the hall, that He was definitely moving. When we were singing the closing songs, I knew my heart and eyes were fixed on Jesus. And I felt as though I was jumping higher and singing louder than ever before, being free from my problems and all worries and sin! I was indeed set free!
-Timothy Tan



I found myself bound to the floor and could not get up. At one point... I started shaking uncontrollably. At another point, I felt extremely calm, and just very overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit. Usually at this point I would be going around to pray for my friends, but I really could not get up. I felt the Lord place His hand on my tummy and tell me that He wanted me to rest, and that it was my time with him.
-Russ Hoe

Camp Theme Verse

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:6-1

SMALL GROUP CONNECT



G.I.E.D

by Edward Leong

Gloria In Excelsis Deo, or GIED for short, is what we have named our small group. We meet every Tuesday evening for bible study, worship, prayer and fellowship -- over supper -- from 8:30pm till past 11pm!

Formed in the late 1990s, the small group has been regularly meeting at Marlene Avenue, a stone's throw from TMC. GIED's original members are mostly still with the group and we have been blessed with the addition of new brothers and sisters from TMC.

GIED is an inclusive small group. We constantly seek to invite others – both new and older church members, especially those without a small group, to join us. We welcomed a South African lady, Lea Klopers, to join our group during the year she spent in Singapore worshipping at TMC. Over the years, the group has grown to 12, and in recent weeks by another four, making us not so 'small' any more.

With the inclusion of recent and younger members, the average age of members has dropped from its previous average of about 50. We thank God for leading, sustaining and growing the group!

GIED has also been blessed with individuals from different walks of life and with unique giftings. All are actively involved in their individual capacities in a church ministry which includes the choir, missions, outreach and social concerns, children's ministry and hospitality.

While varied experiences and backgrounds have enabled us to share different perspectives and learn from one another about how God has worked in our lives, our combined giftings have enabled us to also work well together to bless others. Looking down memory lane, GIED has had the opportunity to organise various activities like church camps, Contact 123 activities, visiting the homebound during Christmas, and church anniversaries. We find that this is a tangible way to glorify God and bless others when we serve together in this manner.

We take the study of God's word seriously. Each bible study is intensive. We each take turns to lead and those who are not leading will still prepare for our weekly meetings, readily share, and encourage one another in the application of the Word of God in our lives. Often, we remind one another to pray more. As we pray for our needs and those of our respective church ministries, we learn to care more for the church and are encouraged by how God is working in other ministries.

May the Lord continue to lead and strengthen us, and use us as individuals and as a small group for His Glory!

More about small groups at TMC can be found at www.tmc.org.sg/smallgroup.html. Or contact Park Ming at Parkming@tmc.org.sg. Tel:96717100

Ask Anything



Alpha Course at TMC

Remember the difficult questions and awkward conversations with your relatives and friends about your faith, Christianity and the Bible? ALPHA is here to help!

ALPHA is an opportunity for anyone to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed setting. Each weekly session and discussion is thought-provoking, and one of the highlights of the course is the weekend away.

So sign up with your pre-believer friends & family. It's an opportunity to ask anything!

Course Schedule Sundays, 4 Mar to 20 May 2012 1 – 3:30 pm
Topics Covered
Who is Jesus?
Why did Jesus Die?
How can I be Sure of my Faith?
Why and How Do I Pray?
Why & How Should I Read the Bible?
How does God Guide Us?
Alpha Weekend
- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- What does the Holy Spirit do?
- How can I be Filled with the Spirit?
- How can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?
How can I Resist Evil?
Does God Heal Today?
Why and How Should We Tell Others? plus Celebration!



how to participate?

Participants: Obtain a registration form and drop it off at the ALPHA registration desk at the Plaza.

Task Force: Be part of the team that will be working behind the scenes to make it happen! Training will be provided.

For further details, please visit www.tmc.org.sg/witness.html



JILLIAN GOH

Let me start by being honest. Going on a mission trip is not for the faint-hearted.

I say that not only because of the personal commitment required but also because of the expectation of the amazing things that God will choose to do with your life once you have made that commitment.

Despite being a youth leader in the Youth Ministry for a couple of years now, I had never gone for a mission trip. Ironically, some of the younger youths whom I was leading were much more experienced in missions work than I was. In December last year, I decided to join the youth mission team to Cambodia.

In retrospect, I am glad and give thanks that God gave me this opportunity to go.

Used to the comforts of life in Singapore, I was rather afraid of the "hardship" I would encounter in Cambodia. Despite the five-month training and preparation phase which the youth mission team had to undergo, I was still worried about the lack of creature comforts before I left for Cambodia. How was I supposed to make my own "make-shift toilet" in the jungles of Cambodia? What if the mosquitoes bit me non-stop while I was sleeping?

Yet God helped me to overcome my fears and revealed Himself to me.

Through worshipping with the youths at Takmau Trinity Methodist Church, I was inspired to commit to a deeper relationship with God. The sincerity I witnessed in their worship helped me understand

that worshipping or spending time with God, should not be an administrative process or an aimless routine. It should instead be treated with reverence and honour because our God is the King of kings. I also learned that if I wanted to experience intimacy with God, I had to come to Him intentionally and with a heart of expectation.

It was also through this mission trip that I realised that everyone is equal in God's eyes, regardless of their social and financial status or education level. God looks at the heart and He loves each and every one of His people dearly and equally. I was moved to accept that Christ died for every single person, whether that person is accepted or rejected in the eyes of the world.

This is what makes missions both important and necessary. To step out of our comfort zones in Singapore and to contribute and bring the joy of Christ to the unreached is something that I really believe pleases God.

Through this mission trip, my eyes have been opened to the love of God for His people and His work among His people.

Therefore, I hope for all Christians, whether you are from TMC or elsewhere, to take one giant leap of faith for God this year and to commit to go on a mission trip. He will use your experience to grow your understanding of Him and love for his people. Regardless of the preconceived notions which you may have of going for a mission trip (just like I had), remember that He will be there for you every step of the way. And His plans for you will be greater than the ones you will have for yourself.

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

For more of TMC's missions work, visit www.tmc.org.sg/missions.html



CHRISTABEL DAVID:

I had already been on two mission trips to Cambodia, and this would have been my third. When I decided to go for the trip this time, I had to be honest with myself and admit that it was not for any altruistic purpose. I went for this trip because I knew that something was missing in my spiritual life. I had become so caught up in the ways of the world that I had lost most of my zest and heart for God. It was only by God's grace that His Spirit prompted me to sign up for it. I needed a breakthrough during those six days and in all his faithfulness, God met me there.

This trip was very different from my previous ones because it allowed me to get to know the missionaries better. I was greatly refreshed and inspired during this trip mostly because of the missionaries we met. During one of the dinners we had with him, Uncle Jacob asked one of the mission-trippers, whose parents were non-Christian, if she had been praying for their salvation and then asked her if she was desperate for their salvation. He then went on to say that being desperate meant more than just praying earnestly, it meant praying every day and fasting for them, being a daughter different from the rest of the world. To the rest of us, Uncle Jacob said, "She shouldn't be desperate alone". That night, I was reminded again what it means to be a community, a family. None of us can walk this journey alone, we all need each other.

I thought of my own mum then and how she had spent the last few years praying and crying for the salvation of her mother and siblings. For the past 20 years of my life, I don't remember a time when I sincerely prayed for my grandmother or encouraged my mother in her evangelistic efforts. I let my mum be desperate alone. And here I was in Cambodia reaching out to strangers when I barely prayed for the salvation of my extended family. I made up my mind that night that I would start praying and seeking God in my outreach to my relatives and also encouraging my mother in her spiritual walk.

The question "Are you desperate?" was also posed to us as leaders and members of the Youth Ministry. Have we been going down on our knees and praying for a revival of our Youth Ministry? As leaders, are our hearts right with the Lord? Are we leading the youths with our own intelligence or with His wisdom?

The Irish missionaries, Jill and Johnny, were also two of the most inspiring people I had met. Despite having a near death experience recently, Jill and Johnny spoke with so much love and conviction about Christ's goodness that I could only marvel at the extent of their faith.

Jill also passed us this phrase that said "Love God, Live Life, Take Risks". This phrase has stuck with me ever since because it is so applicable to my university life right now and especially since I'll be studying in Sweden for the next six months.

Love God: In everything, put Him first. Love Christ with all our heart, then our desires and actions will be guided by Him.

Live Life: Life is too short for us to while our time away. Live it with all the energy we have, be passionate about the things we do, the people we meet. Make the best of every moment we have and bring Christ with us everywhere we go, in every part of our lives. Being a Christian does not mean we have to be boring. It just means we have to be attractive in ways not of this world.

Take Risks: The Christian life is a hard one. Persecution will come. Our challenge is to face these trials and persecutions with courage from the Lord. Don't shy away from them. Learn to take risks for Christ, try the impossible with faith. God will always be there for us, we need to trust Him enough to take risks for Him, to intentionally put ourselves in difficult positions for Him. When we are persecuted, take heart that we stand with a great line of prophets and leaders in the bible.

One thing that also struck me about all the missionary couples - Jacob and Wai Cheng, Pastor Socheat and Pastor Cham Nap, Kevin and Claire, Jill and Johnny, Norman and Fi - was that they each had their spouse for spiritual support. It must be such a joy to be able to serve God with a companion who understands your heart and loves God as much as you do. There cannot be more fulfilling marriages than one that is of God's will.

For all my life, I have been putting off relationships that I know are not pleasing to God. Many times it hasn't been easy to keep myself for the right partner that I know God would eventually place in my life, especially when the suitors are very eligible by the world's standards. But these missionaries have encouraged me to keep waiting on Christ for the right partner, for a partner who will walk with me spiritually and serve God with me and who will love God more than he will love me. I am reminded of my mentor Eugenia's words that if we truly love God, we will have more in common with someone who also loves God than someone who merely has the same personality or tastes as we do. I know for sure now that there is nothing I want more than a partner who will put God first in his life and I greatly look forward to journeying with this yet unknown person and serving God alongside him.



Our God is real. This truth was something that I learnt again and again during the five-day WSCS mission trip – my first mission trip – last November. God showed that He is indeed our provider and protector.

One of our objectives during this trip was to conduct an outreach programme for the female workers at a factory as a follow-up activity to a previous mission trip. Attempts to contact the factory owner met with no response. Another objective was to conduct leadership training for the leaders in Takhmau Trinity Methodist Church (TTMC).

It was the first time the WSCS team had gone on a mission trip with no concrete plan in sight. Before we left, Pastor Dianna encouraged the team with the message that God would provide us with His Living Word, that as we met up with people in the factories, the children at the orphanage and in our encounters with pre-believers, we would conduct ourselves with wisdom and make the most of our opportunities.

Before and during our trip, God sent us angels in various forms to partner with us in His kingdom work. Sometimes, due to our Singaporean “kiasu” mentality, we make plans in our own human knowledge and strength. But if we only surrender ourselves to Him and allow ourselves to be led by His Holy Spirit to go forth in faith, we will spare ourselves much anxiety.

Touched by Angels

Angel 1

As a retired teacher, I was given the task of telling a gospel story to the children at the Centre of Peace (COP), a Christian orphanage. But I was in a dilemma as while I was confident of my storytelling abilities, my problem lay in telling the “story” creatively as the children would be very familiar with most of the Bible stories. I prayed for wisdom and God sent an angel – our very own Children’s Ministry staff worker, Alice Lim – to hold my hand.

Alice taught me that a gospel story has to be a real-life story, one that the children can relate to, one that brings out the gospel in a simple way to convict and touch the heart and soul. She went with me to source for materials for my gospel story.

When we finally visited COP during the trip, and I told the children the gospel story I had prepared about a boy named Ben, I could see that they were very engrossed. I trust that the seed was planted in them when I came to the important part of how Ben, an orphan like them, received salvation from God. Though this may have been a little abstract for the younger ones, I told myself to give eye contact to the older ones, the teenagers, who at some point, seemed to be pensive and there were even one or two who avoided my eyes and looked down. Even while I’m writing this now, I believe that God is doing His work in their lives.



Angel 2

God sent us another angel – Marie, who is one of the voices on air at Trans World Radio. She agreed to conduct an event at TTMC one night.

Some 30 guests turned up on the night of the event and most of them were repeat visitors from another event the previous night. Initially, we were quite disappointed at the turn-out, but our Almighty God was in control. Due to space constraints, the number of guests that night was just right for Marie to put them in groups of five to six. There was adequate rapport between the speaker and the listeners and when group presentations were made, everyone participated wholeheartedly. Although the programme was conducted in Khmer, we gathered it was on the theme of “Tree of Love” with the roots of the tree going deep down into the soil and the branches bearing fruit. We trust that the seeds of love have been planted in the souls of those present that night, and with TWR’s promise that they will conduct further programmes at TTMC on a regular basis, there will be a great harvest in God’s time.



Angel 3

The ladies had a brainstorming session with Shirley regarding the leadership workshop. Shirley is a young Chinese national who had been a lecturer at the Phnom Penh Bible School for the past three months. Again, we realized that God had sent another angel in the person of Shirley to help us. She was just the right person to conduct such a workshop for she was able to speak Khmer and there was no need to use the worksheet which was in English. Indeed God is good all the time.

There were fifteen of us including Pastor Chanap and his wife at the workshop, I could see that everyone listened intently. Then each one took turns to share about God’s blessings in their lives as well as their concerns. It was a time of heartfelt prayer, sharing and encouragement, and though my partner could not speak English very well, we felt we had a common language with God. God’s love binds everyone despite colour, language or creed.

During our debriefing session on our last night, we thanked our God Almighty for His wisdom and guidance, His prompting and leading all the way and the opportunities He had created for us. On reflection, I realized that the people who came our way before we set out for the trip and the people we met during the time we were in Cambodia did not come to us by chance. It was God at work all the time.



EVENTS

Wed Feb 1, Mar 7 and every 1st Wed of the month 10am-12pm

Yum Cha is an opportunity for people to come together for fellowship, and serves as a platform for TMC-ers to meet one another as well as non-Christians in the community mid-week. Devotions in Feb and Mar will be on how to handle one's inferiority and temptations.

www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#yumcha

Every Sat, 9am-12pm

Contact 123 IT Courses from basic computer, to the use of Facebook and movie-making.
<http://www.tmc.org.sg/c123/c123course.pdf>

Sat, Feb 4, 18 and Mar 3, 17, 31, 9-11am

Fellowship of Ukulelians meet to fellowship and play the ukulele of course
www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#ukulele

Every Sat, Feb 4-25, 2-4pm

Western Foot Reflexology organised by WSCS

Wed Feb 15, Mar 21 10am-12pm

God's Master Works: A Concerto in 39 Movements is an overview of the Old Testament conducted by Rev Peter Goh
www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#gym

Every Fri from Feb 17 and every 1st and 3rd Friday thereafter, 9am

WSCS Bible Study by Esther Wong. Contact Mrs Diana David / Mrs Joanne Wong at 96507126 / 98585517 for more details.
www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html/wscsbs

Sun Feb 19, Mar 18 and every 3rd Sunday thereafter, 10am
WSCS Visitation to Homebound. Those interested to cheer up old folks, please contact Lucy Chan at 97482733

Thu Feb 23, Mar 22 10am-12pm

St Luke's Eldercare Centre Devotions at Blk 217 Serangoon Ave 4 on how to handle one's inferiority and temptations. TMC's ministry to SLEC brings hope, help and the love of Christ to many needy elderly.
www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#slec

Sun, Feb 26, Mar 25, 9am

Visit to Institute of Mental Health by Outreach & Social Concerns Contact Yvonne Tan at 9091 8589 / yynn_tan@yahoo.com
www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html

Sat Mar 3, 10am-12.30pm followed by lunch

Small Group Leaders' Meeting
www.tmc.org.sg/smallgroup.html

Sat Mar 3, 1.30-5pm

Children's Ministry Teachers' Training

Sun Mar 4 - May 20 1-3.30pm

Alpha Course
www.tmc.org.sg/witness.html

Sat Mar 10 (tentative)

WSCS Retreat at Fort Canning

Sat Mar 10-18

School Vacation

Every Sat, from Mar 10 3-4.30pm

WSCS Line Dancing. \$10 per month. Contact Eunice at 6288 4061 for further details.

Sat Mar 10, 4-7pm

in the Upper Room
Youth Ministry Movie Event – Soul Surfer
The movie is about a surfer who lost her arm in a shark attack but overcame all odds to become a champion again through her unwavering faith in God.
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/TMC-Youth-Ministry/194806094431>

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